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Lesson No. 23, How to Avoid Common Errors

North American Institute

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EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

LESSON No. 23

HOW TO AVOID COMMON
ERRORS



NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

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CHICAGO

HOW TO AVOID COMMON ERRORS

This lesson is devoted to very briefly stating various practices that are to be avoided. It has been compiled as a review of many matters previously treated at length, for the purpose of making them the means of ready reminders of important considerations. It is also valuable sometimes to be told those things which we must not do.

AVOID A WEAK STANDING POSITION.

Do not stand with a sunken chest.

Do not stand in a slouching position.

Do not stand on one foot and allow the other knee to be bent.

Do not stand with the weight upon the heels.

Do not hold the head to one side—hold it erect.

Do not stand with the feet widely apart.

Do not lean against a table, or desk, or chair, or railing while speaking.

Do not stand as if you were afraid something dreadful were about to happen to you.

Do not put your hands in your pocket.

Do not put your hands behind you.

Do not fold your arms.

Do not clinch your fist.

Do not nervously handle any part of the clothing as you speak.

Do not grasp the hands in front of you.

Do not let the eyes rest on the floor, or look out of the window, or up to the ceiling, or at the back of the room above the heads of the audience.

STAND IN A THOROUGHLY
ERECT POSITION, HEELS CLOSE
TOGETHER, ONE FOOT SLIGHT-
LY IN ADVANCE OF THE OTHER;
THE WEIGHT BALANCED UPON
THE BALLS OF THE FEET;
HEAD ERECT, CHEST UP;
SHOULDERS SQUARED, HANDS

HANGING EASILY AT THE SIDES. KEEP THE EYES ALWAYS UPON THE AUDIENCE.

AVOID UNNECESSARY MOVEMENT WHILE SPEAKING.

Do not sway the body.

Do not walk up and down or back and forth on the platform.

Do not step back a pace or two, and after speaking a few moments step forward again.

Do not gesticulate.

Do not jerk the head forward in emphasizing your points.

Do not raise the weight on the toes.

Do not pound a table, or desk, or anything else as a mode of emphasis.

Do not use exaggerated movements of any kind.

STAND QUIETLY, WITH SELF-POSSESSION CONTROLLING ALL MOVEMENTS AND MAKING NO MOVEMENTS THAT DO NOT

ASSIST THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SPEECH.

AVOID UNNATURAL FACIAL EX- PRESSION.

Do not frown.

Do not squint the eyes.

Do not talk out of one side of the mouth.

LET THE FACE MAINTAIN A
NATURAL EXPRESSION OF
LIFE, ALERTNESS, AND KEEN
INTEREST IN THE AUDIENCE.
TRAIN IT TO EXPRESS NATU-
RALLY THE VARIOUS EMO-
TIONS AND THOUGHTS YOU ARE
EXPRESSING VERBALLY.

AVOID MISUSE OF THE VOICE.

Do not speak with high-pitched tones.

Do not speak with low-pitched tones.

Those having voices of the tenor
quality are more likely to use too high

itches. Those having voices of a bass quality are likely to use too low pitches.

Do not talk too loudly when you get greatly in earnest.

Do not talk with insufficient volume when speaking the less important ideas.

Do not speak rapidly—suit the rate of utterance to the nature of the thought.

Do not mumble your words, or permit any other type of indistinct articulation.

Do not speak in a rasping, harsh, hard quality of tone.

Do not talk with mouth and teeth closed—nor with throat closed.

Do not bellow a word in emphasizing it.

Do not speak more than one phrase on one breath.

Do not mouth your words.

Do not speak in a monotone.

Avoid a recurring tune in the speech. Many speakers develop this voice mannerism.

Do not run words one on the other.

Do not make the sound of “s” too prominent.

Do not cut off the final "g."

Do not speak in a jerky, or a choppy manner.

BY YOUR VOCAL PRACTICE DISCIPLINE THE VOICE TO SPEAK NATURALLY, EASILY, SMOOTHLY, WITH FREQUENT MODULATIONS. ADJUST THE VOLUME, AFTER SPEAKING LOUDLY ENOUGH TO BE HEARD, TO THE NATURE OF THE THOUGHT.

AVOID ECCENTRICITY IN DRESS.

Do not dress extravagantly for any occasion.

When possible wear the kind of clothes which the conventions of society demand for the occasion.

Do not appear on the platform with hair uncared for.

Do not appear with soiled linen.

Do not appear with unpolished shoes.

Do not appear with dirty hands, or unclean finger nails.

Do not appear with startling neckwear, or that out of harmony with the color of linen or suit.

Do not stand slouchily on the platform.

Do not shrink from the audience.

SEE THAT YOUR CLOTHING IS IN GOOD TASTE.

AVOID DOING THOSE THINGS WHICH WILL INJURE THE VOICE.

Do not drink cold drinks.

Do not bundle up the neck during the winter months.

Do not breathe through the mouth.

Do not smoke excessively.

Do not drink alcoholic liquors.

Do not speak in high pitches.

Do not speak in too low pitches.

Do not shout.

Do not tighten the throat muscles as you speak.

YOU WILL HAVE TO TAKE
GOOD CARE OF THE THROAT
AND VOICE IF YOU EXPECT IT
TO SERVE YOU WELL.

AVOID OFFENDING YOUR AUDI-
ENCE.

Do not scowl at an audience.

Do not lose your temper.

Do not show resentment.

Do not scold them.

Do not criticize them.

Do not laugh at them.

Do not try to drive them.

Do not show contempt for them.

Do not harangue an audience.

Do not flatter them.

Do not be insincere with them.

If there is disturbance either by children or grown-ups, do not stop and criticize, or lose your temper, or make them conspicuous. You will lose more than you will gain.

Do not appear superior to your audience.

THE TEACHER OF PUBLIC SPEAKING FIRST TO COME INTO PROMINENCE, CORAX, A GREEK, GAVE THIS AS HIS FIRST PRINCIPLE OF SUCCESS: "DO NOT ANTAGONIZE YOUR AUDIENCE." DO NOT FORGET THAT PERSUASION IS WORTH FAR MORE THAN COMPULSION.

AVOID INCORRECT PRONUNCIATION.

Do not say "advertise'ment" for "adver'tisement."

Do not pronounce "Tuesday," "newspaper," "duke," "avenue," "new," "tune," "duty," "suit," "presume," "assume," and many others, as if with the ōō. The correct pronunciation is long "u," ū.

Do not say "improvement" for "improvement." Watch all words ending in "ment," in order to see that this syllable is pronounced with a short "e" and not like "u."

Do not say "wuz" for "was."

Do not say "poum," "pout," "poultry," for "poem," "poet," and "poetry."

Do not say "goverment" for "government."

Do not run words together.

Do not say "'im," and "'er," and "'em," for "him," "her," and "them."

Do not cut off the final "g" in words, thus, "bein'," "seein'," and many others.

Do not say "conver'sant" for "con'versant."

Do not say "controv'ersy" for "con'troversy."

Do not pronounce "blue" with the long "u" sound; pronounce it "blōō." "Ue" is pronounced like long "u" when it is preceded by one consonant; like "ōō" when preceded by two consonants.

SECURE AN AUTHORITATIVE
DICTIONARY AND CONSULT IT
FREQUENTLY. FORM THE
HABIT OF LOOKING UP THE
PRONUNCIATION OF WORDS
WHICH YOU THINK YOU PRO-
NOUNCE CORRECTLY.

AVOID ERRORS IN GRAMMAR.

Do not say "they was" for "they were." See to it that subject and predicate agree in number.

Do not say "Every one will carry their own book" for "Every one will carry his own book."

Do not say "I seen" for "I saw."

Do not say "lay" for "lie."

Do not say "Between you and I" for "Between you and me."

Do not use "will" for "shall," and vice versa.

Do not use "would" for "should," and vice versa.

Do not say "ain't" for "is not."

IN PUBLIC SPEECH AVOID
ALL CONTRACTIONS.

AVOID MANNERISMS OF TONE IN SPEAKING.

Do not drop the voice to a low pitch when you come to the end of a sentence.

Do not use a sing-song.

Do not speak on a monotone and then suddenly strike a much higher pitch when you desire to emphasize a word.

Do not use the falling inflection except when the thought is complete.

Do not speak in a bombastic manner.

SPEAK NATURALLY, WITH THOSE NATURAL MODULATIONS, WHICH WILL DEVELOP IF THE THOUGHT IS THOROUGHLY REALIZED, USING THE MIDDLE PITCHES OF THE VOICE.

AVOID OFFENSE TO AN OPPONENT.

It frequently happens that a speaker must oppose the ideas or arguments of another or others.

Do not treat an opponent with contempt.

Do not attempt to browbeat him.

Do not abuse him.

Do not misquote him.

Do not be dishonest with him.

Do not call him names.

Do not assume he is dishonest, insincere, tricky, unreasonable, unless you have absolute proof to this effect.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Do not expect to grow unless you practice.

Do not put off today's work, thinking you can make it up tomorrow. You cannot.

Do not become careless in your daily speech.

Do not allow yourself to become discouraged—that spells failure.

Do not attempt to do too much each day.

Do not do anything carelessly.

Do not allow yourself to fall into the habit of using the same expression over and over again during either conversation or speech.

Do not fail to realize that truth and wisdom are the things to be sought at all costs.

Do not fail to recognize that it takes courage to be willing to know and to accept the truth.

Do not allow yourself to be hurried, nervous, and excitable in your daily life. Poise and self-control must be learned in daily affairs if it is to be present in public speech.

Do not refuse an opportunity to speak in public.

Remember each time you put yourself through the experience you have made a gain. You may not see the gain in power, but it has been made—that is, if you have really used the will to do your best.

Do not cultivate any affectations of manners or speech.

Do not fail to hear every speaker whom it is possible to hear. Study carefully and discriminately his methods. Keenly separate his errors from his excellences.

Do not fail to read some good literature each day—poetry, or drama, or essay, or novel, or oratory. Find time to meditate upon that which you have read.

Do not fail to think each day about strengthening and developing the personality.

Do not go around trying to impress people with your importance.

Do not think of how you are saying things when you are before people. Think, then, of what you are saying. Think the "how" in your practice periods.

Do not fail to write a short speech at least twice a week.

Do not fail each day to assert faith in yourself.

Do not let your mind dwell upon hindrances, and faults, and difficulties. Think and work upon those processes which will eradicate hindrances, faults and difficulties.

Do not wait until the last moment before you prepare your speech .

Do not fail to discriminate between effective and ineffective conversation. Analyze the reasons for excellence or failure.

Do not fail to study the bodily expression of men and women as you mingle among them.

It will be felt by the student that very many—seemingly, too many—suggestions and prohibitions have been given in this Lesson. The purpose here has been to make a summary in very brief statements of all matters discussed in the preceding

Lessons. If the student has done his work carefully and thoroughly, he has learned to do well and correctly, many of the necessary things, already. In such case these pages will be useful as a continual reminder of what is not to be done and what is to be done.

However, the student is to remember that above all rules and laws there are three absolutely requisite conditions to success: first, having something to say very well planned and very well fixed in mind; second, having great enthusiasm for those things that are to be said; and, third, having great interest and enthusiasm for the audience to whom these things are to be said.

EXERCISES.

These exercises are provided as a means of testing the students' knowledge of the subject and for training through actual practice. Exercises are not to be sent to the School.

Make at least two plans for a short speech upon the following occasions:

1—The laying of a corner stone of a new High School building.

2—The presentation of a gift to a leading citizen of your city.

3—A speech of welcome to a convention meeting in your city.

4—A speech for the Fourth of July.

5—A speech nominating your candidate for the Presidency of the United States.

6—A speech of thanks to a popular mayor of your city.

7—A speech of a President of the Commercial Club.

8—A speech at a political meeting for non-partisan elections in your city.

"In the race of life, common sense
has the right of way."