



The Most Common Speaking Mistakes Teachers Make: Part 2

If your students don't listen well, then you'll struggle with every classroom management issue under the stars. Capturing and keeping their attention is that important.

Yet most teachers don't give the way they speak much thought. They consider what needs to be said, perhaps, but not how they should say it.

The power is in the how.

To create a class of active listeners who seek understanding, nod internally as they comprehend, and act upon what they learn takes a thoughtful approach.

This week, **we'll continue our series** by looking at two speaking mistakes that crop up whenever teachers rely on what comes naturally rather than on what works best.

Talking too much.

Most teachers talk too much – much more, in fact, than is necessary.

Leaving no stone, slab, or tree stump unturned, they go on and on until their students have more information and encouragement than they'll ever need.

But it's too much to take in.

The caveats, warnings, hints, and what if scenarios . . . the added bits of guidance, advice, and unnecessary background information . . . the rambling and cajoling . . . the thinking out loud . . . it blends together into a whirl of words and confusion.

The truth is, your students don't need to know every what and why. They don't need a running commentary, another interruption, or more suggestions.

They just need to know what they need *to do* or what they need *to know*.

When you provide too much verbal support, you dilute your message, confuse key points and critical information, and cause students to have to sift through the clutter to find out what really matters – which few will be willing to do.

Most will grow bored and daydream or become disruptive.

To reverse these bad habits and behaviors and put power and meaning into your voice, become discriminating with your words – stingy even. Focus only on what action your students need to take to fulfill your objectives and discard the rest.

Make every word count. The more economical you are in speech, the better your students will listen and the deeper they'll understand.

Repeating yourself.

Another common speaking mistake is the tendency to repeat the same directions more than once in succession – and sometimes three, four, and five times.

Like the previous three mistakes covered in this series, it stems from wanting – often too much – for your words to be heard and understood.

It typically happens after presenting a lesson and before or during independent work. It's also common before sending students to line up for lunch, turn in assignments, meet in groups, or perform any other routine.

It's often justified as a reminder or under the illusion that students need to hear the same direction again and again.

But they don't. In fact, it's the very thing that causes poor listening.

If your students know you'll repeat yourself, then there is no urgency or responsibility to listen the first time – or any time. They can afford to be 'blaze' toward you and your instruction because there is no expectation to pay close attention.

If ever it feels like you have to do everything for your students short of putting pencil to paper or fingers to keyboard, then you're probably a serial repeater.

Fixing the problem is simple.

Resolve to give directions only once – and only when your students are quiet and looking at you – and then expect them to be followed. **Through**

practice, and in a short amount of time, you'll create a class that listens intently to everything you say.

Transform Your Teaching

By cutting the amount of talking you do by a third, and committing to no longer repeating directions, your classroom will be transformed – no doubt about it.

But it will also transform your teaching.

You'll have more time to gather your thoughts, **more time to observe**, and more time to breathe. You'll become precise in your words and eloquent in your phraseology. You'll become direct and persuasive and unmistakably understandable.

In other words, you'll be worth listening to.