



**Working In English  
by Doing Business In English™**

**EFFECTIVE BUSINESS ENGLISH**  
**SPEAKING BY**  
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## Rules of Effective Speaking

### Sentences and Paragraphs

#### Sentences - content

- Try to avoid sentences of more than 20 words and use punctuation to break up sentences to make it easier for the audience to understand.
- Do not use the word 'and' more than once in each sentence.

#### Sentences – how to present

“We will complete the project in 3 weeks and the Ops department will take over from that point. We believe we can complete the project on time and within budget. The stakeholders have been involved at every milestone and have given us some great feedback.”

Full stops – *stop at the full stop!*

Space – *pause at the space! (half second)*

### Paragraphs

Try to speak in groups of 3-4 sentences then pause (1-2 seconds) as you move on to the next paragraph – watch the person / people you are speaking to in order to assess whether they are understanding before moving to the next paragraph. If preparing what you will say or how you will say it – speak more like you write, presenting your speech in paragraphs of 3-4 sentences.

### Structure

Help audiences understand by structuring your speech – start with an introduction, then the content and then make a conclusion / summary.

In the introduction use language such as ‘today I would like to explain/update you/present’ or ‘the purpose of this presentation’ as this helps the audience know what will happen.

If presenting several points ‘there are 3 key points/products/problems/opportunities’ and then for each make a paragraph starting with ‘firstly, secondly, thirdly/lastly’.

When concluding help the audience understand know this is the case by using expressions such as ‘Therefore in conclusion, to summarise, to close’.

## Manage and Vary Pace

The speed at which a speaker delivers their messages (measured in words per minute) is very important. For example, speaking too fast will mean the audience will have difficulty keeping up, whereas speaking very slowly will mean they lose attention.

In most cultures audiences believe that people who slow down their pace when speaking to groups have greater authority, credibility and are more trustworthy. In contrast in many Native English speaking cultures audiences are suspicious of fast speakers believing that they could be trying to hide something, do not understand what they are talking about and/or are lying.

Most speakers use between 100 and 300 words per minute; most speakers are not aware of the speed they are talking and how appropriate their speed is for their audience. When speaking publicly to groups and in important meetings speakers should speak more slowly than in general conversation. Most people speak at 150–180 words per minute (wpm) in most general situations and this is too fast for public speaking. President Barack Obama was seen as a great speaker and he only used 100 words per minute, for most speakers this is too slow and 120–130 wpm is more appropriate.

Speeding up and slowing down allows the speaker to generate more interest and hold an audience's attention in speeches, meetings and everyday conversations.

### Check whether you need to slow down

Select a segment of text from a document or speech, ensuring that the excerpt is precisely 130 words in length by utilizing the word count feature in pc. Read this text aloud at your normal pace while someone else measures the time using their smartphone or watch. Divide the duration by the total number of words to ascertain the speed. If you took 45 seconds to read 130 words, your average speaking speed is calculated as 130 divided by (45/60), resulting in 173 words per minute (wpm).

If the rate exceeds 130 words per minute, read it aloud again. Intentionally reduce your speed to approach or slightly fall below the 130 words per minute benchmark. When you do succeed at hitting 130 wpm, you will likely perceive your speech as excessively slow, but actually you are not. Most people are just used to fast speech. Initially, speaking at a slower pace may feel odd; however, with continued practice using various texts, it will become increasingly instinctive.

## Perfect Pauses

Perfecting how and when to hold a pause is a great skill for effective public speaking.

1 Pauses provide an opportunity to contemplate your subsequent remarks or to consult your notes if you experience a lapse in memory.

2 Pauses allow your audience to assimilate your information and establish cognitive connections between your statements and their existing knowledge.

3 Pauses provide your audience with the opportunity to contemplate your statements and respond to any rhetorical questions posed during your speech.

The difficulty individuals experience in maintaining a pause arises from its infrequent occurrence in ordinary conversation. During conversation, any pauses we make are inevitably filled by another participant in the group. During presentations, silence for a few seconds can seem interminable. Nonetheless, you may find your perfect number and length of pauses with enough practice.

## Asking questions and silence

When posing a question to your audience, whether rhetorical or not, intentionally pause for a minimum of five seconds before responding. By counting slowly to five in your mind, you can avoid your inherent inclination to break the silence. When the brain is engaged in a task, it can readily manage silence. Gradually extend the duration of this exercise from five seconds to seven seconds, and subsequently further if appropriate to the situation and audience.

Alternatively, you may test your audience by posing a question and maintaining silence until a response is provided. To help hold the silence, ask yourself, "I wonder how long it will take for a response?" Subsequently, count deliberately and consistently in your mind until a response is received. Increased practice will develop the creation of impactful pauses.

## Pitch and Tone

### **Pitch**

Pitch is how low or high a voice sounds, and is normally determined by physiological factors such as age, height and weight. When speakers have intense emotions, their pitch often changes a lot. For example, if a speaker is excited, their pitch can become quite high, in addition when a speaker does not change their pitch, their voice is seen as monotone.

### **Tone**

Tone is the emotional sound of the voice, e.g. angry, happy or scared, this is really key in showing the subtext of a sentence. For example, the expression 'I'm fine' can be said with a positive, anxious or sarcastic tone of voice which changes the meaning.

## Use of Pitch and Tone

### **Add variety**

The most effective speakers constantly change the tone and pitch of their voice throughout their speech. For most audiences this variety increases how interesting and inspiring the speaker is.

### **Demonstrate authority**

Speakers who introduce themselves and the topic in a clear bold manner also using a low tone, instantly appear both confident and credible.

### **Show emotions**

Effective speakers show emotions through their voice, for example, showing anger, anxiety, energy, sarcasm, or humour can create more powerful interest and engagement.

### **Make it conversational**

When making a speech, in a meeting or speaking in a group, adjusting pitch and tone makes the speaker more conversational which can hold the audience's attention and interest.

## Use Emphasis

Most speakers, without thinking, emphasize certain words or phrases, which enhance their impact and help the listener know what is important. The numerous challenges of communicating in a foreign language to an audience frequently lead to neglect of emphasis as the speaker is just looking to finish without making a mistake. Typically, when speakers do emphasize, they either raise their volume or pitch higher on significant words or phrases.

## How to Emphasize a Key Point

### Repeat it

Rather than just saying your point and moving on say your point, stop, pause and then say it again. Use repetition to get that emphasis and to get that important point across.

### Say it very softly

In most cultures people believe that when a speaker suddenly talks softly or even whispers, they are sharing something important, special or secret. This can draw in the audience and hold their attention.

### Say key points slowly

When an effective speaker has a key point, they can slow their speed, really engaging the audience, pausing before as well, adding to the impact.

### Sit Down

If speaking on a stage and standing the image for most of the time is constant, if a speaker draws up a chair and sits down, then delivers a key point, they will have more impact.

### Stop moving, pause and make eye contact

Sometime a speaker who is moving on a stage or in a meeting room can stop, pause and then make eye contact with audience members. This almost forces the audience to engage with the speaker and helps them understand there is a key point being shared.

## Vary Volume

Speakers who can vary their volume effectively are able to hold attention, interest and tell better stories. This needs to be done in a manner that is both situationally and culturally appropriate. Varying volume can be combined with other techniques such as varying volume to create additional impact.

## Common Speaking Volume Errors

### Speaking too quietly

If the audience must exert effort to hear the speaker, they will overlook essential information, if the issue persists, they will inevitably stop paying attention.

### Speaking too loudly

Excessively loud speech normally leads the audience to perceive the speaker as shouting, which will push them away however valuable the content the speaker is sharing.

### Speaking at a constant volume

When a speaker talks in front of an audience, they often lose their natural variation in volume because of nerves.

### Dropping volume off at the end of sentences

Some speakers have a habit of lowering their volume at the end of each sentence. This can mean that the audience misses essential information, in addition the speaker can be seen as lacking enthusiasm and conviction which impacts negatively on the audience.

## Tips for Public Speaking

**1 Prepare, consider what you want to achieve and what your audience wants to hear. See your communication from the point of view of your audience.**

**2 Practice, practice and practice some more.**

**3 Warm-up your voice, learn some warm up exercises to ensure an effective delivery.**

**4 Breathing exercises, breathing is critical to effective speaking, this exercise can help;**

- Stand up, make sure you are completely upright, place your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight must be evenly distributed.
- Breathe in deeply through your nose and exhale through your mouth, put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- Then try to speak while you breathe making complete sentences.
- Keep breathing deeply, at the same time count from 1 to 5. Practice exhaling on the starting words of your speech.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and level whilst breathing in.
- Remember to breathe at the end of every sentence.

**5 Drink water but do not overdo this!**

**6 Practice with tongue twisters**

Tongue twisters are a great way to help improve clarity and accuracy of speech; they are made up of lots of similar sounding words and patterns that make them difficult to say.

When practicing tongue twisters really concentrate on what you are saying, this will develop help develop your control of your speaking. A range of tongue twisters can be found here - [Perfect Your Pronunciation With These 100 English Tongue Twisters \(mondly.com\)](https://www.mondly.com/learn/english/tongue-twisters)

**7 If you feel brave record yourself**

Listening back to yourself enables you to hear how your voice sounds and often identify mistakes before they happen.

**8 When possible, visit the room the speech will be delivered to familiarize yourself and if possible actually rehearse in it.**

## Preparation and Practice for Public Speaking

Effective public speakers make public speaking appear effortless; this is normally due to their extensive practice in developing their delivery rather than being a natural gift they possess. The higher the level of preparation and practice the lower the level of anxiety and the higher the level of confidence. Rehearsing enhances the speaker's ability to perform in an impactful and inspirational manner, rather than appearing robotic or formulaic.

### Consider the audience first

Effective speakers research the audience to understand their experiences and why they are in the audience both before writing the speech and slides then as they practice.

### Visualization

Speakers like successful athletes visualize themselves delivering the speech brilliantly, considering the audience and the stage. Mentally rehearsing improves memory, understanding and method of delivery. Engaging emotions during visualization works, connecting with the excitement and satisfaction of delivering a successful speech can increase confidence and lower anxiety.

### Nerves can be good

Nerves are normal, for most speakers they are desirable, the adrenaline rush can help with alertness and heighten performance. If nerves develop into anxiety, then effective and extensive preparation is the only way this can be managed.

### Then practice, practice and practice some more

The most experienced and capable public speakers need practice to be the best version of themselves, remember actors and keynote speakers rehearse constantly. Often speaking the presentation or speech out loud gives a very different view of the text, mistakes and improvements often become clearer. If speakers want to deliver an excellent speech or presentation, then they need to commit to rehearse more than they have in the past, and probably much harder than peers and colleagues. Great presenters such as Steve Jobs rehearsed intensively and committed extensive time to it.

Repeated verbal practice of the presentation or speech aloud starts with by reading the speech word by word, then gradually reducing dependency on the script until the text is memorised. Physical repetition is often ignored, but practicing body language, gestures, and movements while practicing develops confidence, delivery and can and reinforce messages.

### **Practice in chunks**

Most presentations and speeches can be broken down into 5 minute chunks, for many speakers practicing 1 chunk at a time is effective until each chunk is mastered, only then is the whole text practiced.

### **Practice making eye contact with the audience**

Public speaking is not easy, when speaking there is a lot to be aware of and eye contact can be missed as the text and speaking are what is given the most focus, therefore eye contact needs to be part of practice. Effective eye contact improves audience engagement, interest and attention, also allowing the speaker to assess the audience's understanding.

### **A conclusion is more than just words**

The conclusion of most presentations and speeches is what the audience will remember most clearly, therefore it must have clarity, energy and real impact (potentially a call to action). The wording needs to be created very carefully along with how it will be delivered e.g. tone, pitch, speed etc.

### **Practice under some pressure**

Many experienced public speakers advise that practice under some pressure is a key part of preparation. Reviewing a presentation or speech in the mind is nowhere near as effective as delivering it in front of an audience. It is highly likely that the more practice a speaker does, the lower the probability that the speaker will fail under pressure. During practice the speaker becomes used to reactions such as an increased heart rate and sweating, then can manage the pressure.

### **Time practice**

Many speakers make the mistake of making a great speech but one that is too short or more commonly too long. At first speakers think, 'how can I talk for 10 minutes to a big crowd?', then actually speak for 15 minutes. Timing needs to start in the first stages of practice and then continue through to ensure adherence.

### **Record Your Rehearsal**

By watching a recording of a practice, distracting habits such as odd hand movements, posture, eye direction and face touching can be seen. Recordings of previous actual presentations are also valuable as it enables speakers to see and hear themselves from the audience's perspective. This process helps speakers improve and see their progress which builds confidence and impact.

## Ask and collate feedback

Effective public speakers ask for and then collate feedback to learn what went well, not so well and should be done more / less / never again. Asking for feedback is not easy, the temptation is for most people asked to be more positive than they really are and often are not specific which means open questions are required and an approach that encourages frank responses.

## Speech Writing

**1 Emphasis – bold letters – ‘there was an exciting opportunity’**

**2 Pitch – slanted line upwards for higher and down for lower – ‘we walked /up the hill then \down the other side.’**

**3 Volume - bigger font for louder and smaller font for quieter – ‘we had to rUN to catch the train, when we arrived the weather was awful’**

**4 Pause – underline to make a pause and vary to show the length of pause – ‘today is a very important day, \_\_\_ I am delighted to be able to announce the results, \_\_\_\_\_ we achieved target!’**

**5 Speed – italics to show saying it quicker and spaced word when slower – ‘we need to *accelerate* the project delivery and d e l a y the payment.’**

**6 Breathe – hash tag for each half second – ‘There are 2 phases of the project, #, the research and then the design. ## We now need the budget to deliver this effectively.’ This can be combined with underlining to show pausing.**

**7 Grouping – brackets to show a group of words to be spoken the same way - ‘Last year was challenging, but (this year is going to be a success)’**

## Example

“*Welcome* to /today’s training session, # my aim is to provide **you** with a /new way of managing tasks when under \p r e s s u r e. ## It has become very clear that customers expect /more # but want to pay \less, # placing significant pressure on every tech supplier. The \old work planning processes are (n o l o n g e r e f f e c t i v e),##, /today I would like to introduce# **Kanban.**”