

When You Are Grammarian and Ah Counter

Being grammarian also provides an exercise in expanding listening skills. You have several responsibilities: to comment on language usage during the course of the meeting and to provide examples of eloquence.

Several days before the meeting, use the information in *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats* or in the appendix of the *Competent Communication* manual to prepare a brief explanation of the duties of the Ah-Counter for the benefit of guests.

At the Meeting Start off with a copy of the grammarian's log or use a blank sheet of paper.

When introduced: Briefly explain the role of the Grammarian and Ah Counter.

Throughout the meeting, listen to everyone's word usage. Write down any awkward use or misuse of the language (incomplete sentences, sentences that change direction in midstream, incorrect grammar or malapropisms) with a note of who erred. For example, point out if someone used a singular verb with a plural subject. "One in five children wear glasses" should be "one in five children wears glasses." Note when a pronoun is misused. "No one in the choir sings better than her" should be "No one in the choir sings better than she."

When called on by the general evaluator during the evaluation segment:

- Stand by your chair and give your report.
- Try to offer the correct usage in every instance of misuse (instead of merely announcing that something was wrong).
- Report on creative language usage and announce who used the word of the day (or a derivative of it) correctly or incorrectly.
- Helping members off their crutches

The purpose of the Ah-Counter is to note any word or sound used as a crutch by anyone who speaks during the meeting. Words may be inappropriate interjections, such as *and, well, but, so and you know*. Sounds may be *ah, um or er*. You should also note when a speaker repeats a word or phrase such as "I, I" or "This means, this means." These words and sounds can be annoying to listeners.

- When you arrive at the meeting, bring a pen and blank piece of paper for notes, or locate a blank copy of the Ah-Counter's log from the sergeant at arms.
- The president will call the meeting to order and introduce the Toastmaster who will, in turn, introduce you and the other meeting participants. When you're introduced, explain the role of the Ah-Counter.
- Throughout the meeting, listen to everyone for sounds and long pauses used as fillers and not as a necessary part of sentence structure. Write down how many filler sounds or words each person used during all portions of the meeting.

- When you're called on by the general evaluator during the evaluation segment, stand by your chair and give your report.
- After the meeting, give your completed report to the secretary.