



Suggestions about what to say when you are the Wizard of Ahs

One of the things that can greatly diminish our effectiveness as speakers is when we rely on “crutch” words like

- Um
- Ah
- So
- And (when it is **not** needed to connect two thoughts)
- other filler words or sounds

We use these when we can't think of what to say – or while pausing between thoughts. Most of the time we don't even realize we have used them.

In order for us to stop using these words, we need to be reminded every time we DO use them.

My job today will be to keep a record of the ah's and other crutch words. The purpose is to improve speaking skills – not to point out faults. I'll give a report at the end of the meeting.

You can help both me and the speakers by using the bells and squeaky toys on the tables every time you hear one of these words. If you are new you may not believe this, but the minor embarrassment of being “dinged” will fade away. Your speaking will be permanently improved by the experience. It is most effective when the speaker simply makes a brief mental note and keeps going without acknowledgment or comment.

Take Note: Use your judgment when you give the results. Most Speech-givers want to know the precise numbers for their speech. However, if someone had several roles, a statement such as, “Janet, in all your various roles, I heard only one during Table Topics.” would work. Try to be efficient. You may wish to report a range for novices. “Over 10” might be appropriate for an Ice Breaker Speech, rather than saying “27”, when all other speakers had less than 5. This is where your responsibility, “to encourage, not discourage,” is important.