

## I Talk Too Slowly

### **Objectives:**

If your audience is tapping fingers and feet impatiently while you're finishing the first paragraph of your talk, it's safe to say you're too slow. Some slow talkers do everything at tortoise pace, including speaking. Others take great pains with their speech because they believe everything that comes out of their mouth must be correct, perfectly worded, and significant. It's admirable to care about what you say, but if you speak too slowly, you may be perceived as boring, tired, or less intelligent than you are. Finding out your problem areas and fixing them with the following exercises will help you keep people awake and interested.

### **To Get Up to Speed**

1. *Learn what makes you slow.* Record a one-minute monologue on tape. Use a stopwatch or second hand and listen for the following types of slow spots.

**Problem One:** too many words along the way to your point.

"As I was mentioning yesterday when we met with um, ah Anderson Industries about the takeover negotiations and ah, proceeded to come up with an alternate plan, I told you I'd be getting back to you, and so let me introduce our findings by saying..."

Better: "Let me bring you up to date on our talks with Anderson Industries..."

**Problem Two:** a generally draggy pace, with both words and pauses drawn out. Audiences prefer an average rate of 180 words per minute or even a little faster.

**Problem Three:** pauses that are too frequent or too lengthy. Pauses between sentences or at the end of phrases should not last much longer than two seconds unless you're consciously pausing to let information sink in for dramatic effect.

2. *Try these speed up strategies.*

**For Problem One:** To practice getting to the point more quickly, ask yourself an opinion question. Using a stopwatch or second hand, give yourself forty-five, then thirty, then twenty seconds to supply an answer.

**For Problem Two:** To pick up the pace, choose a passage from a magazine or book of about 180 words. Practice reading it aloud, seeing how close you can get to finishing it in one minute without sacrificing meaning or clarity.

**For Problem Three:** Imagine your words pedaling the wheels of a bicycle: If you drop the pace too drastically, you'll fall over. Practice keeping up momentum with a story or explanation you know well. Then practice keeping up momentum while answering questions that you're posing to yourself for the first time.