

When You are the Ah Counter

Objective

Use the “**Ah Buzzer/Clicker**” to give audible feedback to participants whenever they use a **verbal crutch**.

Keep a tally of all crutches used during the meeting.

What is a Verbal Crutch?

A verbal crutch is a word or sound commonly used by an untrained speaker to join their thoughts or to fill a pause in speaking. The speaker is generally unaware that they are using verbal crutches. Examples of verbal crutches are “ah”, “um”, “you know”, prolonged “and”, or unnecessarily repeated words.

Before the Meeting

Prepare your introduction using the Sample instruction as a guide.

During the Meeting

- Introduce your role when called upon (15-30 seconds).
- Sound the buzzer/clicker whenever a verbal crutch is heard with the following exceptions.
 - The buzzer/clicker must not be used during the prepared speeches. (Likewise during a formal ceremony like our new member induction ceremony.)
 - If a person is having particular difficulty (especially a guest or new member), don't “buzz” them incessantly. This can become counterproductive. In such a case, you “buzz” them a few times, then give them a break and discuss their problem constructively after the meeting, one on one.
- Tally the number of verbal crutches for each meeting participant and categorize the crutch as an “ah”, “um”, etc.
- Report your results when called upon. Refer to Sample Report and be BRIEF.

After the Meeting

Talk one on one with anyone who needs feedback not appropriate to mention in front of the group.

Sample Introduction

“Thank you, Madam Toastmaster. Today I will be serving as “ah” Counter. During the meeting I will be listening for any verbal crutches such as “ah”, “um”, “and” or “you know.” If I notice you using a verbal crutch I will sound this buzzer/clicker <sound device>. I will be keeping track of verbal crutches and reporting the results at the end of the meeting when called upon.

Sample Report

“Thank you, Mr. General Evaluator. We did a good job today avoiding crutches. Mary, Bob, and George did not use any verbal crutches. John, I recorded several “ahs” for you. Betty, I noticed you saying “you know” a couple of times. And Frank, you repeated the word “so” instead of pausing during your speech.

Keys to Success

- Be prepared for your speaking opportunities. Use sample wording provided as a guideline, but don't read it word for word. This will ensure that your introduction and report are
 - concise so that the meeting stays on schedule and
 - clear so that our guests understand what is going on.
- Don't be timid about sounding the buzzer/clicker. The only way the speaker can benefit is to get audible feedback.
- Keep your report upbeat. Be helpful, not critical.
- Remember **DON'T** sound the buzzer/clicker during a prepared speech.