

# Oral Grammar

Everyone knows the basics of presenting yourself professionally — dress nicely, be well-groomed, chew with your mouth closed.. But have you ever considered how you speak affects peoples' perceptions of you?

A 2004 study of Silicon Valley employers found that 40% of recent business school graduates applying for jobs at their companies did not have acceptable speaking skills. Overuse of slang, poor diction and incorrect usage were some of their biggest problems.



It is important to note that correctness in oral grammar is relative, and that effective speakers know how to “code switch” depending upon their audience and environment. Code switching is a process in which a speaker shifts from one dialect or speaking style to another.

For instance, the words and pronunciation you use when talking to a grandparent at Thanksgiving dinner may be very different from the style and language you should use when addressing an audience in a professional setting.

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Below is a chart with several of the most common “mistakes” speakers make in oral grammar. Also included are problems in speech production and “powerless language” that often hinder speakers’ ability to communicate effectively.

Area	Examples
<b>Double Negatives</b>	I <u>don't</u> see <u>nobody</u> I <u>don't</u> have <u>no</u> money I <u>can't</u> <u>hardly</u> wait
<b>Redundancy</b>	We <u>might could</u> go I feel <u>like that</u> it would be okay I got <u>me</u> a new car You can buy <u>you</u> a watch
<b>Slang</b>	ain't, fixin' to yep / yeah "off the hook"
<b>Subject-Verb Agreement</b>	They <u>talks</u> too fast He <u>be</u> late
<b>Usage</b>	ideal <i>for</i> idea good <i>for</i> well (and vice versa) them <i>for</i> those
<b>Verb Forms</b>	He <u>brung</u> it I should have <u>wrote</u> it I <u>seen</u> it coming
<b>Diction</b>	hit <i>for</i> it axe <i>for</i> ask
	'cept <i>for</i> except 'member <i>for</i> remember
	goin' <i>for</i> going
	nucular <i>for</i> nuclear birfday <i>for</i> birthday
<b>Speech Production</b>	Low Volume
	Rapid Speech
	Lack of Clarity
<b>Powerless Language</b>	Verbal Hedges (“sort of,” “kind of”) Intensifiers (“really,” “you know”) Hesitations (“um,” “er”)

# Nervous? You aren't the only one!

Speech anxiety is no rare occurrence. Everyone has probably experienced it at one point in his or her life. The following physical symptoms are typical of the beginning speaker:



- ♣ Pounding heart
- ♣ Trembling hands
- ♣ Shaky knees
- ♣ Dry, constricted throat
- ♣ Quivering voice
- ♣ Flushed face

To help alleviate some the sufferings of speech anxiety, here are some tips in delivering a quality presentation.

- ♣ Prepare yourself thoroughly.
- ♣ Never memorize a speech.
- ♣ Think of communication, not performance.
- ♣ Imagine yourself giving a good, strong speech.
- ♣ Know that shyness is no barrier.

Additionally, to calm those knocking knees, remember the following advice:

- ♣ Know that most symptoms are not seen.
- ♣ Never call attention to your nervousness or apologize for it.
- ♣ Accept imperfection.
- ♣ Get familiar with your audience and setting.
- ♣ Use visual aids.
- ♣ Pause a few moments before starting your speech.
- ♣ Get audience reaction early in the speech.

## Tips for Giving an Effective Presentation

### Preparation:

- ♣ Content—Spend sufficient time learning your subject, exploring your topic, and generating ideas (prewriting).
- ♣ Organization—Organize your ideas logically into introduction, body and conclusion.
- ♣ Notes—Use notecards and keep notes brief to avoid reading.
- ♣ Practice—Effective delivery requires practice.

### Delivery:

#### Conversational Quality

- ♣ Enthusiasm—Demonstrate your positive attitude and interest in the topic through your voice and facial expression.
- ♣ Eye Contact—Maintain eye contact to increase credibility, gain audience interest, and get nonverbal feedback.
- ♣ Clarity—Speak clearly and use language appropriate to your audience.

#### Body Language

- ♣ Posture and Movement—Good posture and movement convey self-confidence, professionalism, and credibility.
- ♣ Gesture—Keep gestures natural and avoid repetitive motions; use them to emphasize points and keep the audience's attention.

#### Visual Aids: Visual Aids should be...

- ♣ Large enough for all audience members to see.
- ♣ Positioned so that all audience members can see them.
- ♣ Simple and easy to understand.

# Practice, Practice, Practice ...

... if you want to improve as a speaker!



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## Building Your Oral Communication Skills



## How can the WCC help you give an effective presentation?

**One-to-One Sessions:** a tutor works collaboratively with you on ways to improve the format and delivery of your speech.

**Our Practice Facilities:** the Center has private rooms with video cameras where you can record your speech and then watch it alone or with a tutor to analyze your delivery.



### This brochure contains:

- Strategies and Exercises to build Public Speaking Confidence
- Tips for Giving an Effective Presentation
- Common Symptoms of Speech Anxiety and Ways to Alleviate Them