



UMMMM

WHEN AND
HOW TO STOP
USING FILLER
WORDS

GUIDE

REAL TALK



IS THIS EVEN A PROBLEM YOU NEED TO SOLVE?

If you listen closely to leaders you admire and public speakers on big stages, they sometimes use filler words and phrases. You don't notice it because you are enthralled by the story they are telling. If you're trying to remove filler words from your speaking, I would challenge you to first ask

yourself if you're telling a clear and interesting story. When you do, the fillers matter less.

Further, the strategic use of fillers can be helpful.

This guide helps you to identify when and how to reduce your fillers so that you feel more confident in your speaking.

WHEN FILLERS ARE HELPFUL

HELPFUL

When you need to be less assertive: Filler phrases soften your message. Use strategically to soften your approach.

When you need to keep the floor: In some rooms any pause will result in colleagues jumping in before you've finished your point. A filler phrase can be used to prevent losing the floor.

When you need more time to think: Starting your response with a filler phrase like "At the end of the day" or "What I have found is" can give you a few extra seconds to formulate your response to a question. This shouldn't become a crutch for not being prepared for meetings. (more about that on page 6)



HARMFUL

WHEN FILLERS ARE HARMFUL

Fillers are harmful when they distract from your message or make you appear incompetent. Nerves, a lack of preparedness, or habit can lead to excessive fillers.

In the next few pages, you'll learn how to identify your fillers, why you are using them, and strategies to reduce them.

Step One:

IDENTIFY YOUR FILLERS

Everyone has a unique set of fillers that they use when speaking. Record yourself speaking during a meeting. Afterwards, listen to the recording and circle the filler sounds, words, and phrases you hear. You may find fillers that aren't on this list, write those in and circle.

SOUNDS

ah

er

uh

uh huh

um

WORDS

actually

and

basically

like

ok

right

seriously

so

well

PHRASES

I guess

I mean

I think that

kind of

you know

you see

-

-

Step Two:

SELF ASSESSMENT

Listen to the recording a second time. This time listen for why you are using fillers. Are you strategically softening your message or trying to hold the floor? Or were you nervous or unprepared?

FILLER

WHY IT WAS USED

Step Three:

REDUCING YOUR FILLERS

Now that you know your unique fillers and why you are using them, you are ready for these strategies to reduce fillers that detract from your message.

STICKY NOTE

For many people being more aware of fillers is enough to reduce them. Try keeping a sticky note with your most commonly used fillers on your computer monitor.

PAUSE

Silence can have the same effect as a filler word - it gives your mind time to catch up with your thoughts. Practice intentionally being silent in moments that you need time to organize your thoughts.

SCRIPT- ING

The majority of speaking that you do is spontaneous, but it doesn't have to be. A strategy that can help reduce fillers is to make notes of talking points and practice how you will share your ideas or respond to questions you might get.

WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

Removing filler words and phrases that distract from your message is an important step towards effective communication. But where do you go from here? Learn the strategies of how to tell the story of your work in a way that inspires others into action

through interactive workshops or 1:1 consulting. Contact me to learn more about how these services will improve your workplace communication skills.

**CONTACT
ME >**

610.389.6151 (call or text)
kristy@kristyolinger.com

 KRISTYOLINGER.COM

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