



A way with words

Use these 10 language tips in the Year of the Ox to improve the way you speak and present yourself

WHAT does your language say about you? Do you present yourself well by using proper grammar and pronunciation? Or could you be sabotaging yourself without even realising it?

Make this the year you improve the way you speak. Fine-tune the little things that make a big difference with these 10 language tips.

1 Speak positively

Your language influences your thoughts just as much as your thoughts influence your language. When you set your resolutions for the year did you list, "Stop smoking" or "Breathe freely"? Make sure that you are sending yourself positive images with the language you use.

2 Practise tongue twisters

If you are concerned about the way you speak or the way you pronounce certain sounds, tongue twisters are a fun and easy way to begin making progress in the right direction.

A simple web search will give you lots of ideas. Practise saying the tongue twisters in front of the mirror so you can see how your mouth moves to make the different sounds.

3 Set language goals

Whether you want to speak more clearly, correctly or confidently, set goals for yourself. For example, if you want to improve your vocabulary, set a goal to learn 10 new words per week (or whatever number you think is fair).

4 Read

The best way to improve your language skills and become a better



Be a better writer and speaker by reading newspapers, magazines, books and online resources that not only interest you but also offer good English language content.

speaker and writer is to read – a lot. Choose magazines, books, newspapers and online resources that not only interest you, but also have good English language content. If you are only reading the tabloids, you are probably not getting the best English input possible.

5 Observe good language models

Whether you are choosing something to read, or choosing who and what you listen to, the most important thing is that the people you emulate need to speak English very well! Remember, practice doesn't make perfect – perfect practice does!

6 Play word games

Word games are a great way to keep your mind active, build new vocabulary and increase creativity.

Solve a crossword puzzle, do a word search or choose one of the hundreds of different games that you can find on the Internet. Take a breather from your work and work out your mind in a different way.

7 Be aware of body language

Don't forget the non-verbal messages you send! Many people think of language and communication as what they say, but what you do is even more important.

To show polite interest in what someone is saying, sit up straight, lean slightly towards the listener and hold comfortable eye contact.

8 Speak considerably

Remember all the lessons your mother taught you. Say, "Please" and "Thank you". Slow down in large crowds and say, "Excuse me", when you bump into people!

These may seem like little, unimportant things, but they say a lot about the type of person you are.

9 Proofread your work – every time!

Do not write one letter, send one e-mail or submit one report without checking over your work. Look out for things like your use of commas and apostrophes, typos and spelling errors.

Nobody gets everything right on the first try. Assume there are errors and find them!

10 Don't use a long word where a short one will do

This famous rule is one too many of us forget. Remember that communication is not a vocabulary contest.

Successful communication depends on people understanding your meaning. Use common words and phrases instead of over-inflated prose.

When it comes to the way you speak, sometimes the smallest change can make the biggest impact. Choose your favourite three tips and start implementing them today!

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