

# SECTION 5.1

## POWER*talk* ITC Basics

# POWER*talk* ITC BASICS

**POWER*talk* ITC** is a training program designed for ITC with the purpose of offering a compact ‘Short Course’ for those demanding professional training in presentation skills in a limited time, with the added benefit of an assessment at the end of the course and a certificate for successful completion.

As such, the **POWER*talk* ITC** course may be presented by experienced ITC members:

- as a recruitment tool for new members;
- as a means of continued self-improvement for continuing members;
- as an extension of the training material provided in the Master Manual and on the ITC Website. ([www.powertalkinternational.com](http://www.powertalkinternational.com) see Resources);
- as individual educational slots and exercises in the standard club or council program agenda (see \*Projects Basics in the Master Manual).

The **POWER*talk* ITC** course is only available to fully paid-up ITC members.

- When the course is presented to non-members as a recruitment tool, the minimum cost for attendance of the course is the equivalent of the total of ITC dues at all levels. (The dues are then paid in at all levels, accompanied with new member details, as per a new club member.)
- Once the course has been completed, the attendees may be invited to attend ITC club, and other council and region meetings, for the remainder of the ITC year for the purpose of practising their newly gained skills, as they are then already paid up members. **The course may not be presented free of charge to nonmembers of ITC.**

The duration of the course will depend on the number of people attending. As participation is required in order to learn the skills, time should be provided for frequent individual participation in all aspects of the course.

If PowerTalk ITC is offered as a short course, (i.e. over two full days, or over six weeks once per week, or over six months, twice or three times per month) the presenter should ensure that the numbers of attendees and the frequency of the sessions are carefully balanced and allow sufficient time and opportunity for professional, full-participatory and thorough training on the part of both the trainer and trainee.

Upon completion of the course, Gold Certificate holders may assess and award certificates to the successful candidates.

Bronze, Silver and Gold Certificates are awarded.

# POWER*talk* ITC One

## The Course

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- b. How to get started
- c. Image and the eight techniques

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Notes for Successful Presentations

### a. Why do we speak?

When we speak, we aim to:

- inform;
- convince;
- persuade;
- entertain;
- stimulate;
- impress; and
- motivate

In order for communication to take place there needs to be a transmitter and a receiver, a speaker or presenter, and an audience. Both elements are essential in the communication process and a continuous interaction between the two elements needs to be maintained for the communication to be effective, for the presenter to be successful and for the audience to be satisfied.

**Course One** focuses on the presenter's physical delivery of the presentation, whilst **Course Two** focuses on the content of the speech or presentation, the audience and the environment in which the presentation is made.

### b. How to get started

If **POWERtalk ITC** is presented as part of a regular ITC Club meeting, or if it is presented as a short course, the following environment and procedures are recommended:

The room in which the **POWERtalk ITC** training is presented should:

- be spacious, airy and light;
- have school room seating, paper and pens for participants;
- have an open space at one end of the room with a movable lectern;
- if possible, have a video camera and monitor for viewing the videos; and
- when media, audio and visual tools are discussed, have all available for demonstration and use by the participants

The procedure:

- Each participant comes prepared with a short speech or presentation of about five minutes.
- If possible, at the first session, the speeches are recorded on video, during which time the presenter evaluates the speakers.

## ***1 Introduction: Notes for Successful Presentations continued...***

- The participants then watch a play-back of the video, discuss the presentations, and the Trainer evaluates. The question is asked: “Can we improve on even ‘very good’?”
- The recordings are kept until the last session, when the process is repeated and the recordings and evaluations compared.
- Each module covers enough material for a full session and should be allocated sufficient time for each participant to practise the techniques and exercises.
- The material offers ample opportunity for group discussions, experimentation and practical application.

**Practice makes perfect: The course is designed to provide practice.**

### **c. Image and the Eight Techniques**

**POWERtalk ITC One** covers the presenter’s physical delivery of the presentation.

Dr Albert Mehrabian states in research that he carried out, it was found that our voice produces 38% of the impact on an audience, our body language produces 55%, and our words, or the content of our presentation a mere 7% of the impact of a presentation or speech on an audience. Although we will argue that the content of a presentation is the most important aspect of the presentation, you have to consider these findings and remember that unless the content is presented or delivered in an effective way, it will most certainly not make the desired impression on the listener. It may fail altogether in the initial aim - that is to inform, stimulate, entertain, convince, motivate, persuade or impress.

It is a fact that positive body language and paralanguage (voice, stance, eyes), when pleasant and attractive and interesting to look at, will also increase the listening attention of the audience. Good presentation is of the utmost importance – people will decide whether they want to listen to you by how you look.

There are three main aspects that are important for a successful delivery:

- Image – to capture the listening of the audience
- Vocal effectiveness – to control listening of the audience
- Body language – the double slam – to hold the full attention of the audience up to the final word.

This forms the three-step approach to any presentation, speech or report. For a small audience, the first and the second steps will be adequate, but for a larger audience, all three steps need to be present for a successful presentation.

## *1 Introduction: Notes for Successful Presentations continued...*

Apart from a good image, the following eight techniques need to be mastered in order to be in control of our presentation and to communicate with confidence:

- pace;
- facial expression;
- pitch;
- hand gestures;
- projection;
- stance;
- pause; and
- eye contact.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGE

### a. Introduction

In Western culture, we shake hands when we are introduced. The name of the person we are meeting is given to us, but how often do we find we have not been able to retain the name? We think we have a bad memory.

It is reassuring to know that this situation occurs not because of bad memory but because we did not listen to the words spoken during the introduction. We only heard the name and hearing is the physical action of picking up sounds, not words. We did not listen because we were so busy studying the person we were greeting on a visual basis.

Our opinion of that person is supposedly formed in the first 5 seconds of meeting them and this opinion is based entirely on what we see. Hence the image can make or break an encounter, a presentation, a meeting, or negotiation.

***The image can create barriers or break down barriers. It is for us to decide how best to go about deciding what is the correct image for a specific function or meeting. And please do not expect everyone to agree with everyone else!***

It may be considered wrong to judge people by how they look but the fact is that we do.

Three criteria spring to mind when considering the image:

- What do you as a person enjoy wearing?
- What image does your audience expect?
- Does the organization that you work for or represent, or hope to represent, have a dress code that you are expected to follow? And, one could add a fourth:
- Cultural differences – the need for consideration of all peoples at all times

**Presence attracts respect  
Respect attracts listening**

***Exercise: Group discusses different views, cultures and customs***

***\*Cross Reference: The Five-Second Opinion: Criteria by which we judge- see 2b. pg 8***

**The three-step approach to capturing the listening of the audience**

Approach the lectern, the stage or the front of the room with confidence, head held high, shoulders back, firm steps and a smile on your face. Stand facing the audience.

**Step 1.** Say NOTHING.  
Smile at your audience – for at least three full seconds (This not only allows the audience to go through the process of visual evaluation of you, the presenter, but is also a powerful technique for actually drawing in the initial listening)

**Step 2.** Then capture the listening of the audience by using your greeting in a specific way. Rather than saying the usual – “*Good morning ladies and gentlemen*”, to which very few people generally respond – turn the greeting around – “*Ladies and gentlemen... Good morning!*” and allow a slight inflection of the voice at the end. Pause, and breathe between the two halves of the greeting. This is a simple technique to get a response from the audience and to know that they are listening. It also breaks the ice and make the presenter and audience more comfortable with each other.

***Exercise: Allow each participant to practise this and discover the effect.***

**Step 3.** You now need an attention-grabbing comment to ensure that members of the audience are giving you their undivided attention.

Try one of the following:

- An authoritative quotation, e.g. “Winston Churchill said”... The quotation should preferably be by someone known to the audience or be a famous quotation in itself.
- A rhetorical question. “How do you feel about...?”
- A declarative statement or a punchy one liner; avoid turning it into a longer descriptive statement.
- Give a scenario – creating in people’s minds a picture... This opening usually begins with the words like “Imagine...” or “Picture.....”. This is not a story, merely a caption.
- An anecdote – a very short mini-story that should have a beginning, middle and an end, and should be amusing, interesting and biographical
- Do not start with a joke -it may fail and cause the failure of your entire presentation. Later in the presentation a carefully selected joke may be used, but to be safe and considerate of others, direct the humor towards yourself.

***Exercise: Let each participant practise the three steps and discuss them.***

## 2: The Importance of Image continued...

### b. The Five-second Opinion : Criteria by which we judge\*

***“Doth clothes maketh the man?”***

These days much is written about acceptance of different customs and dress codes, and at the same time more people are choosing to wear traditional dress rather than following Western dress codes.

However, just as the audience has to consider and respect the traditions or customs of the presenter, so the presenter has to consider and respect the audience. It is, after all, the presenter who wishes to achieve an objective with the audience, the transmitter wishing to reach and sway the receiver.

***At all times clothes need to be smart, clean and neat as well as appropriate for the audience that is being addressed. Remember also the organization you represent. What the audience sees is not just your image but also that of your firm or company.***

***Exercise: Group discussion on what is expected and acceptable.***

***Exercise: Discuss which attire is best for which occasion and how participants feel about having to conform at times.***

### c. Distractions and Recommendations

When deciding on what to wear for a presentation, you have to consider the audience, the occasion, the environment, the lighting, the temperature and comfort. Take great care to ensure that no item of clothing – or of your personal appearance - may cause the audience to be distracted from your purpose, content of your message.

A beard, a spotted tie, a neckline that is too low, a skirt or trousers that are too short or a ‘strange’ hairstyle (especially longer hair that needs pushing back), may distract the audience to the extent that they do not listen to what you have to say. Once distracted, it is very difficult to concentrate on a speaker’s presentation.

For people who wear glasses, it is a common habit to constantly put them on and take them off, as and when required, for reading of notes. A recommendation is to make something of the fact that you are wearing glasses rather than trying to hide it and to make sure that there is no reflection on the lenses. They may need a non-reflective coating – an investment that will pay good dividends.

## 2: The Importance of Image continued...

***Exercise: Look at the following list and discuss which of these aspects of a presenter's image could cause distractions, and what can be done to avoid this.***

Spectacles	Hair
Beards and moustaches	Jackets on – jackets off
Ties and scarves	Shoes – color and smartness
Clothes clean and pressed	Hands in pockets
Correct sizing of clothes	Jewellery
Shirt colors	Skirt length
Shirt sleeve length	Make-up
Color of socks	Tights/stockings versus bare legs
Neckline	Color co-ordinated clothes
Visible undergarments	Perfume or aftershave
Trouser length	Nail varnish

***Exercise: List any other items of clothing or personal appearance that can be regarded as important when presenting to an audience.***

***Exercise: Discuss different audiences that would require different dress codes, for example: formal, informal, adult, children, teenagers, professionals. Include television, personal appearances, different sizes of audiences.***

***Exercise: Discuss the effect of “Dress Down Day”.***

### d. Effective Impression Management

There are a few simple keys to effective impression management:

- being consistent;
- dressing appropriately;
- meeting expectations;
- creating harmony;
- creating focal points and optical illusions;
- organising and planning your wardrobe;
- grooming;
- optimising expenditure;
- being up-to-date; and
- being yourself.

## 2: The Importance of Image continued...

***Exercise: Discuss how one can capitalise on the above to get the best from any situation.***

### e. The Ideal and the Reality

Is there any difference between the image you create and the image you would like to create, and if so what is that difference?

***Exercise: Discuss the difference between the 'ideal' and the 'reality', in yourself and in general.***

***Exercise: Discuss peer pressure amongst children, teenagers, adults.***

***Exercise: Discuss how aware people are of the way other people look.***

***Exercise: Discuss what you consider a professional image consists of and how you would recognize it in others.***

***Exercise: Discuss what is generally admired in the way other people look.***

***Exercise: Discuss "dress-down days" and how this affects the image of people at different levels of authority and/or management.***

Ask the question of each participant, and discuss:

***"How would you define your own image?"***

- casual
- smart
- stylish
- trendy
- sporty
- professional
- classic

Now ask the rest of the group whether they agree with the self-assessments.

## 3. VOCAL EFFECTIVENESS

### a. Introduction

Once the presenter has captured the attention of the audience with a strong positive image, the aim is to control the audience's attention by means of an effective voice.

An attractive voice is a definite asset to any speaker. One of the most difficult problems, however, is to develop a voice that is easily and clearly heard. Speeches and presentations, no matter how well prepared, may be ruined with unattractive voice delivery. Audiences tend to respond negatively to a speaker whose voice is nasal, indistinct, breathy, throaty, too high, monotonous, dull or lifeless. In the educational environment, a voice needs to be put on 'automatic' and perform at its own potential best – too many other things need attention for the voice to be considered as well: - it needs to be an asset, not a stumbling block.

Let your audience hear a well-modulated, flexible voice. As you enjoy speaking, they will enjoy you too.

A good voice can be developed.

- First, determine weaknesses, then provide regular practice using specific exercises to eliminate flaws and improve strengths. Voice training is essential. Regular exercises, daily warm-up exercises and meticulous voice hygiene needs to form part of a healthy lifestyle.
- Reading aloud is excellent training for improving diction and building contrast in rate, volume, and pitch. Include readings of prose and/or poetry in club assignments.
- Use a tape recorder as you read, then play it back, in order to hear exactly how you sound. A tape recorder is a most useful tool in recognising how you sound to others. Or, ask a friend to listen to your voice and give you an honest evaluation of your vocal effectiveness.

Determine what kind of a voice you have. Is it resonant, musical, and easy to listen to? Or is it harsh, monotonous, or tiresome? You make your voice what you want it to be, if you are willing to work at it. Every time you present a talk, you involve your mind, your body and your voice in communicating the message to your listeners.

***The primary link between you and your audience is your voice.***

Everyone has the potential for an effective speaking voice -the exception being in the case of a person having a disability or injury. The first step in building a better speaking voice is awareness. We should work to develop a voice that is pleasant to the ear and displays a variety of sounds.

**b. The importance of vocal effectiveness**

Psychologist Albert Mehrabian states that we are five times as likely to be influenced by voice than by spoken words as we listen to a speaker. Thus, we are more influenced by how a speaker talks than by what a speaker says. A good speaking voice is loud enough to be heard, clear enough to be understood, expressive enough to be interesting, and pleasing enough to be enjoyable.

*Exercise: Make a list of a number of well-known personalities, actors, politicians and public figures and compare their voices and the effect on the listener. (Examples: Margaret Thatcher, Adolf Hitler, Martin Luther King.)*

In order to improve tonal quality it is necessary to first understand the ‘Engine Room’ of the voice; the very simple basics of where the voice comes from and which parts of the body play a part in the production of an effective voice.

The Engine Room comprises the entire top half of the body – from the top of the head right down to the diaphragm, including:

- the head with all the facial cavities, the mouth, the tongue, the epiglottis;
- the vocal folds;
- the trachea;
- the lungs;
- the ribs and intercostal muscles (muscles between the ribs); and
- the diaphragm.

The production of the voice depends on the vibrations or resonance that take place in the cranial cavities, the balance between the CT (cricothyroid) and the TA (thyroarytenoid) muscles, the closing and opening of the vocal folds or chords, the number of the vocal folds that vibrate and the shape of the vocal tract..

The way to be aware of what exactly is in play when the voice is used to full effect, is to take a deep breath, holding the top of the head as if pulling it up, filling the lungs from the bottom, at the diaphragm, shoulders relaxed. On an ‘mmmmmm’, let the breath out slowly, supporting the lungs, concentrating where the air is coming from and going to, feeling the muscles come into play. This is some of what you should experience:

1. **Inspiration:** the abdominal muscles and internal intercostals (rib muscles) relax and the external intercostals contract to fully expand the ribcage. The diaphragm contracts and descends, which also enlarges the lung space.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

2. **Expiration:** First phase: since the ribcage has expanded more than when it is at rest, it will relax back to its rest position if no muscular effort is keeping it expanded. This is called elastic recoil. The pressure from the recoil is all that is needed to start the outward airflow. If an especially deep breath is taken, the pressure from the recoil will be greater than desired and the air pressure will need to be restrained somewhat by continued contraction of the diaphragm.
3. **Expiration:** Second Phase: The last of the elastic recoil is used up in this phase, aided by the contraction of the internal intercostals. These pressures shrink the ribcage, adding to the lung pressure.
4. **Expiration:** Third Phase: The abdominal muscles are used to provide the last bit of lung pressure possible.

*Exercise: Repeat a resonance exercise to make sure that every part of the 'engine room' is used in the process of voice production – feel the vibrations in every cavity! Repeat 10 times each of the following:            'Ni'            'nay'            'nyar'*

*Exercise: Let each participant put their hands on various parts of their bodies while breathing in and out and report on where and how they feel the various muscles contracting and expanding.*

#### c. Pace

There are generally three speeds at which people speak, namely slow, medium and fast.

If we use only one pace, the listener will become bored and lose interest and/or concentration. It is therefore important for the speaker to use each of the three paces because variation of pace holds the attention of the audience.

The three speeds:     **1st:** a fairly steady pace to allow the audience to pick up on the subject matter  
                              **2nd:** a slightly faster pace - creates motivation, enthusiasm, activates body language and generally appears and sounds more animated  
                              **3rd:** the most powerful speed – speaking word for word, spaced out, and each word strongly emphasised.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

This technique, which will hold the attention of the audience extremely well, can be applied to each sentence or phrase the speaker uses, repeating the pattern

1/2/3/1/2/3/1/2/3:

**Start the sentence at a fairly steady pace,  
speak-a-little-faster,  
end -- very -- slow -- and -- measured.**

This is probably the most powerful tool with which to control the attention of the audience, but also the hardest technique to master. Do take care though as repetitive variation can be as bad as no variation; it lulls the audience to sleep.

*Exercise: Take any piece of prose and practise reading each sentence using the three speeds. Repeat until it becomes easier and almost natural.*

#### Slowing down the Pace

It is a common problem for speakers, when nervous or lacking in confidence, to speed up the speech to a pace that is difficult to follow or keep up with.

When speaking too quickly is your problem, use the following techniques to slow yourself down:

- Practise longer pauses: count one two for a comma, one two three between sentences, one two three at a semi-colon and count one two three four between paragraphs.
- Use stronger emphasis on certain words on each sentence, but avoid mere volume emphasis.
- Try reading a long poem with a lot of inflection and tonal variety as well as pauses.
- Practise the injection technique: Choose any word, and use it between each two words in the following sentences. Then remove the word and read the sentences again.
  - He rode to the village for help
  - You look as though you have just seen a leprechaun with a mouthful of seaweed.
  - Buy bread, buns, butter and bacon for breakfast

#### d. Pitch

The speaker will get a far better response from the audience when the movement of the voice is increased. Use an inflection offering a looping movement from, the lower part of the voice band to the higher part of the voice band. Used well, this becomes a very strong persuading technique.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

#### **Finding your best potential voice band and achieving good inflection:**

With an open throat, say “ho ho ho – ha ha ha – hee hee hee”. Start as low as your voice will go on the “ho ho ho” and end high on the “hee hee hee”.

Now speak and listen to which level your voice naturally returns.

***Exercise: Work in groups of two and let the partners listen in turns to each other’s voices to decide which level the voices are at. Let each person define where their lowest voice band is and practise speaking maintaining, and always returning, to that level.***

***Exercise: Discuss the effect of a voice which stays in the higher voice band (difficult to listen to, irritating, does not demand respect) as opposed to a voice in the lower voice band (authoritative, demands respect, credible, soothing to the ear). A voice that stays in the middle voice band only becomes monotone and boring.***

***Exercise: Take several nursery rhymes and ask each participant to read a nursery rhyme using different emotions, adding feeling and expression, for instance:***

- ***read Jack and Jill in a very angry tone,***
- ***read Little Miss Muffet in a very excited tone,***
- ***read Twinkle Twinkle Little Star in a very sad tone,***
- ***read The Grand Old Duke of York using a different tone - angry, sad, excited for each line.***
- ***The result is that the voice has to loop up and down and the participants will be surprised to hear the difference in their vocal pitch and variety.***

#### **e. Inflection and Vocal Variety**

A good speaking voice should be balanced between extremes of volume, pitch and pace, while having a pleasing sound quality. Speaking at one level not only sounds monotonous, but strains the vocal chords and tires the voice.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

- **Volume.** Some people habitually speak loudly. Perhaps their parents talked this way, or they may have an assertive nature. Such people should make a special effort to speak more quietly. At the other extreme are people who can barely be heard. They need to concentrate on projecting their voices. In any case, you should vary your vocal volume to add emphasis or dramatic impact to your speeches.
- **Pitch.** Good speakers vary the pitch of their voices to convey emotion and conviction. Avoid high pitches because they suggest immaturity and excitability. The best approach is to be conversational in your speaking.
- **Pace.** The most effective speaking rate falls into the range of 125 – 160 words a minute. You can easily keep within this range by speaking rapidly enough to avoid a boring drone, yet slowly enough to be clearly understood. Vary your speaking rate during your talk to reflect mood changes and to emphasize points of the speech.
- **Quality.** The most important recommendation for voice quality is to relax your throat while you speak. Try to convey friendliness, confidence, and a desire to communicate. Relax, eliminating any tension from your voice. A pleasing tonal quality will usually follow.

By applying the above principles to your speech you'll find that a good speaking voice generally has the following characteristics:

- The tone is pleasant, conveying a sense of friendliness.
- It is natural, reflecting the true personality and sincerity of the speaker.
- It has vitality, giving the impression of force and strength, even when it isn't especially loud.
- It portrays various shades of meaning, never sounding monotonous and emotionless.
- It is easily heard, thanks to proper volume and clear articulation.

You can train your own voice to excel in all of these qualities if you listen closely to the way you speak and concentrate on improvement.

Begin by experimenting with a few short passages to discover the meanings you can project using different vocal values. Read these passages aloud and create others using a tone of voice appropriate to each passage:

- ***“I appreciate the kindness you have shown me, and I hope to return the favour when I can.” (Simple, honest statement, or perhaps sarcasm.)***
- ***“Kindness! Do you call that kindness? I wouldn't treat a stray dog the way you've treated me!” (Resentment, anger, unfriendliness.)***
- ***“If we all show a little kindness, a little concern for others' needs as well as our own, we can help make the world what it should be.” (Deep feeling of earnestness and conviction.)***

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

Notice how your tone and effect vary with the different thoughts you express. See how easy it is to change the meaning by changing your emphasis.

***Exercise: Construct an imaginary telephone conversation replying only with the word “YES”. The pitch and inflection in your voice should be so varied that your group can tell what has been said at the other end of the telephone. Try this now with “NO”. Reply to an imaginary caller at the door who is enquiring for someone who is not there. He is bringing astonishing news.***

***Exercise: As another experiment, call a friend on the telephone and talk for several minutes on some topic of mutual interest. Vary your tone of voice as well as your rate, pitch, and volume. Use pauses to emphasise a point or arouse interest in what you will say next. At the same time, keep your vocal experimentation within the context of a normal conversation.***

***Exercise: Choose a subject that lends itself easily to voice variety, to read aloud such as a children’s fairy tale. Something of a narrative or descriptive nature would be good, as would be a topic requiring a display of emotion. Another idea is to select a subject that enables you to quote or imitate different tones of voice or manners of speaking, e.g. an excerpt from a play with a variety of characters.***

Find a place where you can be alone, so you can speak without inhibitions or interruptions. Bring your voice out of the common, monotonous routine by varying the pitch, volume, and quality. Work especially on varying the delivery rate. Speak clearly and project your voice.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

#### **More Exercises**

**“I like red apples”** – read this as if you were:

- *You.*
- *Very, very old.*
- *Very, very young.*
- *Far away.*
- *Not very fond of apples.*
- *Really fond of apples.*
- *Being sarcastic.*
- *Stealing apples.*
- *Caught by the owner.*

Say **“Good Morning”** to mean:

- *A grudging acknowledgement.*
- *A surprise to find someone about so early.*
- *A perfunctory task or duty.*
- *A greeting from habit, without feeling.*
- *A preoccupied greeting, mind deeply engrossed elsewhere.*
- *Great pleasure at the greeting.*

**“I have told you a hundred times, and the answer is still the same.”**

*(This exercise is for projection as well as inflection)*

- *Make this statement a straightforward assertion, using explosive form.*
- *Speak it explosively as though uncontrollably angry.*
- *Speak as with deep but controlled emotion, applying the force gradually.*

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

*Now try and give meaning to this nonsense paragraph through use of inflection, projection, pause and pace. Add facial expressions and hand gestures as well:*

***One day a Speek orgled into a floom. In the center of the floom was a very gracious Grannyflax. Everyone knows that Speeks greeble Grannyflaxes, though Grannyflaxes never foobar Speeks! This Grannyflax was niffy and rather kloobful. It spangled the spale of the Speek and flebbed it stilefully. But while the Grannyflax was fleebing its spale, the Speek baffled the Grannyflax on the boobin and rabbled away.***

*Try the following:*

*Say the same sentence then add the different insinuations*

- *“I thought you were going home today”.*
- *I certainly thought you were.*
- *I wasn't sure.*
- *But that your friend was staying.*
- *I thought it was quite settled.*
- *Not to your office.*
- *Not tomorrow.*

#### f. Projection

**One of the most important, but also most difficult techniques to teach, is the projection of the voice. It is no good when your content and presentation is perfect in every sense, but the audience cannot hear what you are saying.**

**Poor projection** causes fidgeting and yawning that soon spreads through the entire audience.

In teaching how to project, speakers are told to “think their voice to the back wall of the room”, or “visualise their voice bouncing off the back walls”, but for many people this is a difficult concept to grasp. It is therefore best to see what happens when we “think” or “visualise” our voice travelling to the back of the room.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

The secret of good projection is good breathing – the more breath we use to carry our voice, the further it will travel.

To breathe correctly, we have to:

- keep the shoulders down and relaxed;
- place both hands facing inward, fingertips lightly touching, on the ribcage; and
- breathe in deeply, feeling the hands moving away from each other as the lungs fill with air.

Do not tilt the head back as this pinches the vocal chords!

If you do not breathe correctly, you will run out of breath before the end of each sentence. This causes the voice to trail off at the end of the sentence making it difficult for the audience to follow what you are saying.

#### *Exercises*

**It is important that the posture is upright if you want to present and project well. It is best to stand while presenting, but if the occasion calls for you to be in a sitting position, sit up straight with both feet flat on the floor in order to open up the organs for breathing correctly.**

#### *Exercises:*

- *Pull in the abdominal wall, expand your rib cage, fill your lungs with as much air as they will hold then let the air out in one long “Ah.”*
- *Try a staccato “Ah” as many times as possible on one breath, with a small, rapid, firm contraction on each “Ah” and a gradual contraction throughout the breath.*
- *Count 1 and 2 and – up to 5. Project your voice on the number and pull in on the word and.*
- *Inhale deeply but quickly. Release the breath explosively with a quick contraction of the abdominal muscles as you say, “Halt! Who goes there?” Avoid tightening the throat and forcing out a shrill shout. Let the breath do the work.*
- *Whisper “Hi.” Drop the jaw, open the throat and pull the chin low. Repeat 7 times.*

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

Keep an open throat – smile at the beginning as it relaxes the face muscles and opens the throat. If you do not have an open throat your voice will appear to be much quieter. Relax the throat. We must have an open throat so that the sound will come out freely and strongly. To relax the throat try the following exercises:

- Put the back of your fingers against your throat and say “zzz.” Notice the vibration. Now say “sss.” You will feel no vibration. With your fingers still on your Adam’s apple, read a sentence. If your throat is free, you should feel the same buzz you felt on “zzz.”
- Yawn, stretch, let the throat open wide as you relax and complete the yawn with a vocalised “Ah-h-h.”
- With a relaxed throat, repeat the letters of the alphabet.
- Now try whispering – first on the vowel sounds, then counting, then with the alphabet. Graduate to short sentences, still keeping that open throat and taking it easy.

#### g. Posture

- Good posture is the basis of correct breathing and voice control.
- Stand tall, shoulders back, chest up, diaphragm up and in, bottom tucked under and feet planted firmly on the floor.

#### h. Pause

In general conversation, when someone pauses in speech, someone else will whip in with a comment. We become so worried that we will lose our speaking time that, to hold on to our opportunity to speak, we tend to fill the space that should be a pause by the use of *ums* and *errs* and filler words.

In a speech or presentation, it is necessary to eliminate these; otherwise we may sound as if we do not know our subject.

In addition, when you emphasise the filler words listed below, you will find the emphasis that **should** be used on the words following the filler words will disappear making your message less important. Fillers also use up the available breath and leave too little breath for the important words

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

The main filler words that we use are:

*So...well ...right...now ...ok*

Other filler words include *like* and *you know....*

Then we move on to *actually, basically* etc.

Look at the list below and see how many you use yourself:

Err	Realistically
Errum	Then again
Basically	No problem
Obviously	No worries
Yeah	For sure
OK	Thingy
Ahm	Wotsit
Actually	What do you reckon?
You know	Do you understand?
Then again	In all fairness
Frankly	Do you know what I mean?
Are you with me?	To be fair
In other words	To be honest
I mean	To be truthful
So	It'll come to me in minute
Sort of	Hang on
Anyway	At the end of the day
Well let's just say that	To bring you up to speed

**How do we remove the fillers? Firstly, listen to yourself as you speak, recognize the use of your particular selection. As you become more aware of the use of fillers, consciously go for a blank space rather than for a word you don't need.**

***Exercise: Practise rewinding and repeating a short introduction to yourself and your business, removing all fillers.***

Once you have identified the filler words, it is important to learn to use silence in their place. A well-placed pause can be one of the most powerful and versatile tools in effective communication. A pause gives both the speaker and the audience time to reflect, understand and digest.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

Pauses may be used for effect, to emphasise, to change a train of thought, or to change the pace, but they are essential:

- after the opening of the speech;
- between strong statements;
- after a rhetorical question; and
- before the conclusion

The length of the pause can vary. The rule of thumb is:

a stop	one count
a comma	two counts
a semi-colon	three counts
a paragraph	four counts

*Exercise: Take children's books and give each participant a story to read with as much animation as possible, concentrating especially on very long pauses for dramatic effect.*

*Exercise: Read the following sentences using a significant pause (or pauses) and compound inflection in each one to bring out the following points:*

**Sarcasm:**

What a strange hat, do you suppose everyone else will be wearing similar attire?

**Tragedy:**

"You believed me dead. Now I know that the dead must return."

**Embarrassment:**

"I'm sorry, it was silly of me, I shouldn't have said it."

**Bewilderment:**

"Do you mean to say you planned it?"

**Tension:**

"Listen! – he's gone in now – he's turning the key – oh help they've seen him!"

**Anxiety:**

"Doctor, do tell me, is he alive?"

**Incredulity:**

"But Adrian, it can't be true, have they granted a reprieve?"

**Suspicion:**

"I should lock it up if I were you, Michael. Did you know we were followed all the way?"

**i. Exercises, Breathing and Vocal Care**

**Warm up exercises for the voice:**

- The best warm up exercise for the voice before practising changing the pitch, is to make the noise of a siren (ambulance or police siren), on the sound of -ng- in the back of the throat, as if through the nose but with the mouth open. Start on a note and go up as high as you can, then down as low as you can. Start again on a higher note this time. Then go down the scale again.
- Sing up and down the scale: Hum or sing on 'ah'.
- Experiment starting as low as possible and going as high as you can.
- Using the following pairs of words, aim for a variety of pitch:

**High**

ping  
ding  
high  
hill  
mountains  
sky  
hissed  
jump  
up  
light  
white  
treble  
happy  
soft  
top  
air  
comedy  
fun  
holiday  
delight  
tip  
smooth  
tinkled  
excited

**Low**

pong  
dong  
low  
valley  
plains  
sea  
droned  
dive  
down  
dark  
black  
bass  
depressed  
hard  
bottom  
ground  
tragedy  
work  
school  
sorrow  
base  
rough  
crashed  
bored

### **Exercises for the Jaw, Lips and Tongue.**

- Jaw**
- It is important to keep the jaw relaxed. Put your finger on the points of the jaw beneath the ears. Drop jaw slightly. Don't push it down. Imagine you are eating, but keep lips closed.
  - Drop your head forward as if you were almost asleep. Then gradually begin to shake the head, using the muscles in the back of your neck. Increase the shaking until the jaw wobbles.
  - Move the jaw up and down as far as you can for 10 seconds.
  - Yawn and feel the muscles pull. Then move the jaw slowly from left to right.

- Lips**
- In speech, keep the lips relaxed and flexible. Avoid rigidity.
  - Without breath repeat "ee, oo" five times. Reverse. Do the same with "ah, oo." Let the lips do most of the work with the teeth closing as little as possible.
  - Say quickly, "Peter, polar, pillar, pallor, paler, puller."
  - Purse the lips – then sharply open the mouth as wide as you can and bring the lips back together again sharply. Repeat 5 times.
  - Purse the lips and blow through them for 20 seconds.
  - Twist the mouth alternately to the left and right. Repeat 5 times.
  - Stretch the mouth in as wide a grin as possible. Then pucker the lips. Alternate this procedure. Feel the pull in the lips.

### **Tongue**

- Keep the tongue well forward, lightly touching the inside of the teeth and actively ready for use.
- Drop the jaw and flick the tongue lightly and quickly from side to side, up and down.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

- Sing or say “La la la.”
- Push the tongue out of the mouth and let it spring back.
- Bunch the tongue out of the mouth by pressing the tip against the upper teeth. Do the same pressing against the lower teeth.
- Touch the soft palate with the tip of the tongue. Then make the tongue stand on each of its sides in turn.
- Open the mouth wide. Press the tongue firmly against the upper teeth, the gum, the ridge and the roof of the mouth. Repeat until you can greatly increase the pressure.

#### ***Breathing Exercises.***

All these exercises should be done while breathing in the correct way, i.e. from the diaphragm upwards, visualising the entire chest cavity filling up with air from the bottom up. Shoulders should be relaxed and not lifted. There should be a visible expansion of the chest area.

You may find that you feel dizzy at first, as your system is not used to receiving this much oxygen. Breathe ‘normally’ for a few minutes and start again with the ‘correct breathing’ exercise. Repeat the exercises daily until the ‘correct breathing’ becomes your ‘normal breathing’. Lie flat on your back on the floor. Place a large book on your abdomen. Breathe in and the book should rise up, breathe out slowly and the book descends. Repeat 8 times.

- Stand up straight with your back against the wall. Place your hands on your abdomen palms inward with fingertips touching. Breathe in, pressing your abdomen gently with your hands. The fingers should separate. Repeat and observe the distance between your fingertips. This should increase with practise.
- Fill your lungs with air and exhale on -s-. Time yourself and try to keep going longer every time.
- Fill your lungs and exhale on -t-t-t- or -p-p-p-. You will find you can continue for a shorter period that when you exhale on -s-.
- Fill your lungs and count while exhaling. Try to get to a higher count each time you do this.
- Breathe in to the count of 4. Breathe out, hands on hips and count out loud as high as you can. Set yourself goals to increase the length of your expelling of breath each day.

Note: you must force out the air from your lungs even by bending down, or double, as an aid to do this.

- Read Jellie Cats and aim to get further each time with one breath. (The numbers at the end of the lines tell you how many words you manage on one breath) Start putting feeling into the reading and see the difference.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

*Jellicle cats are black and white (6)*  
*Jellicle cats are rather small (11)*  
*Jellicle cats are merry and bright (17)*  
*And pleasant to hear when we caterwaul (24)*  
*Jellicle cats have cheerful faces (29)*  
*Jellicle cats have bright black eyes (35)*  
*We like to practise our airs and graces (43)*  
*And wait for the Jellicle moon to rise (50)*

It soon becomes clear that unless we are completely relaxed, we cannot achieve very much with our voices. When we are tense, muscles contract and cannot expand, we cannot let sufficient air into our lungs, and without air, there is no voice. The vocal chords become constricted and strained and the voice tense and forced. By the end of the course you should be able to reach the end of this poem quite comfortably with the appropriate expression.

#### ***Relaxing Exercises.***

- Stretch: Stand with feet slightly apart, rise onto toes, tightening the leg muscles, knees and abdominal muscles. Reach for the ceiling with your arms, stretch your fingers, head back. Mime climbing to the ceiling. Relax the muscles, drop arms. Repeat.
- Relax your neck and shoulder muscles: Hold your head erect. Now concentrate on letting your neck muscles relax until your head falls forward on your chest. Rotate your head slowly towards the right shoulder, then to the back, to the left shoulder and to the front again, letting it fall of its own weight. Repeat.
- Roll shoulders forward and backward. Lift shoulders and drop. Hold hands behind back and lift your arms as far as you can.
- Breathe to relax. Breathe in for two counts; hold your breath for two counts. Increase up to four counts – not more.
- Breathe in, filling your entire lung capacity, and breathe out on -s-. Use those muscles!
- Breathe in, as above, and breathe out on -t-t-t-.

#### **The following are guidelines and information for the ‘professional voice-user’**

#### **Abuse and Misuse**

##### **Abuse of the voice**

This can be an isolated incident causing trauma to the laryngeal tissue (voice box) e.g. shouting at a football match, in a pub or at a disco.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

#### **Misuse of the voice**

This is a long-term pattern of damaging vocal habits, caused by:

- faulty breathing;
- talking on residual air;
- throat clearing;
- coughing;
- talking incessantly;
- drinking very hot liquids;
- eating very spicy foods and curries;
- excessive seasoning;
- drinking spirits;
- hard vocal attack;
- talking loudly;
- smoking;
- cough lozenges;
- posture;
- sporting activities;
- weight lifting;
- playing wind instruments;
- heartburn, indigestion;
- coca cola, chocolate;
- ageing;
- constant use of the Walkman;
- allergies and colds;
- drugs e.g. Aspirin, antihistamines, diuretics;
- hydration levels;
- clenched teeth; and
- fear or stage fright.

**Do not panic – in ‘moderation’ any of the above are acceptable!**

**Or due to external influences and lifestyles such as:**

- background noise;
- dust;
- chalk;
- dry atmosphere;
- smoky atmosphere;
- personality;
- familiar patterns of behaviour;
- heavy responsibilities;
- work and home relationships; or
- competitive atmosphere.
- There are many more --- these are just some of which you should be aware.

### 3: Vocal Effectiveness continued...

#### **In order for the voice to fulfil its greatest potential, you should:**

- establish good vocal hygiene;
- monitor your voice;
- guard against over-use of the voice;
- stand up for your voice; and
- use aids and amplifiers when necessary after training.

#### **Health and hygiene of your voice:**

- Regularly gargle with saline (salt water) to keep infection at bay.
- Hydration (moisture) is essential in the air. If there is a problem with your vocal chords keep bowls of water in rooms or wet towels on the radiators.
- Drink lots of liquid i.e. water, fruit juice, milk-less tea/coffee. The best juice to drink plenty of is pineapple juice, which is excellent for the throat, will keep the voice healthy and contains Vitamin C to prevent colds as well.
- Dairy products may affect the vocal chords.
- Lubrication - honey pastilles, barley sugar
- Drink honey and lemon mixture: juice of 1 lemon, 1 or 2 teaspoonfuls of honey, dissolve in a pint of water, sip slowly throughout the day.
- Sore, painful throat - gargle with saline, gargle with soluble aspirin/ dispirin.
- Cold - the above, plus a pharmacy prescribed inhalation and lozenges
- Laryngitis - complete vocal rest for at least 48 hours. Speak only on the breath flow.

***Exercises and suggestions for the program: Practise effective voice production.***

- 1. Each participant to present a speech using all effective voice techniques learned in the course.***
- 2. Evaluation: Check for breathing, relaxed posture, pitch, pace, voice register, vocal variety, projection, volume, subject choice and suitability.***
- 3. Make flash cards with words 'Eye Contact', 'Slow Down', 'Pitch', 'Project', 'Breathe', 'Facial Expression', 'Pause', 'Hand Gestures' and let members of the audience hold them up when the speaker needs reminding.***

## 4. BODY LANGUAGE AND GESTURES

### A. Introduction

Body Language is a broad term for non-verbal language that is used between two or more people whilst communicating. It includes body movements and gestures, and even the most subtle movements that most of us are not aware we are using, such as dilation of the pupils, reddening of the cheeks and a slight increase in the pace of our breathing.

**In other words, body language is unspoken communication.**

Dr Albert Mehrabin stated that:

- *7% of the impact a speaker makes on the audience is created by the words the speaker uses;*
- *38% of the impact is created by paralanguage, or the tone of voice; and*
- *55% of the impact is created by the positive body language the speaker uses.*

**Up to 93% of our message is therefore communicated through our body language, while only 7-10% is attributable to the actual words of a conversation. Keeping that in mind, we should pay considerable attention to what our non-verbal communication is saying.**

Body Language can tell you the speaker's true feelings towards you and/or the content of his/her message, as well as how well the speaker's words are being received. Your ability to read, understand and 'speak' body language can mean the difference between making a great impression or a very bad one. It could help you in that job interview, getting that large sponsorship, booking that speaker for your conference – or to deliver the best presentation or speech of your life.

Just as we use body language subconsciously, so our subconscious picks up the signals others send out. If we are perceptive, we can very quickly pick up if a speaker is being sincere or not by whether the words and the gestures match. Whenever there is a conflict between the words that a speaker says and their body signals and movements, we will almost always believe their body language rather than the spoken language.

It is, however, very important to remember that just as not all people speak the same language; body language can also vary in interpretation according to your culture. Be aware that you do not judge too quickly what someone's body language is telling you before you have made sure that you both do in fact 'speak the same body language'. For instance, in most Western cultures open raised palms mean openness, innocence and transparency, whereas in the Mid-Eastern cultures people would never show their palms but always turn the hands to face downwards.

#### ***4: Body Language and Gestures continued...***

In most Western cultures eye contact is considered to be very important to show sincerity and honesty, whereas in most African cultures making direct eye contact is considered to be the ultimate insolence and rudeness. By the same token, there are no hard and fast rules. For example, crossed arms are generally interpreted as a defensive posture, but it could also mean that the person is feeling fear or insecurity – or it could simply mean that the person is cold! Three completely different meanings for the same gesture - so always be very careful when ‘reading’ body language!

**For our purposes, we will not try to cover the entire subject but only discuss and study the generally accepted body language in western culture and that which we use in our presentations and speeches. In other words, mainly when in a standing position in front of an audience – and yes, body language can be learned.**

#### **Examples of generally accepted body language in Western Cultures**

NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR	INTERPRETATION
Brisk, erect walk	Confidence
Standing with hands on hips	Readiness, aggression
Sitting with legs crossed, foot kicking slightly	Boredom
Sitting, legs apart	Open, relaxed
Arms crossed on chest	Defensiveness
Walking with hands in pockets, shoulders hunched	Dejection
Hand to cheek	Evaluation, thinking
Touching or slightly rubbing nose	Rejection, doubt, lying
Rubbing the eye	Doubt, disbelief
Hands clasped behind back	Anger, frustration, apprehension

**4: Body Language and Gestures continued...**

Locked ankles	Apprehension
Head resting in hand, eyes downcast	Boredom
Rubbing hands	Anticipation
Sitting with hands clasped behind head, legs crossed	Confidence, superiority
Open palm	Sincerity, openness, innocence
Pinching bridge of nose, eyes closed	Negative evaluation
Tapping or drumming fingers	Impatience (or listening to a tune in his head and not concentrating)
Steepling fingers upwards	Authoritative
Steepling fingers downwards	Uncertainty or contemplation
Patting/fondling hair	Lack of self-confidence; insecurity (or flirting!)
Tilted head	Interest
Stroking chin	Trying to make a decision
Looking down, face turned away	Disbelief; or needing 'timeout'
Biting nails Insecurity,	Nervousness
Pulling or tugging at ear	Indecision

***Exercise: Discuss other examples of positive body language.***

**4: Body Language and Gestures continued...**

***Exercise: Discuss different forms of body language that have different meanings in different cultures***

***Exercise: Assign different members to research specific cultures and the body language that they use that differs from yours. Program the meeting around cross-cultural communication***

***Exercise: Try to get a hearing-impaired person to come to the meeting to deliver a presentation in sign language and invite another to interpret for the audience.***

***If possible, have a session where the members learn a few basic signs of sign language.***

In the Western cultures and in the English language, we have a large collection of phrases and sayings which refer directly to our understanding of body language. The following are a few examples.

<b>Phrase</b>	<b>Body Language explanation</b>
He has beady little eyes	<i>The pupils unconsciously constrict when we are lying or being deceitful</i>
She has shifty eyes	<i>The eyes avert the gaze when someone is lying, so the eyes shift around looking at anything and anyone but the recipient of the lie</i>
Her eyes sparkle	<i>The pupils unconsciously dilate when we are seeing something pleasurable. This action allows more light to be reflected off the back of the eye</i>
Keep your chin up and shoulders back	<i>Often said to people feeling a bit down, in the (correct) belief that raising the chin up and out with the shoulders back causes physiological changes making us feel more positive</i>

#### 4: Body Language and Gestures continued...

It is time that you stand on your own two feet	<i>Standing with your feet slightly apart and the weight on the balls of your feet gives you a confident stance where you look to be in control and sure of yourself. (This saying in fact goes right back to the ancient Chinese custom of female foot binding, as those who had this done were usually royalty and therefore could not or would not stand on their own two feet without causing pain)</i>
He has finally opened up to me	<i>A physically open gesture, uncrossed arms and legs allowing more of you to be emotionally and physically vulnerable</i>
What a pain in the neck	<i>A physical gesture of tilting the head sideways and slightly away when something is not to our liking</i>
I am biting my lip	<i>I am stopping myself from saying something I know I should not</i>
Bite your tongue	<i>Keep quiet, do not speak out of turn, do not say the wrong thing</i>
She was lying through her teeth	<i>An almost closed mouth and tight/unmoving lips is an involuntary gesture when one is lying</i>
I had a gut feeling about it/my stomach was churning She is so pushy	<i>An actual physical feeling in the stomach indicating a dislike or uncertainty Someone who invades the personal space of others (45cms - 1m) would often be referred to as too pushy</i>
They were keeping their distance	<i>When people stand just a little too far away from us for comfort, outside our personal zone (45cms - 1m)</i>
They are really close friends	<i>Allowing someone into personal or intimate (0cms - 45cms) spatial zones</i>
Get a grip on yourself	<i>We usually touch ourselves for reassurance in times of stress; a tight grip on the upper arm is common</i>

#### 4: Body Language and Gestures continued...

He definitely lives under her thumb	<i>Controlled by another person, referring back to ancient Rome when the thumb turned downwards would almost certainly indicate death.</i>
Thumbs up	<i>Generally a form of OK, good or yes. But be careful where you use this gesture, it can be highly offensive in some cultures</i>
Ooh! It makes my skin crawl	<i>A physical sensation encountered when you are not comfortable in a particular person's company, conversation topic or tone. This is an expression mainly used by women, as women have been proven to be more sensitive to touch and are more aware of sensations than their male counterparts.</i>

***Exercise: Think of other expressions where body language or physical feelings are reflected.***

### Learning Body Language

In your mind, divide your body into two sections. The legs and feet should remain firm and controlled, or move steadily – not quickly. The top half of the body, including the head, shoulders, arms, hands, plus the face and eyes, should do all the communication work for you. Used well, your body language will build a good relationship with the audience and encourage interaction.

## 4: Body Language and Gestures continued...

### B. Stance

#### Feet:

- Feet and legs are the furthest point away from the brain and are therefore the hardest parts of our bodies to consciously control.
- They tend to move around a lot more than normal when we are nervous, stressed or being deceptive. So best to keep them as still as possible.
- Stand with your feet slightly apart. Gently put your weight towards the balls of the feet. As you feel yourself leaning slightly forward, bring the top half of the body to the upright position. You will then find your leg muscles have gone tense, your knees are very slightly bent and the pressure is still on the balls of your feet. Stay in this position for the first paragraph of your speech.
- Try to be at least within 2-3 metres/6-8 feet of the front row of your audience. The reason you lean slightly forward is because interested people always pay attention and lean forward. Leaning backwards demonstrates aloofness or rejection.
- Now relax the pressure, but be careful not to rest on one hip. If you do, the shoulders are uneven. Also be careful not to cross the legs or the ankles. In fact, make sure that nothing is crossed.
- If you are wearing a jacket, open it up. It relays the message: *I am open and honest with you.*
- The angle of the body in relation to others gives an indication of our attitudes and feelings towards them. We angle or lean toward people we find attractive, friendly and interesting and we often just tilt from the pelvis to lean slightly sideways towards someone to share a bit of conversation.
- The distance that the speaker stands from the audience makes a difference to the gestures one uses as well. If the speaker stands too close and uses gestures that are too large, he/she will be regarded as over-dramatic and pushy. If the speaker stands too far back and uses gestures that are too small, he/she might be seen as keeping his/her distance and being standoffish. It is therefore important for the speaker to adjust his/her gestures to the size of the room and the audience, as well as the distance he/she stands from the audience.

#### 4: Body Language and Gestures continued...

##### **Posture:**

A straight back, shoulders pulled back, and a well-balanced stance is very important to create a good confident and authoritative impression, but also to ensure efficient breathing – without which a speaker cannot function well. If the shoulders are drooping down and inward, the speaker not only looks unimpressive, but this also collapses the chest and inhibits good breathing, which in turn can help make you feel nervous or uncomfortable.

***Exercise: Make a point of checking each presenter's feet, legs and posture at the beginning of every assignment and do not allow them to continue with the presentation until the posture and stance is correct.***

##### **C. Hand gestures**

Where to keep your hands, is always a question.

- If you put your hands across the lower part of the body you are showing a lack of confidence.
- Hands across the top part of the body show stronger feelings as this is known as the area of emotion.
- Putting your hands behind your back can be a little disastrous – some people then use their shoulders instead of their hands to 'gesture', and not only look a little ridiculous and awkward, but also lose the power that the hands can add to the presentation.
- Keep the hands relaxed, separately and not clenched or clasping, at waist level – almost as if the wrists are resting in your waist. This makes gestures much easier as the hands are readily available and do not have to come all the way up from a hanging position!

Hand gestures are so numerous that is it difficult to give just a short guide.

Important basic tips for using your hands are:

- Use your hands in 'throw-away' gestures. Either to the left, or the right, or on both sides.
- Alternatively, use a stronger opportunity in creating 'picture gestures'.

#### ***4: Body Language and Gestures continued...***

- Use more movements and wider movements, always complementing the content of the speech. Be careful not to keep the elbows locked into the middle which causes little windmill movements.
- Never use the index finger to point -- towards the audience or anywhere else. Rather use the whole hand, fingers closed, hand slightly bent upwards from the wrist.
- Avoid fisting the hands at all costs; but keep them open or partially closed.

Relationship-building hand movements are:

Open palms held upwards and towards the audience; fingers together rather than open; hands held slightly upwards rather than downwards. Palms slightly up and outward is seen as open and friendly. Palm down gestures are generally interpreted as dominant, emphasising and possibly aggressive, especially when there is no movement or bending between the wrist and the forearm. (This palm up, palm down is very important when it comes to handshaking and where appropriate we suggest you always offer a handshake upright and vertical, which should convey equality.)

***Exercise: Take each one of the pointers and let every member practise them in turn, one at a time, and evaluate them during all assignments.***

#### **Arms:**

If your hands are in the correct place, your arms will have to be as well! Arms tend to give away the clues as to how open and receptive we are to our audience and therefore, if you are not using gestures, either keep your arms out to the side or slightly bent at the side of your waist. The message you send out is that you are confident and not scared to take on whatever comes your way; you can meet all challenges front on – and this inspires confidence in the audience. They can relax and listen to what you have to say. Often the more outgoing you are as a person, the more you tend to use your arms with big movements whilst the quieter you are the less you move your arms away from your body. The ideal is to try to strike a natural balance and keep your arm movements to just enough to give added color and movement to your presentation.

***Exercise: Instruct the audience to mirror exactly the speaker's arm positions and movements while the speaker is speaking. This should create great fun and be a sharp reminder to the speaker where he or she needs to practise what to do with the arms.***

## 6: Body Language and Gestures continued...

***Exercise: Give the person who generally uses over- emphatic arm gestures an assignment where no arm gestures are allowed, and the person with gestures that are too small, an assignment where large and expansive gestures have to be used throughout the speech. Discuss the impressions of their performances.***

### D. Eye contact

- Eye contact is one of the most important aspects of dealing with others, especially people we've just met. Maintaining good eye contact shows respect and interest in what the speaker has to say and the same applies to the audience – by making and maintaining eye contact with his audience, the speaker shows respect and a genuine interest in his audience. It gives the audience a feeling of comfort and genuine warmth in your company, and a happy audience results in a successful presentation.
- At all costs, try not to do what comes naturally, namely looking up at the ceiling, down at the floor or out of the window. Remember: once you take your eyes away from the audience, they will take the opportunity for a break in listening concentration and drift away, and will have to be captured all over again.
- The way the speaker ensures that he or she includes everyone in a large audience is to use the clock face method. Look at 3 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 9 o'clock, and then back at 3 o'clock.
- In a smaller audience, it will be quite easy for the speaker to make eye contact with every individual in the audience. In a larger audience, where the speaker is further away from the members of the audience, the secret is to look, at shoulder level, between two individuals.  
This way a minimum of six people in the audience believe that you are making eye contact with them personally.
- There are wide cultural differences regarding eye contact, as mentioned before, but the safest rule is never to hold eye contact for too long with any one individual and so make them feel self-conscious and uncomfortable. With an audience of more than 15 people, your contact with any one person will be about three seconds. This is the time on average between eyes blinking. With an audience of fewer than 15 people, eye contact will be fractionally shorter. However, be careful to keep eye contact for more than a full second, otherwise you will appear shifty, lacking in interest in the audience and distracted.

***Exercise: Practise the different pointers with short two-minute speeches. Give each member several opportunities to try each of the pointers.***

***Exercise: At every meeting, remind the evaluator to study the list of eye contact pointers and to evaluate specifically according to those.***

#### 4: Body Language and Gestures continued...

##### E. Facial Expressions

- Facial expressions are used to bring the presentation alive. Facial expressions open the speaker's personality to his audience.
- Facial expressions should always match your words. A friendly and open face will warm an audience to the speaker and encourage those listening to be really interested in the subject.
- It is therefore very important that the speaker's face is open and fully visible to the audience. Loose hair over the face or a too long fringe that covers the face also covers any facial expressions, and in a large auditorium, this can also cause deep shadows on the speaker's face which results in the audience not listening as they cannot 'see' the speaker.
- Mouth movements can be important too – for example, do not be afraid to use your mouth to enunciate your words clearly. People often find it hard to concentrate and to listen to a speaker when the speaker hardly uses any lip movements while speaking. Think about how difficult it is to follow the dialogue when you watch a dubbed film. Lip and mouth movements are very important in verbal communication!
- The speaker can also purse or twist her mouth to reflect his/her thinking or the content or when indicating that he/she does not wish to tell a secret.
- And lastly, it is most important to smile. A smile is the easiest ice breaker a speaker can use!

***Exercise: Let the audience take turns in reading nursery rhymes or children's poems, using exaggerated mouth movements. Repeat the exercise a few times and note how the movements become less exaggerated and more natural, without any effort.***

***Exercise: Ask the presenter of a prepared speech to present parts of the speech with as little mouth and lip movement as possible. Discuss with the audience afterwards what their impression and reaction was to these sections.***

##### The Head:

When a speaker wishes to show that he/she feels confident and self assured, he/she will keep his/her head level both horizontally and vertically. This is also the position to look authoritative and when he/she wants to have what he/she is saying to be taken seriously. Conversely, when the speaker wants to appear friendly and in an attentive, or listening, or receptive mode, he/she will tilt his/her head slightly down and just a little to one side.

#### 4: Body Language and Gestures continued...

***Exercise: Discuss different speakers or well known figures and television broadcasters and compare what each one of them does with their heads and what the resulting effect is.***

#### **Colors:**

Colors that are worn by a speaker can give specific signals to the audience as well.

Red is a color of authority - it makes the wearer look and feel confident and in control and provides an energy boost. However, if the speaker wants others to open up to him/her, red tends to intimidate as well, and therefore not the entire outfit should be red, but only part of it, such as a jacket, or a tie.

Wearing green allegedly helps you to concentrate and will focus your attention on what needs to be done.

Blue is a calming color in times of stress, but to be avoided if you want to be creative.

Purple is a brain-booster, so wear that when you need to be bursting with ideas.

Black gets you to be taken seriously, but can make you conform to the corporate stereotype – it may be hard to stand out or suggests you lack flair.

\*See: Powertalk : Image

#### **The audience's body language:**

It is important for the speaker to be constantly aware of the body language of the audience. Just as the speaker uses body language to convey a message, so the audience uses body language to convey a message back to the speaker.

For example:

- The members of the audience sit forward when they are interested.
- Their eyes shine as their pupils become dilated when they are interested
- They make voluntary eye-contact with the speaker - they smile, nod, frown.
- The speaker must be aware of this and respond directly to the message the audience sends out. For instance, if there is a frown in the audience, the speaker must give another different example, repeat the sentence or slow down, etc.

#### ***4: Body Language and Gestures continued...***

- The audience reflects the enthusiasm or mood of the speaker. If the speaker's eyes are sparkling, their eyes are sparkling; if the speaker's face is flushed theirs will flush. Or if the speaker is smiling, his/her body is relaxed, and the members of the audience will reflect that.

***Exercise: Appoint an observer to study the body language of an audience while a speaker is presenting. The observer should note how the speaker responds/or does not respond to the audience's body language. The observer then shares his/ her observations, and the speaker responds.***

## 5. COPING WITH NERVOUSNESS

### a. Understanding Nervousness

*"There are two types of speakers: those that are nervous and those that are liars."*

- Mark Twain

It is a well-researched fact that the fear of speaking in public is the number one fear of all fears – far greater even than the fear of dying. Most people have some fear of, or anxiety with, speaking in front of an audience. Children may be labeled “shy” or “timid”, and this can even be seen as endearing. But as an adult, this fear can become debilitating and possibly embarrassing. Fear of speaking in public can result in a range of uncomfortable symptoms, such as sweaty palms, stuttering, difficulty in breathing, an accelerated heart rate, shaky knees, -- and the symptom which causes even more fear, namely *memory loss!*

It will not ease your nervousness knowing that most people, even the most experienced public speakers, feel the same as you do. However, it may be a good idea to start coping with your nervousness, by taking cognisance that:

- a. It is perfectly normal to feel nervous – in fact, that it is better to feel nervous, as the extra flow of adrenalin will enhance your performance; and
- b. there are easy ways to learn to cope with your nervousness. The aim is to cope with, not to overcome, your nervousness. A speaker who does not feel the thrill of the moment, who does not feel a slight quickening of pulse and of breathing, who feels no nervousness at all, is usually a dull and uninteresting speaker.

First of all you have to understand what it is that causes nervousness. What underlies this nervousness? What is it that can turn a confident, competent adult into a shaking, gibbering wreck?

- *No, it is not the audience.* After all, they are normal people like yourself who have, in fact, come voluntarily to listen to what you have to say. So, whether it is an audience of two or two hundred or even two thousand, why should they make you nervous?
- *No, it is not the speech* you are about to make that makes you nervous either. After all, you are speaking on a subject you know and enjoy, and yesterday, when you told your friend about the speech you were going to deliver, you even wished that you had been given an hour instead of ten minutes in which to present the speech!

### 5: Coping with nervousness continued...

- What is causing the nervousness is fear of the unknown - fear of tripping over your own feet when walking up to the podium, fear of dropping your notes, fear of not being able to recall information, fear of not being able to answer an awkward question, or sometimes, it may even be the fear of success.
- Fear can be both a protector and an inhibitor and by understanding the dual nature of fear, and acknowledging, analysing and managing the particular causes of your own fears, you can learn to cope with the resulting nervousness. Start to conquer the fears that hold you back and find the right balance between too little and too much fear.

**Knowledge is your weapon against fear and nervousness, so, once you have acknowledged and analysed your fears, you can start to reduce them and manage them and consequently cope with your nervousness, by being properly and thoroughly prepared before you speak.**

**\*\*Useful Hint: Print off** the PREM Ten Tips 1: Controlling Nervousness and use these as ‘spot prizes’ for those who cope best with their nervousness.

***Exercise: Each person makes a list of their own personal fears related to public speaking with a comment as to why they think each of these is a fear and the origin of that fear. In a group, allow everyone to voice at least one of their fears and then discuss the different fears. Are any of these fears possible/probable/realistic/unrealistic? What is the worst possible scenario? And what would be the result of this worst possible scenario?***

## 5: Coping with nervousness continued...

***Exercise: Discuss the consequences of too little fear (e.g. dull, monotone, reckless, foolhardy) and too much fear (static, paralysed, blank, dry mouth).***

***Exercise: Discuss how and when fear is usually, but not always, a warning from your body or brain that you may be putting yourself in a dangerous situation.***

***Exercise: Each member writes down her/his biggest fear or worst case scenario when speaking to an audience. Conduct a Topic Session where everyone gets a turn to make a two-minute speech. Try to 'act out' at least one of the fears/scenarios during each of the speeches, e.g. worst case scenario: people in the audience do not listen to the speaker, start talking amongst themselves, walk out of the room, etc. After each speech discuss the impact this situation could have and how could it be managed?***

***Exercise: Discuss when and why people fear success. Discover how sometimes fear may not be of failing – it may actually be some underlying fear of success, including life changes and additional pressures. Ask for suggestions for dealing with fear of success.***

***Exercise: Let each member write a list of his/her symptoms of fear of failure, e.g. escape mechanisms such as fight or flight, procrastination, sleep; anxiety symptoms such as stress, nervousness, neck and back aches, out of control feelings, sleeplessness, hypertension and irrational self talk. Discuss how these can be overcome.***

## 5: Coping with nervousness continued...

### b. Techniques for controlling nervousness

- Proper preparation and practice can help reduce your fear by up to 75%.
- Proper breathing techniques can further reduce this fear by another 15%.
- Your mental state accounts for the remaining 10%.

Coping with nervousness and *proper preparation and practice* are synonymous. Nothing will relax you more than to know you are properly prepared and that you have practised sufficiently. Always remember,

***"He who fails to prepare is preparing for failure."***

**Prepare, Prepare, Prepare**

**Practise, Practise, Practise**

**1. Prepare the room: know the room** - become familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early and walk around the room including the speaking area. Stand at the lectern, speak into the microphone. Ask someone to stand in different places around the sides, at the back and in the front to hear whether the sound is good. Walk around where the audience will be seated and look at the podium and visualise yourself there. Walk from where you will be seated to the place where you will be speaking. If necessary, arrange the room to suit your presentation and test and adjust the equipment – and if you are planning to use any audio-visual equipment come prepared with extra pens, blue tack, light bulbs, extension cords, back-up disks, etc.

**2. Prepare the audience: know the audience** - If it is possible, greet some of the audience as they arrive and chat with them. It is easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers. Introduce yourself to at least one or two people and tell them something about yourself, about how excited you are to be here and to be speaking to them. These people will become your ‘allies’ and you will be assured of a smile and a friendly familiar face in the audience.

**3. Know that the people in the audience want you to succeed** - All audiences want speakers to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining – that is why they are there – to listen to you! In other words, the audience wants you to succeed - not fail. Use past positive experiences to help you work through fearful events.

## 5: Coping with nervousness continued...

**4. Visualise yourself speaking** – Visualisation is very important in preparing for a presentation. When you practise your speech, for instance, practise the walking up to the lectern as well and always practise the speech standing up and out loud in front of a mirror. **In the days prior to the presentation**, imagine yourself walking confidently to the lectern as the audience applauds. ‘See’ yourself speaking, ‘hear’ your voice - clear and confident. **When you visualise yourself as successful, you will be successful.**

**5. Never apologise – and least of all for being nervous** – With the right stance, posture and breathing, your nervousness will not be noticeable to the audience. Should you mention your nervousness and apologise for any problems you think you have with your speech, you will only be calling attention to them. If you remain silent, on the other hand, the audience will remain unaware of it. Think how often you have heard the evaluator comment on your confidence when you thought you would die of nervousness! By controlling your nervousness, you can appear to look and sound super-confident – and you may even fool yourself!

**6. Turn nervousness into positive energy** – The popular saying is: *Teach your butterflies to fly in formation!* Nervous energy is good energy when used properly. Nervousness causes an adrenalin rush, which in turn brings color to your face, makes your eyes sparkle, adds a slight ‘breathiness’ to your voice, animates your face, straightens your back. Consequently, the *same nervous energy* that causes you to have such stage fright, can be a huge asset to your presentation. Teaching your butterflies to fly in formation is controlling your fears and harnessing your nervous energy to transform it into enthusiasm, vitality and confidence.

**7. Prepare your material: Know your material** – Prepare! Prepare! Prepare! Practise! Practise! Practise! Always remember Churchill’s son’s comment when President Nixon expressed his admiration for Churchill’s ‘extemporaneous’ speeches: *“Oh, yes. I’ve watched my father work for hours preparing those extemporaneous speeches.”* There is no such thing as winging it through a successful presentation. Do not let the professionals make you believe that. If you are not familiar and comfortable with your material, you will fail at presenting well and your nervousness will increase. Practise, practise and practise your speech or presentation some more - until you can present it with ease and confidence.

*Several centuries ago, a Japanese emperor commissioned an artist to paint a bird. A number of months passed, then several years, and still no painting was brought to the palace. Finally the emperor became so exasperated that he went to the artist’s home to demand an explanation. Instead of making excuses, the artist placed a blank canvas on the easel. In less than an hour, he completed a painting that was to become a brilliant masterpiece. When the emperor asked the reason for the delay, the artist showed him armloads of drawings of feathers, wings, heads, and birds’ feet. Then he explained that all of this research and study had been necessary before he could complete the painting.*

## 5: Coping with nervousness continued...

**8. Concentrate on your message, never on yourself** - The whole idea is to concentrate on what is important - your presentation. You have dressed correctly for the occasion, you have done your breathing exercises, checked and studied the room, made a few friends in the audience, prepared and practised your presentation, so now all you have to do is stand up there and enjoy sharing your message. Your nervous energy will come under control and be harnessed into positive energy if you focus your attention away from your anxieties and fears and concentrate on your message and your audience, not yourself.

**9. Prepare yourself: Learn how to relax** - Breathing normally is a key element of handling nervousness. Nothing is as effective at easing tension as breathing exercises. An example of an easy exercise to do before you go up to the lectern is to sit comfortably and squarely with a straight back. Breathe in slowly, hold your breath for 4 to 5 seconds, then slowly exhale. Repeat 5-6 times. Roll your shoulders forward three times and backwards three times. To relax your facial muscles, open your mouth and eyes wide, then close them tightly. Once you are at the lectern, remember to breathe from the diaphragm and not to breathe shallowly from the shoulders. If you pause to breathe between paragraphs or segments, or take a drink, it will seem natural to the audience. Resist the urge to fill every moment with words— silence is not as awkward as you think. Pauses can be very effective in any presentation – pauses that you use to gather your thoughts, slow your pulse with deep breathing and take a sip of water.

**10. Gain Experience** - Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking. Most beginners find that their anxieties decrease with each speech they give. But never lose those butterflies – they are your friends and will help enhance your presentation!

**\*\*Cross References:** PowerTalk on Breathing exercises; PowerTalk on eye contact; PowerTalk on how to start a presentation; PowerTalk on body language.

*Exercise: Have each member prepare a check list of everything that has to be done in the preparation of any presentation.*

*Exercise: Discuss the importance of clothing, room size, audience size, audio-visual equipment, voice projection, notes, etc. in coping with nervousness.*

*If you feel nervous, admit it to yourself and tell yourself that it is acceptable -- and good!*

## 6. LISTENING

### a. Introduction to Listening

*We were given two ears but only one mouth. This is because our creator knew that listening was twice as hard as talking.*

Good listening is crucial to effective communication and yet studies show that only about 10% of people listen properly. Most people do not know how to listen intelligently, systematically and purposefully and only about 25% of listeners grasp the central ideas in communication.

*What does it mean to really listen?*

**Real listening is an active process that has three basic steps – hearing, understanding and judging or evaluating.**

- *Hearing* simply means listening enough to catch what the speaker is saying. For example, if you were listening to a report on zebras, and the speaker mentioned that no two are alike and you can repeat that fact, then you have heard what has been said.
- *Understanding* is the next part of listening. It happens when you take what you have heard and understand it in your own way. When you hear that no two zebras are alike, and think about what that might mean – for instance that no two are alike because the pattern of their stripes are different, then you have added understanding to the hearing.
- *Judging/ Evaluating*. Listening is the process of absorbing words and selecting meanings. After you are sure you understand what the speaker has said, think about whether it makes sense. Do you believe what you have heard? For example: How could the stripes be different for every zebra? We know that fingerprints are different for every person. So this does seem believable.

*Exercise: Use different examples by reading a paragraph from a magazine, a newspaper or a popular novel and decide at which point the listeners pass from hearing, to understanding, to judging/evaluating.*

**6: Listening continued...**

**Exercise: Look at the following table and see if you can add more differences between poor listeners and effective listeners:**

<b>A poor listener</b>	<b>An effective listener</b>
..tends to "wool-gather" with slow speakers	..thinks and mentally summarises, weighs the evidence, listens between the lines to tones of voice and evidence
..is over-stimulated, tends to seek and enter into arguments	..does not judge until comprehension is complete
tunes out the speaker when the subject is dry	..finds "what's in it for me"
.. is inexperienced in listening to difficult material and usually avoids more difficult subjects	.. welcomes more intricate and complicated subjects to listen to so that the mind is regularly exercised
.. is easily distracted, has a short attention span	..fights distractions, sees past bad communication habits, knows how to concentrate
..drifts back and forth between listening and thinking about other things	..tries to anticipate the next point of the speaker and evaluates what the speaker is using for supporting evidence
..tunes the speaker out on the basis of a few words	.. does not let the emotional baggage of a word hinder them from getting at the substance of what the speaker is saying
..takes intensive linear and detailed notes, but the more notes taken, the less value; has only one way to take notes	..often uses mind-maps for note-taking, has 2-3 different ways to take notes and organise important information
.. says "I listen only for facts" and then may retain a few of those facts, but the information is usually garbled	.. looks for foundational concepts, grabs key ideas and use them as anchor points for the rest of the message
..lets his or her mind wander absorb material	.. remains focused and actively tries to
..is impassive while listening and shows no energy output	..holds eye contact and helps speaker along by showing an active body state
..judges delivery but tunes out to content	..judges content, skips over delivery errors
..listens for facts	..listens for central ideas

## 6: Listening continued...

Think about recent conversations amongst friends or colleagues. *If you remember what you said better than what you heard, you have probably developed some bad listening habits.* Instead of really listening, you let your mind wander while others were talking. You were thinking about what you were going to say before the others had finished. Faulty listening habits can cause misunderstandings several times a day in our busy lives -- many serious mistakes and organizational misunderstandings stem from someone not hearing instructions.

Poor listening can result in missing important appointments, misunderstanding directions, misinterpreting valuable suggestions or addressing the wrong problems.

According to research, a good leader will spend anything from 45% to 60% of his or her time listening and leaders who are rated most efficient by subordinates invariably are good listeners.

**Most people spend more time using their listening skills than any other kind of skill. Like other skills, listening takes practice.**

**However, *listening in itself is less important than how you listen.***

Listening in a way that demonstrates understanding and respect causes rapport to develop, and that is the true foundation from which you can lead, sell, manage or influence others – and most importantly, communicate well. People need to practise and acquire skills to be good listeners, because a speaker cannot successfully impart information in the same manner that a dart player tosses a dart at a passive dartboard.

**Information is an intangible substance that must be sent by the speaker and received by an active listener.**

Meaning cannot just be transmitted as a tangible substance by the speaker. It must also be stimulated or aroused in the receiver. The receiver must therefore be an **active** participant for the cycle of communication to be complete. **Effective listening is an active rather than a passive activity.** When listening intently the listener should feel tired after the speaker has finished. When you find yourself drifting away during a listening session, change your body position and concentrate on using one of the listening skills (*in Section c. page 56*). Once one of the skills is being used, the other active skills will come into place as well.

**b. Obstacles to listening**

Listening is one of the most difficult skills to learn – probably because we are not taught this skill as a child – we are usually taught to hear what is being said to us and to follow instructions or orders, but not to question and analyse and evaluate what we hear. The fact that there are many obstacles to effective listening does not make matters any easier!

The main obstacles are:

- physical discomfort;
- thought speed;
- prejudice;
- distractions; and
- poor messenger.

1. **Physical discomfort.**

Be aware that room temperature, space, lack of air, a draught, noise, activity, movement or sound around you will happen. There is little you can do to always eliminate these and often we have to be almost super-human to concentrate on the speaker despite all these factors.

2. **Thought speed.**

Because we think up to four times faster than we listen, thought speed can become an obstacle and lead the mind to race ahead of and away from the speaker's words, drift off into its own world and tune out on what is being said.

3. **Prejudice.**

Your own attitudes, the positive as well as the negative, play an important part in determining how actively you will listen. It is probable that if you agree with the speaker's views or like the speaker, then you will listen more attentively. If you disagree with the views then you are likely to tune out. Note as accurately as you can the structure and logic of the ideas or arguments being presented to you. Once that is in place you can then reflect on your own reactions to the content.

4. **Distractions.**

Other than the physical discomfort mentioned, there are numerous ways that distractions can divert our attention from what the speaker is saying. Some of the most common distractions are due to the characteristics of the speaker such as appearance or manner of delivery. Again, the solution is to stay focused on the message of the speaker. Other distractions may come from other members of the audience, or consequences of your own personal lifestyle, such as commitments and activities in your life which may cause you to become stressed, excited, depressed - and hence too pre-occupied to concentrate on the speaker's words.

5. **Blame the messenger.**

It is very human to blame the messenger when the message is not understood. But – you have to remember that communication is a two-way process, and if you are an effective listener, the process is already 50% successful. Therefore, to listen actively is to work hard to make sure that you receive the message clearly and accurately.

*Exercise: Assign prepared speeches or readings to experienced and confident speakers. Arrange to have different obstacles to effective listening present, e.g. a stuffy room, noise inside as well as outside the room, a subject that is sure to antagonise or cause discomfort, no eye contact with the audience, a long drawn-out boring speech or reading with a large number of statistics or irrelevant facts, etc. After the speech or reading, test the listening of the audience, then discuss which were the obstacles and find solutions for the listener.*

*Exercise: Make a list of obstacles to effective listening and let each member of the audience decide for themselves which obstacles they find to be the most important.*

*Exercise: Divide the audience into groups of three: the speaker, the listener and the observer. Each of the three should have a turn at taking each of the three roles. The speaker speaks about something that is very important to him/her for about four minutes. The listener has to practise listening, using all the skills (e.g. eye contact, body language, silences, verbal responses, questioning, etc.) The observer watches the listener's verbal and nonverbal listening skills. The three then discuss their respective experiences for a total of 6 minutes.*

6: Listening continued...

***The listener:*** What was comfortable? Difficult? Did you stay with the speaker? Do you think you understood the importance of the subject for the speaker?

***The speaker:*** Did you feel listened to? Was it helpful? Did the listener have any habits you found distracting?

***The observer:*** Evaluate the listener's listening skills and share observations.

Now everyone change places and repeat, until each person has taken each role once.

Get everyone together in one group and compare notes.

- Which listening skills are the easiest and which the hardest – for the listener as well as the speaker?
- Which obstacles are the most/least common?
- How are listening skills relevant to your work/family and community?
- Where else would they be useful?

Go around the group so that participants have a chance to share at least one thing they have learned about themselves in this practice session.

***Exercise: Chinese Whispers.***

(Most people will remember this game from their childhood. There should be at least ten to fifteen people in the group for this exercise to be effective. The more people in the group, the greater fun it becomes!)

Place everyone in a circle. Whisper a reasonably difficult and long word to the first person and let this person whisper the word in the ear of her/his neighbour. She/he then repeats the word in a whisper to the next person – until the word arrives with the last person in the chain, who says the word out loud. The word is bound to be a different word from the one the first person passed on. Discuss with the audience where the word started changing and find out if they can judge what the reason for the change was. Repeat the exercise by using a sentence or a short story of no more than about four or five sentences.

### c. Speaker/Listener Interaction

Becoming aware of deficient listening skills, coupled with a conscious effort at overcoming them, helps to master the art of listening. Great listening skills need to be developed. Commitment is required to learn how to become a great listener, it doesn't happen by accident. The following guidelines are useful in improving listening awareness and efficiency:

1. ***Act like a good listener.*** The first skill that you can practise to be a good listener is *to act like a good listener*:

- a) **Take time to listen.** The speaker is apt to feel rushed if you indicate your listening time is limited. For the speaker to open up and crystallise the meaning, you must convey that you have time to talk freely.
- b) Never rationalise that you're too busy to listen. Instead, set aside whatever you're doing. This will reassure the speaker that he doesn't have to talk faster or abbreviate the message. It will also help you to concentrate on what's being said.
- c) Then, give 100% of your attention and prove you care by suspending all other activities. We are bombarded by information almost every minute of the day and spend a lot of time in thinning out all the information that is thrust at us and which we do not have a need for.
- d) Therefore, stop what you are doing, put your thoughts on hold, turn towards the speaker and give him or her all your attention. By making your listening an active rather than a passive action, you have a much better chance of listening to, and understanding what, the speaker is trying to communicate.

**It is therefore important to change our physical body language from that of a deflector to that of a receiver, much like a satellite dish.**

2. ***Keep an open mind.*** Following on this, by giving 100% of your attention, you are more likely to give 100% of your mind as well. This means that you *open your mind completely and make it receptive to what the speaker is saying*.

- a) You cannot fully hear their point of view or process information when you argue mentally or make a judgment before they have completed what they are saying.
- b) **An open mind is a mind that is receiving and listening to information.**
- c) When your mind is cluttered with your own ideas, you will tend to interrupt while the speaker is communicating his message.
- d) Interrupting and finishing a speaker's sentences often damages communication.  
Deliberately try to inhibit your temptation to interrupt.
- e) Make sure the speaker has finished conveying the message before you speak. The most effective way to break the interrupting habit is to apologize every time you interrupt. After a few apologies, you'll think twice before jumping in while a person is speaking.

3. **Make eye contact.** The third skill is therefore to use the other bodily receptors besides your ears.

- a) You can be a better listener when you look at the other person. Your eyes pick up the non-verbal signals that all people send out when they are speaking.
- b) By looking at the speaker, your eyes will also complete the eye contact that speakers are trying to make.
- c) A speaker will work harder at sending out the information when they see a receptive audience in attendance.
- d) Your eyes help complete the communication circuit that must be established between speaker and listener.

4. **React to the speaker.** Following on from these three actions, and keeping in mind the three steps of listening (hearing, understanding, judging), once you have established eye and face contact with your speaker, you must then react to the speaker by sending out non-verbal signals.

- a) You'll act like a good listener if you're alert, look the speaker in the eye and lean forward.
- b) Radiate interest by nodding your head or raising your eyebrows, tilting the head, smiling, frowning – all of which will show whether you are following what the speaker has to say.

5. **Respond to the speaker.** Remembering the saying about one mouth and two ears, now also remember that it is humanly impossible to receive information when your mouth is sending out information at the same time.

- a) A good listener will stop talking and use limited receptive language instead, such as "I see," "mmm" and "oh really". In other words they will offer encouragement with comments and questions such as, "Is that what you had in mind?" and "Correct me if I am wrong, but I think you are telling me . . ." followed by a paraphrase of the speaker's remarks which, in turn, encourages your speaker's train of thought. **This forces you to react to the ideas presented, rather than to the person.**
- b) You can then move to asking questions, asking for a repetition or for a different explanation - instead of giving your opinion on the information being presented.
- c) By your actions, show the speaker you are genuinely interested and want to listen.
- d) If you are not sure of the whole message, ask the speaker to repeat or clarify it.
- e) Constantly evaluate your own understanding of the message.
- f) Prove your understanding by occasionally restating the gist of the speaker's idea or by asking a question which proves you know the main idea.
- g) The important point is not to repeat what the speaker has said to prove you were listening, but to prove you understand. It is a true listening skill to use your mouth as a moving receptor of information rather than a broadcaster.
- h) When good listeners do not understand the speaker, they will send signals to the speaker about what they expect next, or how the speaker can change the speed of information delivery to suit the listener.

## 6: *Listening continued...*

6. **Evaluate your listening.** Asking questions about the content can be an effective way of clarifying main points and making sure that you have not only heard, but listened to the speaker. You can direct questions to **the speaker or to yourself**. Asking yourself questions is a good way to analyse what you have heard and to evaluate the level of your listening. For example, you may ask "what point is being made?", "do I understand?", "Is there an alternative point of view?"

7. **Adjust your thinking speed.** You can think three to four times faster than a person can talk. In fact, we think at about 400 words per minute, which is four times faster than most speakers can talk, therefore the discrepancy between speaking and thinking speed can be the major reason for poor concentration.

- a) When you become impatient with the speaker's speaking pace, you will lose concentration and your mind will wander off until you hear something that does interest you. You will then realise that you have missed a section and will not be able to understand the rest of what the speaker says.
- b) **To use your thinking speed to advantage, keep analyzing what the speaker's saying as he talks.** Mentally sum up what's been said. Weigh the evidence by considering whether the facts are accurate and the viewpoints are objective, and analyse and evaluate the information.

8. **Listen for the content and don't overreact to the delivery.** If you become too involved in a person's speech style, you'll lose track of the message.

- a) Force yourself to concentrate on the message instead of the speaker's accent or style of speaking, speech impediment or disorganised thought-pattern.
- b) Ask yourself: "What is he or she saying that I need to know?"
- c) Do not become distracted by extraneous factors.
- d) Poor listeners are distracted by sounds, objects and people, such as a police siren, a telephone ringing or a person passing in the hallway.
- e) **Good listeners position themselves to avoid distractions or concentrate harder on what the speaker is saying.**

## 6: *Listening continued...*

9. ***Listen between the lines.*** Concentrate not only on what is being said but also on the context, the attitudes, needs and motives behind the words.

- a) Remember that the speaker's words may not always contain the entire message.
- b) The changing tones and volume of the speaker's voice may have meaning, as may the facial expressions, gestures and body movements.
- c) **Being alert to nonverbal cues increases your total comprehension of the message.**
- d) Furthermore, listen for main ideas. The main ideas are the most important points the speaker wants to get across. They may be mentioned at the start or end of a talk, and repeated a number of times. Pay special attention to statements that begin with phrases such as "My point is..." or "The thing to remember is..."

10. ***Identify the main ideas.*** Even if the speaker does not say explicitly, "this is a main idea", they telegraph that information in various ways.

11. ***Watch out for the following.*** They may make listening a lot easier for you.

- **Verbal cues.** Certain words signal that a key point or main idea is about to be elaborated. For example, the speaker might say, "there are three main issues. *First... Second... Third...*". Listen for verbal signposts such as *first, second, next, in conclusion, on the other hand, importantly.*
- **Repetition.** The repetition of a main point may not be word for word, but near enough so that it is clear that the point is of sufficient importance for the speaker to say it a number of times. Speakers usually repeat important points more than once.
- **Pitch and pace of delivery.** Speakers will usually vary their volume of voice and also their pace to provide some variety. Main points are often given in a slower pace, with emphasis, following and/or preceding a pause, often in conjunction with repetition.
- **Body language:** Pay attention to the presenter's visual signals. Many people give body signals, such as gestures or direct eye contact when they are discussing a main idea.
- **Audio-visual aids:** Many speakers provide audio-visual cues for main points. For example, they might list the main points on an overhead projection sheet, or write them on the board as they occur during the lecture. Be aware though that these may become a distraction to effective listening!

**Effective listeners actively process what they are hearing**

**Remember:** Time is on your side! Thoughts move about four times as fast as speech. With practice, while you are listening you will also be able to think about what you are hearing, really understand it, and give feedback to the speaker.

*Exercise: Form groups and find out what different people do to become better listeners and which factors help them.*

*Exercise: Assign readings from a variety of literature (fiction and non-fiction, magazines, newspapers, novels, guide books, etc.) and follow up with a ‘comprehension test’ – ask pertinent questions about each reading’s content. After each reading, analyse where members listen best and where they fail to listen effectively and discuss the possible reasons why this happens.*

*Exercise: Program three or four prepared research speeches (i.e. speeches in which the facts are important) and have a verbal ‘Spot Listening Check’ after each speech.*

*Exercise: Do the same with other types of speeches. Then discuss which speeches– the research speeches, the humorous, the serious, the anecdotal, etc, are easier to listen to effectively, and why.*

## 6: Listening continued...

*Listening involves hearing, sensing, interpretation, evaluation and response.*

**We hear only what we want to hear and remember only part of what we have heard. Good listening can improve both the content and the quality of what we hear and remember.**

*A good leader is always a good listener. A good listener may be or may not be a leader - but a good listener is usually popular, which is an important step in becoming a leader. People like to be around someone who listens well. We can improve our listening habits. It will take concentration and hard work, as our listening habits are the results of years of often unconscious behaviour. But it can be done, and today is a good day to start!*