



**Helping individuals and companies
break out of their comfort zones
to become more successful**

Training | Coaching | Speaking
www.gildabonanno.com
gilda@gildabonanno.com
203-979-5117

Cut Out Your Filler Words

Filler words include "um," "ah," and words such as "like," "so," and "ok," which are used as a verbal bridge to the next word.

These words just fill in space while you remember or think of something to say next. Rather than being effective bridges, they are roadblocks, distracting the audience and interrupting the flow of your message. These filler words weaken your presentation and give the impression that you don't know what you're talking about. Starting every other sentence with fillers (for example, "you know" or "like I said") can also be interpreted as verbal expressions of your anxiety or lack of confidence.

The good news is that you can learn to eliminate filler words. And like with so many bad habits, the first step towards change is to become aware that you're using them.

How can you become conscious of the filler words you use? Listen to yourself as you speak, record yourself or ask someone in the audience. Or attend a Toastmasters meeting (an international organization dedicated to helping people improve their public speaking www.toastmasters.org), where there is an official Um and Ah Counter. He or she tallies up all the filler words used by the speakers and then reports on it at the end of the meeting. The point is to hear yourself using them so you can cut them out.

Once you have become aware of when you use fillers, here's how to eliminate them:

1. Stop speaking when you hear yourself use a filler word.
2. SILENTLY pause instead of filling the space with words.
3. Breathe.
4. Move on to your next word.

Here's an exercise that you can use to practice this at home:

1. Speak for 1-2 minutes about something you know, like your job or what you did today.
2. Every time you hear yourself using a filler word, STOP, breathe and repeat that sentence – eventually, with more practice, you will get through the entire 2 minutes without using any filler words!

Cutting out your filler words will help you convey your message to the audience without any distractions getting in the way. And you'll sound more polished and professional.

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