

## **Grammarian**

The role combines the roles of Listener (“who said what”), and Grammarian (reporting on effective and bad uses of language). Your goal is to educate the audience by highlighting what was done well and what could be improved.

You need to listen attentively throughout the meeting and take notes:

- Filler words like “uh”, “um”, “you know”, “that sort of thing”, etc.
- Mispronunciations or incorrect use of words
- Verbs and nouns whose tense don't agree
- Exceptionally good word usage and pronunciation.
- Factual items for the "Who said what" section of your report. \

Refer to the Grammar supplement in this manual for definitions of common grammatical terms and speech structures.

## Grammar

**Acronyms.** An acronym is a pronounceable word or name made from the initial letters or parts of a group of words, for example, UNESCO. Some acronyms have become regular English words: radar, scuba and laser. Acronyms are often used to sound impressive but are usually annoying. For example, a word pronounced “bee dee em, based on the acronym BDM (Business Development Manager) is just a fancy way of saying “salesman”.

Beware of using acronyms as your audience may not be familiar with the term. Always spell out the meaning before using the term.

**Alliteration.** This is the repetition of the beginning consonant sound of two or more words that appear close together in speech. Alliteration is used to add poetic pleasantry to a phrase and grabbing attention or focus.

Example: *Some say sunshine soothes the soul. Daredevil dogs dashing daringly.*

**Allusion.** An allusion is an indirect reference to something or something else, without actually specifically saying so. You can use an allusion if the audience will understand what you are referring to.

**Assonance.** Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in two or more words that appear close together in speech. Assonance is sometimes used as an alternative to rhyme in verse.

Example: *Sighing silent cries, Viola divides her prize.*

**Cliché.** A cliché is a phrase, saying or term that has become dated and, due to overuse, lacks the creativity to make the language interesting. Clichés are often referred to as hackneyed expressions, but the adjective “hackneyed” is almost a cliché itself.

Create your own metaphors and similes instead of using a cliché. You can find hundreds of clichés at <http://suspense.net/whitefish/cliche.htm>

Examples: *Airing your dirty laundry, another day – another dollar, like a hot knife through butter, let the cat out of the bag, it's not rocket science.*

**Colloquialisms.** Colloquialisms are short-lived fad words or slang sayings.

Example: *groovy (nice), bananas (crazy or insane), bag (ugly or old woman)*

**Euphemism.** A euphemism is a substitution of an agreeable or less offensive expression in place of one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant to the listener.

Politicians like to use euphemisms to describe bad things, such as “collateral damage” for civilians accidentally killed during war

Example: *The powder room (the toilet), passed away (died), in the family way (pregnant), terminate with extreme prejudice (assassinate – as used in the film “Apocalypse Now”)*

**Hyperbole.** Hyperbole is an exaggeration for emphasis or effect, and its meaning is not meant to be taken literally.

Example: *These books weigh a ton (weigh a great deal). I could sleep for a year. (for a long time).*

**Idiom.** An idiom is an expression that is unique to a language and cannot be understood simply from the meaning of its individual words. Understanding idioms is a challenge for non-English speakers. Australian idioms are renowned for their colour and originality! A good list of idioms can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:English\\_idioms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:English_idioms)

Example: *Back-seat driver (usually the driver's partner offering gratuitous advice on how to drive), Hold your horses (don't be in such a hurry), a stiff upper lip (being in control of expression one's emotions)*

**Irony.** Irony is criticism or ridicule in which words mean the opposite of what they state.

Example: I lost my job, and my dog left home. I was having a wonderful day (that last statement shows irony).

**Jargon.** Jargon refers to a specialized vocabulary unique to a certain segment of a population for reasons such as occupation, industry or academic discipline. Jargon is rife in corporate presentations and is often used to make the speaker sound impressive. (That last statement was an example of irony).

Example: *Viral marketing, flash drives, and the web are common computing jargon.*

**Malapropism.** A malapropism is a word that sounds like another word with a totally different meaning, used by someone who has mistaken the sound-alike words, or is not aware of the spelling. Malapropisms are a great tool for humour.

Examples: *For all intensive purposes (For all intents and purposes).* In the Australian comedy, Kath and Kim, Kim tells her mother, "*Mum, we're effluent!*". She meant *affluent* (meaning financially well off) instead of *effluent* (meaning liquid discharged as waste).

A former British politician said "*It's great to be back on terra cotta!*" but he really meant terra firma which means firm ground. My favourite was used by the character Wayne in Wayne's World when he says "Baking Powder? Squeeze Me?" instead of "I beg your pardon, excuse me?"

**Metaphor.** A metaphor is a word, phrase or figure of speech that denotes one kind of object or idea in place of another. A metaphor suggests a likeness or an analogy between them.

Example: *The first cab off the rank* means to be the first chosen, just like the first cab (taxi) at a taxi-rank.

**Mixed metaphor.** This is the combination of two unrelated metaphors often used for comic effect, for example, "a pain in the neck would be thrown out the window"

**Metonymy.** A metonymy is figurative language in which a word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated and with which the audience is familiar.

Example: *Wall Street* refers to the American Financial Markets.

**Onomatopoeia** is the ability of a word's sound to suggest its meaning.

Example: buzz, achool!, bang, drip, splat.

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**Pun.** A pun is a use of a word or phrase, usually with humorous intent in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meanings or the meaning of another word similar in sound. A bad joke is usually based on a pun.

Example: I *moss* say I'm taking a *lichen* to that *fungi*, even though his jokes are in *spore* taste.

**Rhetorical Question.** A question asked for effect but not requiring an answer. Rhetorical questions are sometimes used to start a speech, for example, "Have you ever wondered what it would be like to ....."

**Rhythm** is the repetition of stressed and unstressed syllable patterns rather than sounds.

**Similes.** A simile is a figure of speech that indicates a comparison, and sometimes confused with a metaphor. The existence of the comparison is demonstrated by the presence of a word such as "as" or "like" to present a contrast between two subjects or items.

Example: Wayne has muscles as strong as iron. Fog shrouded the countryside like a blanket.

Source: Macmillan Teach Yourself Grammar and Style in 24 Hours  
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