

1-1-1924

Lesson No. 24, Good Taste in Matter Style and Delivery

North American Institute

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/effective_public_speaking



Part of the [Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

North American Institute, "Lesson No. 24, Good Taste in Matter Style and Delivery" (1924). *Effective Public Speaking Courses*. 25.
https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/effective_public_speaking/25

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Columbia College of Expression at Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. It has been accepted for inclusion in Effective Public Speaking Courses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago.

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

LESSON No. 24

GOOD TASTE IN MATTER
STYLE AND DELIVERY



NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

Copyright 1924

By

WORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

GOOD TASTE IN MATTER STYLE AND DELIVERY

Under this title the student is asked to consider some questions which appear to many to be of no, or at least of little, importance. Those, however, who have had a wide experience and who have learned the lessons which a wide experience should bring, will pretty readily agree that he who would succeed in the best sense and who would wield the most valuable kind of influence, cannot afford to violate the laws laid down by good taste. There are many who refuse to be bound by these demands. Those who do not evince good taste always wonder why doors through which they wish to enter are being continually closed.

In the field of buying and selling, standards are being fixed continually. The man who produces seeks as rapidly as possible to establish a reputation for manufacturing an article that reaches certain fixed

standards of value. The buyer soon learns that in the long run it is more economical to buy an article that is standard, even though it costs him more. He who manufactures and attempts to sell a product that is not standard sooner or later learns that his course is not one of wisdom or prosperity.

In the field of manufacture and business management, recent years have seen a very decided increase of efficiency brought about by means of standardizing methods, processes and movements. Not very long ago there appeared an article upon efficiency in the Saturday Evening Post, and among other anecdotes given there was this one. A firm of painters could not understand how it was, when they were doing their contracts at such a price as left very little profit, that one of their competitors was able so frequently to underbid them. One of the firm began to wonder whether the competitor had an improved method of spreading the paint. He took a group of his men and set them to work, whereupon for several days he carefully studied their

method of painting. After a while he evolved a series of movements whereby the same amount of space was covered with fewer movements, thereby saving time at no expense of quality of work. All the painters of the firm were taught to use the new methods of spreading the paint. Thereafter the firm secured the contracts and the competitors lost them. What was done was the standardization of a group of movements among workmen. Standardization of human effort in industry has meant not only a lessened cost of manufacture, but also an improvement in many instances of the value of the article.

All this effort at standardization is merely the setting up of that which is best in value or process. It raises the grade; it increases the value; it induces more intelligent effort; it compels advanced preparation; it prevents backward steps.

So in matters of human conduct men and women are continually setting standards of dress, manners, action, speech and writing. When these standards become established one is expected not only to know them, but

also to be governed by them in his intercourse with his fellows if he desires to mingle with those who are adjudged intellectually, socially and morally desirable. These standards are the judgments of those possessing good taste. Through the centuries there has been going on a refining process in all affairs with an ever enlarging number of those matters demanded by good taste, and an ever increasing circle of those who are willing to be governed by the demands of good taste. Those who expect to mingle on an equal footing and be accepted in the circle and brotherhood must guide themselves in all their actions by the standards which have been established. To go into the field of sports, the point may be further illustrated by saying that it is playing the game according to rules which have been established. One may break the rules if he wishes, but he has only himself to blame and must not complain if he is penalized. To refuse to play the game according to the rules is to be held in contempt by those who are higher up.

Among the many phases of human action

in which good taste has set specific standards will be found an important one called speech. As for centuries good taste has dictated that which is acceptable in clothing the body, so the same good taste has dictated that which is acceptable in clothing human thought. Through generations of language development, rules have become established which are called the grammar of the language. There is an ever growing demand from an ever increasing number that those who wish to be recognized as members of the standard class shall be able to use language that is grammatical.

During the same time in which a grammar was developed there became fixed another body of principles and rules governing the use of language which is known as the rhetoric of language. The rules of rhetoric are almost as exacting as those of grammar. Justly or unjustly as it may be, one suffers in the estimation of many of his fellows if he fails to be governed by these standards of good taste in the use of language. In many situations he is at a distinct disadvantage among those who observe

these matters of good taste. The disadvantage may be either social or commercial, or perhaps both.

The standards established by good taste are to be observed very thoroughly by any one who expects to appeal successfully to his fellow men through the spoken word. No plea is being made for an exaggerated refinement or insincere culture or any conventions of society which may destroy the finer sensibilities of human sympathy and brotherhood.

“A man’s a man for a’ that.”

There may be the finest of manhood and womanhood, and in thousands of instances there is, among those who have not had opportunities of education and of outward culture.

But it must be recognized that the mass of mankind are not prone to care very much for standards. It must be recognized that there are abroad in the human family influences which tend to tear down and destroy, and if the race is not destroyed there must be carried on persistently various

modes of education with a raising of standards ever to a higher and higher plane.

It must be recognized also, that many have felt the intense suffering that has come because they have been shut out from fields and places of advancement by reason of the fact that their speech and manners have not been standardized. They do not do many of the things demanded by good taste and therefore they are excluded from the circle. A clergyman loses a call to a much larger church because when invited to dine by one of the members of the church it was discovered that he ate with his knife. A school teacher failed of receiving the appointment to a position carrying a larger salary because her grammar was faulty. A woman has been refused admittance to a social circle she wished keenly to enter because her manners showed she was lacking in the practice of that which is in good taste. A young man loses a coveted new position because he is careless in matters of dress and address.

To offend against the demands of good taste is dangerous in private speech: it

is much more dangerous so to offend in public speech.

In public speaking a man is met with two conditions, both of which present temptations to lower his standards. There can be no gainsaying the fact that applause is sweet to the ear. The desire to gain applause will occasionally and, unless checked, will frequently lead one to introduce statements, illustrations, stories and, what are supposedly witty and humorous, statements which are violations of good taste. The author has seen this occur again and again. Applause has followed but as sure as the applause, is also the offense to a greater or less number whose good sense and taste have been offended. Many of those who at the moment applaud will afterward feel regret that they applauded and that the speaker allowed himself to indulge in questionable public speaking conduct.

In this connection there is always asked the question of the advisability of the use of slang. It is a growing habit among public speakers, but inasmuch as slang is a departure from that which is considered good

taste, it should be avoided for that reason, if for no other. But there is another very excellent reason for avoiding slang. It will be admitted that slang is extremely forceful and that many times there is nothing offensive in it itself.

But experience has shown that those who form the habit of using slang lose the power to use standard English. If the student has been accustomed to using slang more or less, let him make his own test for the next week. When a slang expression comes to your lips, avoid using it and attempt to put a better expression in its place. This little test will prove the point.

A natural desire for applause is not the only cause that leads speakers to offend against the standards of good use. It frequently happens that the success of a public speaker is measured by the applause he receives. His commercial value is often measured by this means. Even then, it will be found that in the long run the wiser course is to avoid the offense, and to gain the approval sought by the use of those

modes of appeal which have made speakers great in the past.

Good taste in style demands that one shall observe the standards of English use which have been established by the best writers. One must learn to know and to use effectively the rules governing the grammar and the rhetoric of the language. To make an error in grammar or an error in rhetoric is to open oneself to greater or less criticism from a smaller or larger audience. Good taste demands some things of the speaker, likewise, in his personal conduct before an audience. In personal bearing and in attitude toward both his subject and his audience the speaker must take pains not to offend. To lose one's temper, to indulge in personalities, to be irritable, sarcastic, cynical, unduly or severely critical, unfair in either matter or manner in a point, is bound to react against the man himself and the effectiveness of his speech. Use of tact, generosity, fairness, and other manly attributes never yet weakened a speech or its cause. Occasionally men's measures and conduct must be attacked,

but the attack must be made with manliness, with dignity, with fairness, without irritation, personal anger, or vindictiveness, if the attack is to succeed in the largest and best sense.

It is to be remembered that if one wishes to have the greatest power and influence with his fellows, if he wishes to be accepted in the higher and better circles, if he desires the respect and esteem of those who are true gentlemen and gentlewomen he must not offend by refusing to be guided by the established standards of good taste.

If one talks loudly, loosely, carelessly and in rough, coarse, uncouth language he cannot expect to be accepted by a refined society.

If one is awkward, uncontrolled, swaggering, exaggerated, ungraceful in bearing and action he cannot expect to be received in a society that does not bear itself in the manner just described.

If one delights to tell stories and describe incidents which are impure, nasty, low or obscene in character he need not complain

if he is shunned by those who admire the good, the pure, and the beautiful.

If one in his appearance upon a public platform violates any of the standards of bearing, action, speech, dress, language, attitude or temper which are accepted and observed by those of finer sense and sensibilities he need not become incensed if neither he, himself, nor his speech is accorded the warmly appreciative reception he desires.

In closing let it be observed again that the reason why standards are to be observed is not that we wish to worship standards but that we wish to have the largest power with our fellow men, first. Second, that the thought we wish to express will be more effectively set forth in English that is standard. The standard tools are the best for the work in hand. They will produce the finest and the best product.

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.

1—Make a list of slang expressions you are accustomed to use. Place opposite each slang expression one that is acceptable English. Keep this list where you can refer to it frequently. Study it often, and eliminate the slang expressions from your vocabulary as soon as possible.

2—Make a list of errors in grammar you are guilty of using. Note the list often and rid yourself of these errors.

3—Make a list of words you overwork, or misuse, like nice, awful, terrible, grand, mighty, etc. Look up their correct meaning, write it opposite the word. Refer to the list often, and train yourself to use these words in their correct sense.

**"We stamp our own value upon
ourselves and cannot expect to pass
for more."**

—Orison Swett Marden.