WHO TALKS LIKE THAT???

HOW SOUNDING HUMAN MAKES EVERYTHING YOU SAY MATTER MORE.

FOR BROADCASTERS AND PODCASTERS.

Common misstatements that make listeners ignore you.

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Radio and podcasts are intimate media.
And unforgiving.

Mispronounce a word, misuse another, lapse into cliché or announcer-speak, and you've given them a reason to notice **how** you're talking, instead of **what** you're saying…or to just tune-out mentally.

I PROMISE: What follows is not intended to make you self-conscious. And if my take on this litany of examples seems picky-picky-picky, I'll take The Fifth. I'm all about helping you communicate clearly enough to compete with a historic number of audio choices, all chasing an increasingly scarce commodity: **attention.**

Broadcast-ese

"announced"

- **Avoid:** "The school board announced that classes will…"
- **Instead:** "Schools will close two hours early tomorrow."
- **Why:** Tell me the news, not that somebody announced it.

Process-speak

- **Avoid:** "The Transit Board revised its fare structure."
- **Instead:** "Riding the bus will cost 50 cents more starting Monday."
- **Why:** Meetings are process. What changes for me is news.

Bureaucrat-speak

- **Avoid:** "The district reallocated Title I funds."
- **Instead:** "Some after-school programs could be cut."
- **Why:** Translate the paperwork into consequences.

"What say you?"

- **Avoid:** When posing a call-in topic.
- **Instead:** "How do YOU feel about [issue]?" Note: "Feel" instead of "think;" because you're asking for opinions, not facts.
- **Why:** "What say you?" sounds like Tonto from the old "Lone Ranger" show.

"Those who…"

- **Avoid:** "Those who feel they were overcharged can…"
- **Instead:** "If you were overcharged, you can…"
- **Why:** "Those" talks about people. "You" talks to me.

"Is asked to…"

- **Avoid:** "Anyone who saw the accident is asked to call…"
- **Instead:** "If you saw this accident, call…"
- **Why:** Passive voice sounds stiff. Direct voice sounds human.

"The Traffic Leader"

- **Avoid:** Telling listeners what you claim to be.
- **Instead:** Tell them what they get.
- **Why:** "Leader" is about us. "Time-Saver Traffic" is about you.

Boasting

- **Avoid:** "The Station of Record…"
- **Instead:** Demonstrate what makes you useful.
- **Why:** Authority you award yourself isn't very authoritative.

Say it shorter.

- **Avoid:** “Due to the fact that…”
- **Instead:** “Because…”
- **Why:** What you’re saying lands faster.

“contact”

- **Avoid:** “You are urged to contact the State Police.”
- **Instead:** “Call the State Police.”
- **Why:** Nobody ever ran in yelling, “Contact State Police!”

“Many of you”

- **Avoid:** Sounds like you’re talking to a crowd.
- **Instead:** “You…”
- **Why:** Radio and podcasting are intimate media. Talk to one person.

“My name is…”

- **Avoid:** Introducing yourself on your podcast, or as a radio guest host.
- **Instead:** The less-formal “I’m…[name.]”
  When I guest-hosted The Jim Bohannon Show, I simply said “I’m Jim’s pal Holland Cooke;” and went right to what the coming hour offered the listener… rather than emphasizing who is missing from the show.
- **Why:** How would you introduce yourself to someone standing in front of you?

“For our friends in…”

- **Avoid:** Something of interest “For our friends in Westerly…”
- **Instead:** “If you’re in Westerly…”
- **Why:** Talk *to* people, not *about* them. “You” & “Your” are magic words.

“In order to…”

- **Avoid:** “In order to qualify…”
- **Instead:** “To qualify…”
- **Why:** “In order” brought nothing to the meeting.

“In the event that…”

- **Avoid:** “In the event that it rains…”
- **Instead:** “If it rains…”
- **Why:** Three fewer words.

Redundancies

"All-new"

- **Avoid:** "The all-new… [product]"
- **Instead:** "The new… [product]"
- **Why:** New is new. Better yet, tell me *why* new matters.

"Period, full-stop"

- **Avoid:** "Period, full-stop." Sounds bellicose, like "I'm right and that's that!"
- **Instead:** Pick one.
- **Why:** Saying the same thing twice doesn't make you twice as right.

"Close proximity"

- **Avoid:** "Homes in close proximity to the fire…"
- **Instead:** "Homes near the fire…"
- **Why:** Two syllables beat six. And humans say "near."

"…and much more!"

- **Avoid:** Adding this to embellish features listed in commercial copy.
- **Instead:** Delete it. 3-fewer-words will sound less-rushed. Let copy breathe.
- **Why:** If the "much more" matters, tell me what it is.

"Added bonus"

- **Avoid:** "And as an added bonus…"
- **Instead:** "And as a bonus…"
- **Why:** A bonus is already added.

"Past history"

- **Avoid:** "His past history shows…"
- **Instead:** "His history shows…"
- **Why:** History has already happened.

"End result"

- **Avoid:** "The end result was…"
- **Instead:** "The result was…"
- **Why:** A result is where you ended up.

"Personal belongings"

- **Avoid:** "Take your personal belongings with you."
- **Instead:** "Take your belongings with you."
- **Why:** Whose else would you be taking?

"Each and every"

- **Avoid:** "Each and every weekday…"
- **Instead:** "Every weekday…"
- **Why:** Sounds like you're being paid by the word. Sounds mid-20th Century.

"Future plans"

- **Avoid:** "She'll discuss her future plans."
- **Instead:** "She'll discuss her plans."
- **Why:** Plans generally concern what hasn't happened yet.

"Unexpected surprise"

- **Avoid:** "It was an unexpected surprise."
- **Instead:** "It was a surprise."
- **Why:** If you expected it, it wasn't much of a surprise.

"Completely destroyed"

- **Avoid**: "The building was completely destroyed."
- **Instead:** "The building was destroyed."
- **Why:** Destroyed doesn't leave much wiggle room.

Cliché Alert!

"At the end of the day…"

- **Avoid:** Sounding like everyone else is easy. That's the problem.
- **Instead:** Just make the point.
- **Why:** Like "Period. Full Stop," this often sounds bellicose.

"The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly"

- **Avoid:** when describing three-of-something.
- **Instead:** Think of something new.
- **Why:** The movie came out in 1966. Sounding more current earns you ears.

"The best ___ in town"

- **Avoid:** The restaurant has "the best wings in town."
- **Instead:** Make me hungry.
- **Why:** Don't claim the benefit. Demonstrate it. What makes them SO delicious?

"a relaxing atmosphere"

- **Avoid:** Generic adjectives any competitor could claim.
- **Instead:** Describe something I can picture, hear, taste or experience.
- **Why:** If ten competitors could make the same claim, it advertises none of them.

"For all your ___ needs"

- **Avoid:** Lazy commercial copy, i.e., "For all your automotive needs…"
- **Instead:** Talk about specific benefits.
- **Why:** "Needs" is verbal Styrofoam.

Grammar and Usage

It's / Its

- **Avoid:** The wrong one. Homonyms aren't a problem on-air, but elsewhere…
- **Instead:** "It's" = "it is," a contraction. "Its" = possessive. "It's licking its paw."
- **Try this:** Substitute *it is*. If it works, apostrophe.

Imply / Infer

- **Avoid:** Using them interchangeably.
- **Instead:** Speakers imply. Listeners infer.
- **Why:** I imply. You infer. Different ends of the conversation.

"I could care less"

- **Avoid:** Because you mean the opposite.
- **Instead:** "I couldn't care less."
- **Why:** If you *could* care less, apparently you care.

"Switching gears"

- **Avoid:** Young valet parkers. Many don't know how to drive a standard shift!
- **Instead:** "Shifting gears..."
- **Why:** Gears don't switch. They shift. So the valet will park you out front, next to the Maserati.

"Out of pocket"

- **Avoid:** Using this phrase to mean unreachable.
- **Instead:** If you will be unavailable, say "out of touch."
- **Why:** "Out of pocket" means you've lost money, or are self-funding.

"These days"

- **Avoid:** Unless you're trying to sound like somebody's grandfather.
- **Instead:** "Lately" sounds like conversation. "These days" sounds like reminiscence.
- **Why:** Same meaning. And fewer words, easier on the ear.

Dated References

“the radio dial”

- **Avoid:** sounding like you’re referring to a receiver with vacuum tubes.
- **Instead:** the station’s frequencies.
- **Why:** When was the last time you actually turned a dial?

“a carbon copy”

- **Avoid:** “And tomorrow will be a carbon copy of today.”
- **Instead:** “More of the same tomorrow.”
- **Why:** People who used carbon paper are now old enough for Social Security.

“Rolodex”

- **Avoid:** “Add it to your Rolodex.”
- **Instead:** Say “your Contacts.”
- **Why:** Info formerly on a rotary of index cards moved to smartphones long ago.

“like a broken record”

- **Avoid:** “I know I sound like a broken record,” meaning “I’m repeating myself.”
- **Instead:** Don’t point out that you’re repeating yourself.
- **Why:** Many listeners have never heard a record skip.

“toll-free”

- **Avoid:** “Call toll-free, [number].”
- **Instead:** Just announce the number
- **Why:** With unlimited-calling phone plans, “toll-free” sounds ancient.

“World Wide Web” and “on the web”

- **Avoid also:** “log-on.” People are always-on now.
- **Instead:** Just announce the domain name.
- **Why:** That AOL 1.14K modem screech is right out of “You’ve Got Mail.”

Commonly Mispronounced Words

Erudite

- **Avoid:** AIR-ee-oo-dite.
- **Instead:** AIR-oo-dite.
- **Why:** Three syllables, not four. Want to sound erudite? Pronounce it correctly.

Literally

- **Avoid:** "LIT-trilly."
- **Instead:** Give it all four syllables. "LIT-er-ally."
- **Why:** Swallowing half the word doesn't make it sound smarter.

Jewelry

- **Avoid:** "jew-lery."
- **Instead:** "jewel-ry."
- **Why:** First say *jewel.* Then add *-ry.*

Vice Versa

- **Avoid:** "vice-a-versa."
- **Instead:** "vice versa."
- **Why:** No extra *a* required.

Undoubtedly

- **Avoid:** "undoubtably."
- **Instead:** "undoubtedly"
- **Why:** "Undoubtably" is undoubtedly wrong.

Supposedly

- **Avoid:** "supposably."
- **Instead:** "supposedly"
- **Why:** "Supposably" makes whatever follows sound less credible.

Espresso

- **Avoid:** “expresso”
- **Instead:** “espresso”
- **Why:** It may be fast caffeine, but there’s no *x* in it.

et cetera

- **Avoid:** “ex cetera”
- **Instead:** “et cetera”
- **Why:** In Latin, “et” means “and.” “ex” means “out of, from.”

For all intents and purposes

- **Avoid:** “For all intensive purposes…”
- **Instead:** “For all intents and purposes…”
- **Why:** You mean *every practical sense*, not an especially strenuous purpose.

The “Who-Talks-Like-That?” Test

Before you open the mic -- or hit Record – ask yourself:
Would I actually say this to one person sitting across from me?

If not, rewrite it.

Because the object isn't to sound like a broadcaster.
Sound like a person who has something useful to tell me.

"But wait! There's more!"

Other consultants' web sites are brochures, static content about *them.*
HollandCooke.com is about *you* and your work, and I keep adding to it.

Among what you'll find there:

Podcasting: Your #1 success factor?

44-second video explains. And hear why your technique is critical, in **this 3-minute podcast**.

Attention is not for sale. Buying clicks is a recipe for failure.

For less than you spend at Starbucks, my E-book can help you move from sampling to subscribing to subscribers-sharing your podcast. $4.99: **Click here for instant download** [PDF].

Broadcasting: The phone isn't ringing?

It's a common challenge for vacation fill-in talent. Often the guest-hosts are local somebodies, not career broadcasters.

For their benefit – and because even seasoned professionals always benefit from brushing-up-on the fundamentals – **here are 12 tips**.

The 6 Most-Dreaded Words in Sales!

These advertisers canceled…until we reworked their spots using the technique I demonstrate in **this short video all reps should see**.

Hungry for relevance? And revenue?

There is a National _____ Day for nearly every food you can imagine; and lots of promotion and public service opportunities.

Download my Events & Occasions Calendar, either a PDF or editable spreadsheet, so you can add local items. It's FREE when you **subscribe to my monthly newsletter**, also free.

How else can I help?

To book a Zoom -- complimentary and confidential – **click here**.

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