



May is “Better Hearing and Speech Month”: Five Tips for Being Understood When You Speak

1. Tailor your message. Always have a clear objective and outcome in mind. Plan ahead and try to know your listeners. Factor in their needs and perspectives. If you are selling something, talk about the benefits. If you are persuading, support your arguments with points that your listeners can relate to.
2. Watch your language. Use a style that is appropriate to your audience and your message. When you speak, your sentences need to be shorter and less complex than when you write. In business, follow the grammatical features of Standard English. Variations from basic grammar stand out even more than pronunciation differences.
3. Let your voice carry your message. If you “aim” your voice at each and every one of your listeners, it will generally be loud enough. For large group presentations, a microphone is strongly recommended. Always make sure to vary the pitch of your voice. Effective speakers in English signal the key words in their sentences with rapid pitch changes.
4. Move with your speaking. In face-to-face communication, your facial expressions and body movements also carry affective meaning. Your smile, the tilt of your head, the movements of your hands and shoulders, your eye contact – they all serve to engage your listener and to help them hear the message. Time your movements with your speech so they won’t distract your listeners. You will both look and sound great.
5. Show and tell. Use visual support for your message. Your listeners will hear your message even better if they have something to see. Find a way to show your product or to illustrate the service you are discussing. Use real props, photographs, charts and PowerPoint presentations. Providing print materials leaves a lasting memory of your message.

Accent On Business founder and CEO Ellen Dunnigan is a nationally-recognized voice and speech coach for business professionals. She is specially trained in voice, speech, and English improvement. For more information or to schedule an interview or assessment with Dunnigan, call (317) 218-5111 or visit her website at <http://www.AccentOnBusiness.net>