

# What Do You Do If You Speak Too Fast

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Do you speak too fast? Does everyone tell you to slow down? Do you also have a lot of “filler” or “crutch” words? Inevitably, if you speak quickly, there will be lots of “ums, ahs and you knows.” If this is you, don’t ignore this issue. It is not okay to speak quickly.

Listeners want to digest what you say, formulate their questions and maybe even take notes. It is important to speak at a rate people find comfortable. Speaking too quickly affects comprehension and retention, especially on technical issues. It leaves your team, your customers or your boss frustrated and maybe even upset, if they are already disgruntled. It also affects people’s perception of you. In fact, many will sense you are anxious or just want to be done. Some may feel you are trying to pull a fast one on them in the hope they won’t notice. Speaking quickly is a bad habit. The good news is habits can be changed! Read further and we’ll tell you some ways to slay the dragon.

## Get feedback on your pacing

In any meeting situation, ask a trusted colleague or your boss to let you know if your pacing is too fast. Ask them to give you a subtle signal to slow you down. Look for their feedback often, particularly if you are almost out of time.

## Monitor yourself:

Check your voice messages to others. Before leaving a voicemail for any colleague or customer, review your message. If you are speaking quickly or have “filler words,” redo the message. Do this about 4 or 5 times a day. It’s easy to remember to slow down first thing in the morning, but as your day progresses or when the pressure is on, you forget. However, each voicemail is an opportunity to build a relationship, solve a significant problem or gain buy-in. If the listener has to replay your message multiple times to get pertinent information, you are not scoring points.

## Practice saying all the syllables

When we speak quickly, we have a tendency to “slip” over syllables. For example, “enunciate” has four syllables. Some fast talkers will say it in two syllables,

as in nun/c’ate. This may cause listeners to get stuck on what you just said, instead of what you are currently saying. If they get lost, they may ask someone, “What did he just say about...?” Thus, you may cause your own “side bar” conversations. To say all of the syllables in the word and get the lips, teeth and tongue in the right position, you have to speak more slowly and carefully.

## Pause often:

Read out loud marketing pieces related to your company’s products or services. Wherever you find a comma, pause. Wherever you find a period, pause longer. Practice emphasizing particular words in each sentence. That will also force you to pause. Tape yourself with your phone while reading out loud. Play back the recording. You may get the feeling, while doing the exercise, that you sound too slow or that people would be uncomfortable listening to you. What you will notice when you playback your recording is that your pace is exactly where it should be.

## Listen to newscasters:

If you watch the news on television or listen to a podcast, pay attention to the fact that newscasters rarely mispronounce a word or a name. That is because the pace with which they speak is much slower than if they were “off the air” and just “hanging out” with friends. They speak slowly because they know the people listening to them are multi-tasking. They are making breakfast, checking email, responding to messages or getting the kids dressed. In order to maximize the chance of people absorbing the information, newscasters and presenters speak at a pace that is easy to follow.

Speaking too quickly is not something you have to accept about yourself. You go to a lot of trouble to prepare a message. Ensure that people get your points by pausing and speaking slowly.

**Question:** *What additional ways have you found helpful if you speak quickly? We’re interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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