

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Words are powerful. They convey your message and influence the audience and its perception of you. Word choice and arrangement need just as much attention as speech organization and purpose. Select clear, accurate, descriptive, and short words that best communicate your ideas and arrange them effectively and correctly. Every word should add value, meaning, and impact to the speech.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Select the right words and sentence structure to communicate your ideas clearly, accurately, and vividly.
- ▶ Use rhetorical devices to enhance and emphasize ideas.
- ▶ Eliminate jargon and unnecessary words. Use correct grammar.

Time: Five to seven minutes

HOW TO SAY IT

A clear purpose and effective organization are the foundations of any speech. However, your presentation's success ultimately depends on the words you use and how you place them together. Words are powerful; they communicate your message and affect how the audience perceives you and your message. Clear, simple, vivid, and forceful words add excitement to your presentation, stimulate the audience and communicate a specific message, while good grammar and proper pronunciation give you credibility. If you have a good command of language, your presentations will sparkle with energy and you'll have great influence on your listeners.

WRITE FOR THE EAR

When you don't understand a section of a book or magazine article, you can read it again and again until the meaning is clear to you. When you speak, your listeners don't have this luxury. What you say must be immediately clear to your audience. For this reason, spoken language is much less formal and more repetitious than written language. Repetition and simple, clear language help listeners remember certain points. If you want listeners to understand and accept you, be sure to speak the same way they speak, using familiar words and concepts. Construct your speech in an oral style, using:

Short words. Some people believe they impress others when they use long, convoluted words. In speaking, the most effective and memorable words are short—usually comprised of only one syllable. Short words are easier for listeners to follow and remember. Review your speech draft and count the number of syllables in each word. If most have three, four, five, or more syllables, your audience may have difficulty understanding your message. This doesn't mean every word you use should have one syllable—only that most of your words should.

Short sentences. Shorter sentences are easier for a speaker to say, easier for the audience to understand, and they have more power and impact. However, a speech made up entirely of short sentences is boring and tedious to hear. Use longer sentences periodically to add variety, but make sure the audience can easily follow them. To tell if a sentence is too complex, look for commas. More than one or two commas indicate the sentence structure is too complicated.

Short paragraphs. A paragraph develops one idea or thought. When you limit your paragraphs to a few sentences, your audience will more readily follow

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your logic. Pausing between paragraphs also gives your listeners time to assimilate what you've said.

BE SPECIFIC

Some words are general and have a number of meanings. You want to use concrete, specific words that communicate exactly what you mean.

If you said, "Andrew has a large collection of letter openers," one person may think Andrew has 10 letter openers in his collection, while another may think he has more than 100. If you said, "This suit is cheap," you could mean that the suit is inexpensive, affordable, or poorly made. Depending on a person's viewpoint, the statement "Francois ate a nice dinner" could mean that Francois dined on a hamburger or on filet mignon. *Criminal* could mean a pickpocket, bank robber, embezzler, or murderer. Words like *liberal* and *conservative* may have a different meaning for every person in your audience. As you prepare your speech, select words that leave no opportunity for misunderstanding.

Many words carry special associations or suggestions beyond their dictionary meanings. This is called *connotation*. The dictionary definition of a dog is "any of a large and varied group of domesticated animals related to the fox, wolf, and jackal" and literally has no emotional value associated with it. However, a woman who has been bitten by a dog may attach fear and pain to the word dog, while a little boy with a beloved puppy may attach affection to the word. The words you choose should give listeners the connotations you wish to convey.

VIVID WORDS

The words in your speech should appeal to the senses and stir the audience's imagination. The words should be so descriptive that the audience can see, touch, hear, smell, and taste whatever you describe. Instead of stating, "Alice's feet hurt as she walked to town" say, "As Alice trudged along the dirt road to town, she grimaced in pain as the blisters on her aching feet swelled." Instead of saying, "This proposal will result in more money for our school" say, "This proposal will boost the school's income by \$20,000, enough to buy new textbooks and classroom supplies for the next year."

Select verbs carefully. Verbs conveying action add power to your presentation. As you write your speech, use verbs that have energy. *Shake, roll, and wiggle* have more energy than *move*. *Bellow, shout, whisper, scream, or whine* could replace *speak*. *Hobble, creep, and trudge* could be used instead of *walk*.

Use active voice. In the English language, sentences have a voice. This voice is defined by the verb in the sentence. The verb indicates whether the subject performs the action. In the active voice, the subject does something. "The club *elected* Marion president"; "We *reviewed* the programs." The active voice clearly states who is doing what. In the passive voice, something is done to the subject. "Marion was elected president by the club"; "The programs were reviewed by us." The active voice uses fewer words, is easier to follow, and sounds more lively and interesting.

The verbs *is, are, was, and were* weaken your message because they don't show action. Instead of saying, "There are two remaining proposals," say "Two proposals remain." "Restricting automobile traffic in our parks is a way to protect the trees and wildlife" can be changed to "We can protect the trees and wildlife in our parks by restricting automobile traffic." "It is a fact that Barbara is a candidate" can be changed to "Barbara announced her candidacy."

INCORPORATE RHETORICAL DEVICES

Rhetorical devices are special ways of arranging words to make an idea or thought sound more pleasing and easier for listeners to remember. Some of the more effective devices are:

- ▶ **Simile.** A simile is a comparison that uses the words *like* or *as*. "If we deny our children an education, ignorance will grow like a cancer."
- ▶ **Metaphor.** A metaphor merely implies the comparison. "Ignorance is a cancer that must be cured."
- ▶ **Alliteration.** In alliteration, the initial sounds in words or in stressed syllables within the words are repeated in a pleasing or memorable manner. "Unnoticed and unused," "hallowed halls," "protect and preserve peace."
- ▶ **Triads.** Ideas, adjectives, and points are grouped in threes. Expressed in threes, thoughts have a pleasant rhythm, are dramatic, and become more memorable. "We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

USE WORDS ECONOMICALLY

Strive to say a lot in as few words as possible. Many words are unnecessary or are used as fillers, and they detract from and dilute your message. For example, phrases such as *as you know*; *needless to say*; *it has been shown that* can be eliminated. Replace clichés such as *tried and true* and *quick as a flash* with more appropriate, descriptive words or phrases.

Other phrases can be reduced to one or two words. *A large number of* can be reduced to *many*. *At the present time* can become *now*, and *in the event of* can become *if*. *Conduct an investigation of* can be reduced to *investigate*; *take into consideration* can be changed to *consider*; *exhibits a tendency* can become *tends*; *in view of the fact* can be reduced to *because*.

Pay attention to redundant words, too, such as *sum total*, *joint collaboration*, *future plans*, *unexpected surprise*, and *new record*. The extra words have no meaning or value.

WATCH FOR JARGON

Perhaps you have heard speakers use sports terms as they talk about business or politics, or incorporate business words in a speech about art or theater. Use specialized terminology only when speaking to people familiar with those terms. Some buzz words can be considered jargon even though they are not related to a specific profession. Following are some of these words and the more acceptable ones to use instead:

JARGON	BETTER
<i>conceptualize</i>	<i>imagine</i>
<i>downsizing</i>	<i>laying off</i>
<i>finalize</i>	<i>finish</i>
<i>implement</i>	<i>begin, use</i>
<i>infrastructure</i>	<i>framework</i>
<i>interface</i>	<i>talk with</i>
<i>operational</i>	<i>working</i>
<i>output</i>	<i>results</i>
<i>parameters</i>	<i>limits</i>
<i>strategize</i>	<i>plan</i>
<i>utilization</i>	<i>use</i>
<i>viable</i>	<i>possible</i>

SAY IT CORRECTLY

Grammar and word pronunciation are major factors in your ability to influence your audience. Audiences perceive good grammar and pronunciation as indicators of a well-educated and credible person. Some common grammar problems are:

- ▶ **Subject/verb agreement.** A singular subject requires a singular verb, and a plural subject requires a plural verb. Lilian *runs* home. Lilian and Sean *run* home. One in five children *has* eyeglasses. Five children *have* eyeglasses. Statistics *is* a confusing subject. The statistics *are* not available.
- ▶ **Misplaced modifiers.** Keep related words together and in the order that communicates their intended meaning. "Arturo telephoned to talk about the meeting yesterday" and "Yesterday Arturo telephoned to talk about the meeting" have two different meanings simply because of the placement of one word. Similarly, "The child chased the sheep wearing the hat" gives listeners a different image than "The child wearing the hat chased the sheep."
- ▶ **Misused pronouns.** Use the correct pronoun in subjective and objective cases. "He and I raced through the course"; "The supervisor chose between him and me"; "A few of us employees rallied behind her"; "No one in the choir sings better than she."

Use correct grammar and pronunciation so your audience will perceive you as well-educated and credible.

Some people have difficulty pronouncing words such as *nuclear*, *statistics*, and *aluminum*. Spell a problem word phonetically on paper and practice saying it. If you continue to have problems, replace the word with an appropriate substitute that still conveys your meaning. If you plan to say a foreign-language name or expression, make sure you know the correct pronunciation and can say it smoothly.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project focuses on language.

- ▶ Select a topic that allows you to use vivid, descriptive words. Pay attention to the words you select and their arrangement. Your words should be so colorful that the audience can "see" them in their minds. Words should be clear, accurate, descriptive and as short as possible, and verbs should convey action.
- ▶ Keep sentence and paragraph construction simple and short.
- ▶ Use rhetorical devices to enhance and emphasize ideas.
- ▶ Eliminate jargon and unnecessary words and use correct grammar.

Your speech should incorporate what you learned in previous projects about purpose and organization and include appropriate suggestions from the evaluations you received. Review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 as you prepare your speech.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **HOW TO SAY IT**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to use words and arrangements of words that effectively communicate his or her message to the audience. The speaker should select clear, accurate, descriptive and short words and choose verbs that convey action. Sentence and paragraph construction should be simple and short. The speaker needs to include rhetorical devices, avoid jargon and unnecessary words, and use correct grammar. The speech must have a clear purpose and be appropriately organized. Please complete the evaluation form below by checking the appropriate column for each item.

	EXCELLENT	SATISFACTORY	COULD IMPROVE	COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS
▶ Was the speech topic appropriate for this particular assignment?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Did the speaker use simple, short, and clear words?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Did the speaker use vivid, descriptive words that created mental images?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Did the speaker use words that had more than one meaning or were inaccurate?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Were the speaker's sentences short, simple, and understandable?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Did the speaker use rhetorical devices to enhance his or her ideas?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Did the speaker avoid jargon and unnecessary words?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Did the speaker use proper grammar and pronunciation?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Was the speech purpose clear?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ Was the speech effectively organized?	_____	_____	_____	
▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?				
▶ What did you like about the speech?				

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Body language is an important part of speaking because it enhances your message and gives you more credibility. It also helps release any nervousness you may feel. Stance, movement, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact help communicate your message and achieve your speech's purpose. Body language should be smooth, natural, and convey the same message that your listeners hear. Read *Gestures: Your Body Speaks* (Item 201) online at www.toastmasters.org.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Use stance, movement, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact to express your message and achieve your speech's purpose.
- ▶ Make your body language smooth and natural.

Time: Five to seven minutes

YOUR BODY SPEAKS

When you talk to your friends or co-workers, you move your hands and arms, walk around, make eye contact, and change facial expressions. These movements are called body language. Body language is as important in public speaking as it is in everyday conversation. Imagine a speaker who is sincere about her topic but stands stiffly before the audience during the entire speech, not moving or even looking at anyone as she speaks. Her words say she cares about the subject, but her body communicates otherwise. The result? Her audience doubts her message.

Not only does body language communicate confidence and power, it enhances your believability, illustrates and emphasizes the points you are making, and helps to release any nervous energy you may have. Body language is expressed in stance, movement, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact.

STANCE

Although you should move during a presentation, occasionally you'll stand still as you speak, usually during your opening and closing words or as you make an important point. The stance you assume while standing still is important because it indicates your confidence and comfort level. If you slouch your shoulders and fix your eyes on the floor, your audience thinks you're shy and weak. If you repeatedly shift your weight from one foot to another, you appear uncomfortable and nervous, and your audience may be distracted by your movement. But if you stand straight—feet slightly apart and your weight evenly distributed on each foot—and look directly at your listeners, you convey confidence and poise.

MOVEMENT

Movement during a speech provides variety for the audience. When you walk from one place to another, you attract listeners' attention and get them involved as their eyes and heads follow you.

Your movement from your seat to the lectern or podium is actually the beginning of your presentation and the first opportunity to use body language. You want to appear confident and eager to speak, so walk purposefully to the front of the room with your head up and shoulders back. Turn and face your audience directly, then begin speaking. When you've finished speaking, return to your seat in the same manner.

Any movement during your speech should be purposeful as well. Avoid pacing, fidgeting, swaying from side to side or bouncing up and down on your toes. These are nervous habits that distract the audience. Instead, deliver part of your speech from one spot, then move crosswise two or three steps as you transition to another point in your speech and deliver that point from your new

location. Step toward the audience to emphasize important points. If you want to dramatize a specific point, use movement. For example, if you are describing a physical action such as throwing a ball or shivering from the cold, act out your description by moving your body appropriately. The movement should take place slightly before the verbal point it reinforces.

GESTURES

Gestures are the most expressive part of body language and consist of movements of the head, shoulders, arms, hands, or some other part of the body. Some basic gestures show:

- ▶ **Size, weight, shape, direction, and location.** These physical characteristics call for hand gestures. "He went that way!" you may exclaim as you dramatically point out the direction.
- ▶ **Importance or urgency.** Show your audience how important your point is. Hit your fist into your open palm.
- ▶ **Comparison and contrast.** Move both your hands in unison to show similarities; move them in opposition to show differences.

To be most effective, gestures should be made above your elbow and away from your body, and they should be vigorous and definite to show conviction and enthusiasm. A sweeping wave of your arm to show distance and a rapid, repeated up-and-down-nod of your head to indicate approval will add more to your message than a half-hearted hand wave or a barely noticeable dip of your head. Gestures also should be full and varied rather than partial and repetitious—the same movement over and over is distracting. Make your gestures larger for large audiences to ensure that even people in the back of the room can see them.

Gestures can mean many things and these meanings may vary from culture to culture, so be sensitive to your audience. Generally, clenched fists show power or anger. If you want your audience to join you in fighting some injustice, for example, you could clench your fist as you urge them to take action. Opening your palms indicates generosity and caring, so you may display your open palms when describing how a kindly tourist helped someone in need.

In North America, a forefinger pointed toward the ceiling means people should pay attention to what you are saying. Folding your arms across your chest projects strength and determination. Clapping your hands together in front of your chest conveys unity. Of course, body language and its meaning will vary in different countries and cultures.

FACIAL EXPRESSION

Your face unwittingly conveys cues about how your listeners are supposed to react or feel. If you are talking about a terrible automobile accident, yet you are smiling and nodding, your audience will be confused, not sad. Your facial expression must be consistent with the feelings or information you are communicating.

Your eyes, eye movement, eyebrows, and mouth play vital roles in showing sadness, fear, happiness, anger, frustration, nervousness, excitement, boredom, interest, wonder, exhaustion, aggressiveness, confidence, and uncertainty. When you show these feelings, your audience will emulate them. Show sadness by lowering your eyelids, turning down your mouth slightly, and bowing your head. Show surprise or disbelief by widening your eyes and raising your eyebrows. Smile broadly to show happiness.

Your movements during a speech attract listeners' attention so any movement should be purposeful.

EYE CONTACT

Have you ever conversed with someone who did not look at you directly? The person looked over your shoulder, above your head, at the floor, or even at someone else—everywhere but at you. What did you think?

Most likely you doubted that person's interest, honesty, and confidence. Or you may have felt excluded or ignored. Eye contact plays a major role in how people perceive one another, and as a speaker you should pay special attention to it.

In Western cultures, people more readily believe people who look them in the eyes while speaking. If you make eye contact with your listeners, they'll think you are sincere, credible, friendly, and honest. These feelings have a great impact on your message and listeners' willingness to accept it.

Eye contact has another benefit. It allows you to establish a bond with listeners. By looking at them, you command their attention and they will have difficulty ignoring you.

As you speak, look at the people in the audience. Don't simply gaze around the room. Look directly at one person until you finish a thought, then move on to another person. Make eye contact randomly throughout the room and avoid moving your head from side to side like an oscillating fan. Look at people toward the back of the room as well as at those in front. Be careful that you don't look at someone too long—you could make that person uncomfortable. Also, looking at each person too quickly may make you appear nervous or deceitful.

If your audience is small, making eye contact is fairly simple, because you will be able to look at each member of the audience at some point. But if the audience is large, you won't be able to do this. Instead, make eye contact with someone in each section of the room, front and back.

Body language should look natural and unrehearsed and be consistent with the meaning of the words being spoken.

MAKE IT NATURAL

Body language should look natural and unrehearsed and be consistent with the meaning of the words being spoken. Using body language that is comfortable for you and enjoyable for the audience takes thought and practice.

After you have drafted your speech, read it and note any places where body language would be appropriate and help convey your message. Try several different ways of using your arms, hands, and facial expressions.

Match your gestures to your words. You should be compelled to gesture and make facial expressions when your thought requires such action. This means your gesture or facial expression should be done slightly before or as you speak, not afterward, to look natural.

Don't worry if at first your movements are stiff and awkward. Natural positions and smooth movements will come the more you rehearse your speech and become familiar with it.

If you have access to video equipment, use it in your rehearsals to help you improve. Rehearsing in front of a mirror also is helpful.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project focuses on body language.

- ▶ Select a topic that facilitates the use of body language.
- ▶ Use stance, movement, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact to express your message and achieve your speech's purpose.
- ▶ Ensure that body language enhances and clarifies your words and helps the audience to visualize your points and overall message. The message your listeners see should be the same one they hear.
- ▶ Make your body language smooth and natural.

Be sure to incorporate what you learned in previous projects about purpose, organization, and language and use appropriate suggestions from the evaluations you received. As you prepare your speech, review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 and *Gestures: Your Body Speaks* (Item 201), available as a free PDF at www.toastmasters.org. You may also refer to *The Better Speaker Series* presentation *Using Body Language* (Item 279).

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **YOUR BODY SPEAKS**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to use stance, body movement, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact that illustrate and enhance his or her verbal message. Movement, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact should be smooth and natural. Body language should enhance and clarify the speaker's words and help the audience visualize the speaker's points and overall message. The message you see should be the same one you hear. The speech must have a clear purpose and appropriate organization. Also, the speaker must use words and arrangements of words that effectively communicate his or her message to the audience. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this evaluation form by checking the appropriate space for each item. Add your comments for those items deserving praise or specific suggestions for improvement.

COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS

- ▶ **Topic selection:**
 - ___ Facilitated body language
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ **Preparation:**
 - ___ Excellent
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ **Manner:**
 - ___ Confident, enthusiastic
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Nervous, tense
- ▶ **Posture:**
 - ___ Poised, balanced
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ **Gestures:**
 - ___ Natural, evocative
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ **Body movement:**
 - ___ Purposeful, smooth
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Awkward, distracting
- ▶ **Eye contact:**
 - ___ Established visual bonds
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ **Facial expression:**
 - ___ Animated, friendly, genuine
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ **Speech purpose:**
 - ___ Clear
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ **Speech organization:**
 - ___ Logical, clear
 - ___ Satisfactory
 - ___ Could improve
- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?
- ▶ What did you like about the presentation?

EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS

PART 1

Congratulations! You've now completed five speech projects. This is a good opportunity to evaluate your progress and to set new goals. Complete the evaluation form below, rating your abilities in each category using the following guide. Circle the appropriate rating for each statement:

- 5 = Excellent, a personal strength
- 4 = Very good, little room for improvement
- 3 = Satisfactory, but could be better
- 2 = Could improve, needs more attention
- 1 = A real weakness for me, needs plenty of attention

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. I feel confident and comfortable about giving a speech. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. I enjoy speaking before an audience. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. I easily find good speech topics. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. I am able to organize my speeches so they effectively convey my message. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. My speech openings capture the audience's interest and lead into my topic. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. My speech conclusions are strong and memorable. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. My speeches are free of such verbal crutches as "ah" and "um." | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. I am careful to use words that precisely and vividly carry my message to the audience. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. I am able to think quickly and clearly in an impromptu speaking situation. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. I do not depend on notes when giving a speech. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

What skills would you like to improve? Set your goals in the space below.

Don't worry if you found some skills that you would like to improve. You'll have more opportunity to practice in the next five projects! There is still much more to learn. In the next projects, you'll study how to use your voice effectively, how to research your topic, how to use visual aids, and how to persuade and inspire your audience.