

The Value of the Simple Statement

“The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.” – Thomas Jefferson

It is best to assume that with spoken language, simple is better than complex. Unable to recapture or replay, one hopes their spoken words will be correctly interpreted the first time they are heard. Unfortunately, spoken words can be the most misread and misinterpreted form of communication, and therefore, can be a great hindrance to effective persuasion. When you're in a persuasive situation, use simple, direct, and concise language, rather than fretting about how eloquent you're sounding. If you are preoccupied, you'll miss a lot of important cues. Moreover, complex language may not effectively deliver your point.

Persuaders normally try to speak to the lowest common denominator. The more advanced and complex your ideas and sentence structure are, the harder it is to follow your line of reasoning. You don't want your audience struggling to understand what you mean. Comprehension should be easy because then your audience is more open to persuasion. If your prospects are struggling to find your logical thread, their emotions will never get involved, except in a negative, accusatory way.

Clarity is of prime importance when persuading. Your persuasive attempts are useless if you are not clearly understood. Below is a list of complex words we use when we are trying to sound educated but which actually only confuse and tire our audiences. Notice the much simpler choice on the right that would help your audience to both comprehend your message and be persuaded by your presentation. Following are some simple guidelines to keep your speech and verbal packaging on the right track.

- Don't use jargon or technical language unless you are sure every member of your audience understands the meaning.
 - *Don't use profanity or slang.* Profanity doesn't get you anywhere or anything – except maybe a late night special on HBO. In general, using profanity damages your credibility.⁸ Researchers found that job applicants with filthy mouths, regardless of their gender, were perceived as significantly less persuasive than those using clean language. Be sensitive to whatever language your audience might find offensive, profanity or otherwise. Avoid name-calling and other forms of abusive language. Sure, you can call someone dumb or stupid, but when you can verbally package what you are trying to say, you can paint a better picture.
 - Speak in everyday language. You want your audience to relate to you and to feel as comfortable with you as possible. Use language that will make you seem familiar and easy to follow.
 - Keep your language simple and clear.
- Keep your sentences short. Use as few words as possible unless you are painting the picture – just one idea at a time. Use words that will engage the audience: you, we, us,

and even I if you are relating a personal experience. Don't use vague and abstract words. They muddle your meaning and confuse your listener. Don't talk down to your listener by using pompous and pretentious words. Be direct; don't bluff or beat around the bush.

Complex	Simple
annually	every year
comprehend	understand
assistance	help
cultivate	grow
accomplished	did
essential	necessary
utilize	use
persists	continues
primary	first
respond	answer
disseminate	spread

- Use verb-driven language. If you use verb-driven language, you will arouse a greater sense of action and motivation. Using these kinds of verbs will make your statement more convincing because your audience will engage their emotions, consciously and subconsciously. Verbs that are abstract or overused do not communicate excitement.