

► 10 – Work with Words

Executive Summary:

Choose correct words to communicate a clear and concise message.

Objectives:

- *To gain an understanding of the functions and uses of the spoken word*
- *To select precisely the right word required to communicate your ideas clearly, vividly and appropriately*
- *To avoid common mistakes in word use.*
- *TIME: 5 to 7 minutes - or - 6 to 8 minutes.*

Work with Words

Words used in communication is important. People may interpret a word differently, based on their experiences. Paraphrasing sentences with different words can help clarify perceptions.

For example, the word “stuff”. Does “stuff” mean stuff a turkey, stuff a basketball, stuff cluttering a room, foolish stuff, etc. Paraphrasing means using additional words to clarify the message. To paraphrase this sentence, “I was overloaded with a lot of stuff”, add this sentence, “I decided to clean the room”, which clarifies.

Thinking and Speaking

We often think clearly about a topic. It can be challenging to convey a message using words that the audience interprets what is in our minds.

We strive to translate our thoughts and feelings into words that others understand. It is crucial that we relate to people who may have totally different backgrounds and interests.

It is important that we use appropriate words. Some words should be paraphrased when they could lead to a different perception.

Words have a wide variety of functions. This includes:

- 1) Words can be labels that classify.
 - Your name means you. Audience means a group of people. These words immediately bring a mental image.
- 2) Words can be misleading.
 - Words can have different meanings. Chair can mean a piece of furniture. Chair can also mean someone who is leading a business meeting.
- 3) Words can be misinterpreted.
 - When the wrong word is used because it sounds similar to the correct one, the listener could misinterpret the message. When the audience misinterpret words, that error could keep growing throughout the speech.
- 4) Words can be loaded.
 - Words can have emotional tags attached to them. It is important to understand the sensitivity of the audience.

- 5) Words can make attitudes permanent.
 - The audience may have momentary feelings of admiration or dislike. These feelings could be permanent. Words can attach ideas firmly in our minds.

Some words and phrases should be avoided. Principal classes are:

- 1) False generalizations.
 - The phrases, “something ‘always’ goes wrong”, and “that will ‘never’ happen”, are false statements. The use of these phrases can blunt the ability of the audience to think clearly.
- 2) False identities.
 - Stating that “he is lazy,” overlooks the fact that he may be doing something he likes to do. Linking items should be done carefully to avoid misleading the audience.
- 3) Jargon.
 - Using phrases such as, “making dough”, “BOM”, “ASAP”, may be confusing to some, especially if they are from another country. It is best to avoid jargon.
- 4) Words that end discussion.
 - “Everyone knows” and “experts agree” can disrupt the thinking of the audience.
- 5) Unnecessary phrases.
 - “I would like to” and “at this point in time” are phrases that should be eliminated.
- 6) Judging.
 - “That action was good” is a judgement that should be avoided. “I liked that action” is an opinion, not a judgement.

Speaking Style

Words spoken should be understandable quickly. Too many words can cause the audience’s mind to wander. Clear and concise is key.

To increase the odds the audience will understand the message:

- 1) Clarity.
 - Short and simple sentences clarify the message.
- 2) Appropriateness.
 - Select words that relate to the audience. Using personal pronouns can show your interest in the audience.
- 3) Vividness.
 - Using words that conveying mental images that can stick in the minds of the audience. Examples, stories, word pictures, action words, and words of feeling can increase clearness.

Evaluation Guide for Work with Words
--- Evaluate the Speech, not the Speaker!

See last page for more evaluation guidelines

Speech Title:

Speech Evaluator:

Date:

Note to the Speech Evaluator: The speech should choose words that communicate a message to the audience. The message should be clear, concise, vivid, and appropriate. It is important for the Speech Evaluator to provide **many positive comments**, **one item** that could **strengthen the speech**, and **end with more positive comments!** In addition to the oral evaluation, provide answers to the questions below.

The purpose of the evaluation is to Encourage, Encourage, and Encourage!
Strive to have the Speaker look forward to giving another speech.

- How well did the speaker demonstrate understanding of spoken language? Give examples
- What words do you recall the speaker using that might have been misinterpreted?
- How did the speaker show precise word selection?
- Give some examples from the speech of: Simple wording; complex wording; vivid words; dull words; wording appropriate to the audience; inappropriate wording.
- How did attention to wording add to speech quality?

Handy Dandy Speech Evaluation Guidelines

260424

- Strive to start with **four or more positive** comments, **one constructive** comment, end with **more positive** comments. A constructive comment example, *"The speech could be strengthened by"*
- Focus on the **Speech**. Avoid: *"you could improve"*- better: *"the speech could be strengthened by"*.
- Avoid commenting on the Speaker's point of view or facts. Focus on the **presentation**.
- Use specifics. Avoid: *"opening was weak"*- better: *"starting with a question would strengthen the speech"*.
- Use a lot of **"I"** phrases **instead of "you"** phrases. Avoid: *"you did this"*- better: *"it appeared to me"*.
- Avoid judging. Avoid: *"the speech was good"*- better: *"I liked the speech"*.
- If it is difficult to identify something that could be strengthened, ask yourself the question, **"Is this the best speech I've ever heard?"** If it is not, try to determine what could make it the best.

Evaluator:

Speech Title:

Date:

C Opening: Address Audience? Get Attention?

O Lead Into Body?

N Body: Organized?

T Help Remember? Persuasive?

E Interesting? Support Material?

N Relevant? Appropriate?

T Effective? Clear? Inspirational?

Closing: Climax? Produce Results?

Tie It Together? What to Do?

D Physical Appearance: Appropriate? Posture?

E Professional? Shirt (men) with collar?

L Zoom: Hands visible? Eyes include webcam?

I Body Language: Eye Contact? Hands? Face?

V Natural? Spontaneous?

E Overuse / Underuse? Detracting / Adding?

R Deliberate? Precise? Appropriate?

Y Vocal Variety: Volume? Pitch? Rate? Quality?

Manner: Enthusiastic? Direct? Assured?

Presentation: Visuals? Humor?

L Word Use: Clear? Accurate/Correct?

A Colorful? Vivid? Appropriate?

N Precise? Simple/Complex?

G Dull/Exciting? Jargon? Slang?

U Always/Never/Everyone Knows?

A Grammar: Proper?

G Pronunciation / Enunciation?

E Vowel Sounds?
