

People Often Ask Me to Repeat Myself

Objectives:

That can be very frustrating for both you and your conversational partners because nobody likes talking or listening to be hard work. The following three problem areas may contain the solution to solving the snags in your speech patterns. Try practicing them as often as possible. If you really want to know if other people can hear and understand you, then tape record your voice and see if you can understand yourself.

Exercises:

1. *Are you dropping your volume at the end of your sentences?* It is normal to soften your volume at the end of a thought, but don't trail your sentences into oblivion. Practice speaking or reading aloud with conscious attention on lessening the decibel drop. Use these practice sentences:

"Let's meet in the lobby of the downtown Marriott."

"Sarah James was finally promoted to regional manager."

In these examples, if you don't keep your volume up, you'll be swallowing your main point.

2. *If volume is not the problem, are you jumbling words together?* Some degree of assimilation, or blending sounds and words together, is normal in conversational speech. An example of assimilation is the phrase, "How are you?" The *ow* sound at the end of *how* naturally blends into the *a* in *are*, so the phrase sounds more like "Hower you?"

You can find out if you tend to jumble your words by listening to a five-minute sample of a telephone call or conversation you have taped. If possible, ask someone to listen with you to provide objective feedback. Note any words or phrases that were difficult to understand. Pay particular attention to long words, names, and the ends of sentences. If you are jumbling more than twice a minute, here is a starter list of words and phrases that are frequently assimilated. Practice saying them incorrectly, then correctly for contrast.

cancha	can't you
cudja	could you
generly	generally
havta	have to
howzitgon	how's it going
I dunno	I don't know
proibly	probably
shuda	should have
uzhly	usually
wanna	want to
wuncha	wouldn't you

3. *Another possibility: Are you moving your mouth enough when you speak?*
Some speakers fail to put their best mouth forward due to reticence or a desire not to appear too outspoken. Here are two techniques of mouth mobilization:

Practice Precision

Make precise movements on the following lip sounds:

b	bank	lab
p	park	tap
m	money	time
v	vote	drive
f	first	life
w	win	wow

Practice sentences (five times every day):

- "Bob, please pass the proposal to Walt."
- "Mona, would you make a copy of Fred's will?"
- "Fred would live winters in West Palm Beach."

Vow to Work on Vowels

Most vowels require a degree of mouth opening, and they're great to practice opening that oral orifice. Say these vowels with as much stretch as possible. Start with the following words and sentences and then focus on the same vowels in everyday speech.

ah	stock	job
eh	met	bet
ae	cat	fat
o	no	open
aw	fall	talk
ow	mouth	out
ai	buy	deny

Practice sentences:

- "How wide can you go?"
- "Why open my mouth now?"
- "I found the way."