



## Speaking Too Slowly

If your audience is tapping fingers and feet impatiently while you're finishing the first main point of your speech, it's safe to say you speak too slowly. Some speakers do everything at a slow pace, including talking. Others take their time with their speech because they believe everything they say must be correct, perfectly worded, and significant. Speaking too slowly can project that you are boring, tired, or less intelligent than you actually are. Finding your problem areas and fixing them with the following exercises will help you keep people awake and interested.

**Problem One:** *Using too many words to state a point.*

Each sentence should be clear and **concise**.

**Bad Example:** "As I was mentioning yesterday when we met with, um, Anderson Industries about the takeover negotiation and, uh, proceeded to come up with an alternate, I told you I'd be getting back to you, and so let me introduce our findings by saying..."

**Good Example:** "Let me bring you up to date on our talks with Anderson Industries..."

**Solution:** To practice getting to the point, ask yourself an opinion question. Use a stopwatch and give yourself 45, then 30, then 20 seconds to give your answer.

**Problem Two:** *A generally dragging pace, including both words and pauses drawn out.* Audiences prefer an average rate of **180 words per minute** or even a little faster.

**Solution:** To pick up the pace, choose a passage from a magazine or book of about 180 words. Practice reading it aloud to see how close you can get to finishing it in one minute, but without sacrificing meaning or clarity.

**Problem Three:** *Lengthy or frequent pauses.* Pauses between sentences should not last longer than **two seconds** unless you're consciously pausing to let information sink in or dramatic effect.

**Solution:** Imagine your words pedaling the wheels of a bicycle. If you drop the pace too drastically, you'll fall over. Practice keeping up momentum with a story you know well and then again with a question that you're posing to yourself for the first time.

Adapted from Laurie Schloff and Marcia Yudkin. *Smart Speaking: Sixty-Second Strategies*, 1991.