

**NSCA**

# COACHES

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#NSCACoaches23

# Common Communication Mistakes

*This would be 100 pages if we covered all the mistakes people make on camera or in front of a group. But here are some of the most common.*

- 1. Problem:** Bumpy takeoffs and landings  
**Solution:** Entry and exit plans
- 2. Problem:** Not adapting to your audience  
**Solution:** Know your crowd and purpose
- 3. Problem:** You're a robot  
**Solution:** Bullet points, voice inflections, physicality
- 4. Problem:** Verbal tics  
**Solution:** Discover them; punish yourself
- 5. Problem:** Bad physical habits  
**Solution:** Watch your tape, watch the greats
- 6. Problem:** Transitions  
**Solution:** Active listening; list of phrases
- 7. Problem:** Talking at people, not with them  
**Solution:** Conversations, not presentations

# Common Communication Mistakes

**Problem:** Bumpy takeoffs and landings

**Solution:** Entry and exit plans

## What does this mean?

You start or get to the end of an interview/presentation/topic and don't know what to do. You either freeze up or, the opposite, keep rambling on because you don't have another question or next step to go to.

Avoid this by planning — down to the exact word if you have to — how you want to start and end your presentation. Those couple sentences are the walls of your house; everything in between is moveable furniture you can rearrange how you like.

That way, if you told yourself beforehand that once the segment is over, you're going to end with “And that's what I have to say about that, thanks for watching” — you'll have that as your plane's autopilot landing option if you run out of things to say.

# Common Communication Mistakes

**Problem:** Not adapting to your audience

**Solution:** Know your crowd and purpose

**What does this mean?**

The best head coaches don't force players to adapt to their system; they create systems that adapt to their players.

You need to be the same as a communicator. You can't just plan to deliver the same content the same way every time you address people. Do research ahead of time to learn things about who you're dealing with and find unique ways to meet them on their terms or, at least, on middle ground. Know the WHY of why you're both there.

The way you address a group of 100 will be different than a group of 5. What's important to stress to colleagues will be different than what's important to educate strangers. Prepare for this.

And then always be ready to do what great head coaches also do: make adjustments on the fly if something's not working.

# Common Communication Mistakes

**Problem:** You're a robot

**Solution:** Bullet points, voice inflections, physicality

## What does this mean?

Many people — from YouTube videos to wedding toasts — script out everything they want to say. Whether it's on cards or paper or in a teleprompter. But that only leads to you coming off robotically as you try read every word as it was prepared.

Break this up by bullet pointing your material as much as possible, either on paper or in your head. Knowing the 3-5 main tentpoles you need to hit, and then getting from one to the next without reading something verbatim makes you way more natural.

On top of that, vary the speed and cadence of your sentences. Pick specific words or phrases to emphasize with a difference in Voice. Speak with your hands, move your shoulders, arch your eyebrows or use your smile/frown on certain words. These will all shut that robot down.

# Common Communication Mistakes

**Problem:** Verbal tics

**Solution:** Discover them, punish yourself

**What does this mean?**

“Um.” “Ya know.” “Like.”

We all have verbal tics we fall back on constantly. Whether it's ending every sentence by asking “Ok?” or using “like” like, every other word, they undermine you.

Nobody will ever be tic-free, and you wouldn't want to be — they're natural and authentic. But you don't want to overdo it. So, if you don't know yours already (and trust me, you have them), ask someone you trust to be brutally honest with you and tell you.

Then, every time you catch yourself doing it, pinch yourself. Or put a buck in a “tic jar.” Create negative reinforcement, and soon you'll catch yourself about to do the tic, and instead avoid it or control it.

# Common Communication Mistakes

**Problem:** Bad physical habits

**Solution:** Watch your tape, watch the greats

## What does this mean?

You don't know what to do with your hands. Should you be crossing your legs in this chair? How do you sit at a desk or stand at a lectern?

If you ever feel physically awkward in a communication setting, think of someone who you admire for how they act in a similar setting. Maybe it's a specific news anchor or sports reporter or public official. Then watch examples of them doing what you want to do, and take notes.

Does the nightly news anchor clasp his hands at the desk? Does the candidate delivering a campaign speech have her hands in her pockets? Learn from those you want to emulate, mimic what they do, and blend those new habits with the existing behaviors you're comfortable with to create your best physical style.

# Common Communication Mistakes

**Problem:** Transitions

**Solution:** Active listening; list of phrases

**What does this mean?**

It's so common — especially in interviews/panels — to hear the presenter say the same thing after a response. “That’s great.” “Awesome.” “So interesting.” And then ask the next question. Then they say the same thing after *every* question.

Try to avoid crutch words like this anyway. Even if you’re alone And just transitioning from one point/segment to another.

If it’s with a group, active listening is so important. *Listen* to what the other person just said. Once they’re done, comment on something they said, or ask a follow-up, or mention something they said as a springboard to your next point.

Otherwise, at least vary your crutch words/phrases. Amazing, incredible, awesome, wow, fabulous, great, wonderful, terrific, outstanding, fascinating — [thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com) is your friend!

# Common Communication Mistakes

**Problem:** Talking at people, not with them

**Solution:** Conversations, not presentations

**What does this mean?**

The most boring PowerPoints? When the person reads what's on the slide word-for-word. The best? When the slides are just guides.

Same for any communication. Think of a boring lecture or a YouTube video you keep looking away from — it was probably somebody who had an essay in their mind and were just talking AT you.

Even if presenting alone, make it feel conversational. No memorizing. Crack jokes. Go on (small) tangents. Tell stories. Break fourth walls. Admit you're nervous. Get excited. Answer your own questions.

And never turn interviews or panels into “Question-Answer-Question-Answer.” Make quips or small observations about their responses before your next question. Maybe don't ask a next question at all, just relate to what they said and have them go on. Structure it like a talk at the family dinner table. Conversations, not interrogations.



# *Sick of Me Yet?*

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