

**Confident Speakers Toastmaster Club 4199  
Palm Desert, California**

**Ahh Counter / Grammarian**

The Ahh Counter / Grammarian tracks each members use of vocal bridges and evaluates them on their word usage and grammar. This is the only evaluation role in Toastmasters where everyone who participated in the meeting including Table Topics receives an evaluation.

**Objectives**

- Make members aware of their use of vocal bridges to help reduce and eliminate them. Members pay a fine of 10 cents for each vocal bridge they use up to a maximum of 50 cents.
- Provide feedback to members on their grammar.
- Point out effective use of sentence and phrase construction and areas where they could be improved.
- Point out the use of words that were very effective as well as words that should be avoided.
- Track which members used the "word of the day" during table topics and report on this when asked to do so. Only members who use the "word of the day" qualify for being voted best table topics speaker.

**Responsibilities**

1. Briefly explain your role when asked to do so by the Toastmaster.
2. Keep track of each members vocal bridges, grammar, sentence construction and use of words.
3. When called on by the Table Topics Master, report on those members who used the "word of the day" during table topics.
4. When called on by the General Evaluator, deliver your Ahh Counter / Grammarian report.
  - For everyone who participated in the meeting, mention them by name and then give them feedback on their use of vocal bridges, grammar, sentence and phrase construction, and words.
  - This means you only have to mention each person one time and tell them what you have observed about them in all the areas you looked at.
  - You only have to say something if you observed something about them.
  - If a member had no vocal bridges, they should be recognized for that accomplishment.

## What to look for

We encourage you to Google about grammatical errors, repetitive and parallel construction and the effective use of words to learn more.

## Vocal Bridges

Vocal bridges are filler words we insert when we talk that can detract from how effectively we communicate. Often a pause would be better than to use a filler word. Filler words include: ahhh, ummm, you know, so, and, ummm as well as possibly others. And, so, ummm and you know may not be a filler word if used properly in a sentence or for a certain effect.

Count the number of times a member uses each type of vocal bridge.

## Grammar

Here are some of the most common grammatical errors:

Using the wrong verb tense such as present instead of past

Pronouns that could refer to more than one subject or noun creating confusion.

Plural versus singular subject and verb agreement.

Active versus passive verbs. Passive verbs include ones like is, are, were and was. While we do need to use them sometimes, active verbs carry more impact. A passive way of saying the preceding sentence would be: ...choosing an active verb is more compelling.

Dangling modifiers where the introductory phrase does not relate to the rest of the sentence.

## Sentence and phrase construction

How sentences are constructed and used can add to the impact of a speech. Poor construction such as very long, complex sentences or too much of one type of sentence or phrase can detract from the speech. Sentence construction should help listeners to easily understand and remember the message.

On the good side, repetitive or parallel construction can be very effective if not overused.

In repetitive phrasing, a phrase or sentence is repeated during the speech to create something people remember about the speech.

In Martin Luther Kings' speech "I Have a Dream," he repeated the phrase "now is the time..." followed by a different action.

In a Winston Churchill speech during World War II, he used the phrase "we will fight..." followed by several different locations.

Individual words can also be repeated to create emphasis and make the speech more memorable.

Parallel construction is when the same type of grammatical sentence or phrase construction is used.

"That's one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind."  
Neil Amstrong

"...government of the people, by the people, for the people."  
Abraham Lincoln's Inaugural Address

"... we will pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and success of liberty."  
John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address

### **Use of Words and phrases**

Our choice of words can enhance or detract from our speech. When a word jumps out at you in a good or bad way, point this out.

Look for unnecessary and tired phrases that can be eliminated or are redundant.

### **Video Resources**

On YouTube, you can find many examples of Ahh Counter and Grammarian reports. Here are two good ones.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vTfwJQpbOk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZQw05N0RTY>