



### Filler words

If we want to be effective in our communication, then we need to ensure our language is grammatically correct. It is easy to get into bad habits and once we do these habits become engrained. With our friends and family, it can be acceptable to be more relaxed in the way we communicate. In the work place, we need to ensure that we get our

language and therefore the impression we make correct. This applies to both internal and external communication.

### Acknowledgements

We use certain words or noises to either encourage or to show that we are thinking. These fill a pause and give us time to think. They indicate to the receiver that we are bringing our thoughts together as we communicate.

The words or noises such as, Umm or err, show the other person that you are thinking. If you start using them as a punctuation, then our message starts to demonstrate a lack of confidence, Umiming is very useful when you have been asked a question and you want time.

If you find yourself doing too much umming then slow yourself down. Each time you finish a sentence, pause and pace yourself, use a silence instead. It can also be useful to internalise the umm, saying it to yourself rather than out loud. This then gives a natural pause while you are thinking.

We can also over do the recognition or confirmation. This is a common trait among trainers or those who present a lot. At the end of the sentence they will build in their own confirmation, adding an ok, yeah or right at the end. This can also be common among managers who are seeking to direct a team member. Expressing their own confirmation, to get the individual to agree. If

used a lot this can become very irritating. The yeah, ok, right, presenter, encourages the audience to start playing buzzword bingo, as it is one of the most obvious habits you can possess.



### Nonsensical words

We can also get into habit of using words that have their own meaning, but are used in a nonsensical way. The correct use and meaning

of the word is forgotten and the word is used as a filler or punctuator. We pick up these patterns of communication from friends, colleagues or teachers. We often learn them as children or teenagers to fit in with our peer group. After awhile they become part of our subconscious and we become unaware that we are using the words in our communication.

One of the most common words is 'basically'. This is often used before someone starts explaining or informing someone else - 'basically we need to take the following approach' – basically, what I did at the weekend was...' If the approach was basic then it would be an acceptable word to use, however it is used as a noise word.

The other word that is often used in a similar way is 'Actually'. You will often find someone who punctuates their sentences whenever they speak. One thing these people won't do is do the same when they produce written communication. This is because they are being more conscious about their communication when they write.

Applying the same principle when you speak, will help you overcome these habits. Listen to what comes out of your mouth, be aware of the words you are using. That way you will start having oral correctness.

A common word when explaining something that you know well is the word 'Obviously'. People use this when it is apparent to them what needs to be done, or they are giving an instruction. This word comes across as very condescending or demeaning. If it were obvious, you wouldn't need to tell the other person!

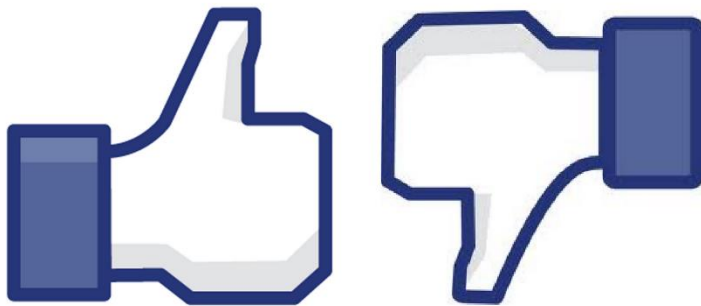
Literally is another word that people use incorrectly. You will often hear someone say 'I literally laughed my head off'. That's an interesting concept and doesn't bare thinking about. The other way it is used is where an individual will use it is 'literally what I am going to do is'. Either you are going to do or not, you do not need the word literally in the sentence.

Then there are just the nonsensical and annoying phrases that people use. The dismissive response of 'whatever'. Meaning they haven't listened and are going to ignore what you have said. Similarly, there is the 'yes but'. I am ignoring what you have said and going back to my own argument. When you hear 2 people having 'yes but' conversations, you know they aren't listening and the discussion is not going to go anywhere.

There are also people who use the annoying fillers of 'You know' and 'You know what I mean'. The person isn't thinking about what they are saying and how they say it.

## Greetings

We also have the strange and confusing greetings. These can be words like 'sup' or 'wha's sup'. One that is used a lot in the UK and particularly in the south is 'alright', the north it becomes 'alreet'. When someone who is not from the UK first encounters this, they will often find it confusing. They will interpret it as being asked if they are ok. This then results in them explaining how they are at that time. This then creates confusion in the person who first used the phrase – all I was doing was saying hello. The correct conversation usually is: 'alright?'. 'yeah alright, you alright'. 'yeah alright'. Complete and utter nonsense.



## LIKE

The word that seems to have crept into the vocabulary of the millennial and snow flake generation is – 'like'. It was used in the past and probably started in the 1950's and 60's. In the past 15

to 20 years its use has increased and there seems to be a switch in children where suddenly it creeps into their sentences. It becomes a punctuator, rather than pausing. It can also be used to indicate thinking – similar to umm – mentioned earlier. The most common use of the word now just appears to use it randomly throughout a sentence. It then becomes extremely irritating and the receiver will pay attention to the word 'like' and no longer take in what you are saying.

It is suggested that when it's used as an emphasis point then it's acceptable. I don't necessarily agree with that use. It indicates passiveness and doubt, therefore doubt in the mind of the receiver. An example of this given below:

'like, I've been taking this approach for years' – bad  
'well, I've been taking this approach for years' – better  
'I've been taking this approach for years'. - good

The last one is much more active and concrete. The incorrect use of the word 'like' originates in America and has crept around the world. Think about what you are saying and use a pause instead. If you wouldn't write it, don't say it!

## Expressives

There are also the phrases that are used before someone says something. These again tend to be filler words or phrases. Things like – 'Just sayin', 'like I

say'. There are also the vague non-committal phrases such as – 'Kind of' and 'sort of'. Immediately there will be doubt in the mind of the receiver.

The final word that gets over used is; 'Sorry'. We can be over apologetic and use the word when it's not appropriate. You will often see someone bump into someone else and they then go through a routine of both saying sorry. No one knows who is to blame and it all becomes very apologetic. There is also the type of person who will say sorry at the drop of a hat. Someone else is to blame, or they feel nervous about asking for something and will start their sentence with 'sorry but could I....' It immediately puts you into a position of weakness. Ration the use of the word sorry, then it has more meaning when it is used.

### **Summary**

Make yourself aware of what you say and how you say it. Take your time to think, plan and think before you speak. Be conscious of the words and phrases that you use. If you trust someone get them to give you feedback about the good and bad things that you say.

Be concrete, active and definite in how and the way you express yourself, you will be more successful in getting your message across.

