

TOASTMASTER[®]

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**Beauty,
Poise and
Speaking
Skills**

**History's
Most
Important
Speeches**

**Announcing
the 2010
Golden Gavel
Recipient**



Eschew hackneyed phrases in favor of inventive expression.

Avoid Clichés Like the Plague

The judicious use of clichés, those stereotypical expressions we hear so often, can be effective, both in speech and in print. When used appropriately, clichés are a form of shorthand that can get listeners to nod knowingly while furthering the intended course of action. Yet excessive reliance on clichés can be fatal to speeches and stories, and should be avoided whenever possible.

A cliché, by definition, is a trite, commonplace expression – a sentence or phrase usually conveying a popular or common thought or idea. But the very fact that it has become a cliché, through popular use – and overuse – suggests that the phrase has lost originality and ingenuity and, thus, impact.

Using a cliché is like taking a familiar shortcut. At times, it can reassure listeners or allow you to express yourself without thinking too much. Yet it shows a lack of imagination and robs the language of interesting word combinations and fresh descriptions. The danger is that this path will lead you to stale thinking. My advice: Avoid clichés... *like the plague!*

Day-To-Day Clichés

Every culture and language has its clichés. Many embody universal truths. Some come from farming, sports, business or the political arena. Others come from the influences of foreign cultures. Consider the following:

- No use crying over spilled milk
- Old as dirt
- I wasn't born yesterday
- What goes around comes around
- Yada, yada, yada
- Moving forward
- At the end of the day
- It's déjà vu all over again
- It's like putting lipstick on a pig
- When all is said and done
- Laughing all the way to the bank
- It's now or never
- Tried and true
- It's a slam dunk
- No man left behind
- That goes without saying
- Talk is cheap
- Where there's smoke, there's fire

If I Had a Nickel ...

By attending Toastmasters meetings regularly, you're likely exposed to a separate set of clichés. Examples:

- Without further ado
- Put your hands together for
- This speaker needs no introduction
- And so on and so forth
- Think outside the box
- In the final analysis
- In conclusion

To which I respond:

Get Thee to a Thesaurus

Don't be lazy. Replace these over-used phrases. A good first step is consulting a thesaurus for appropriate alternatives. Seek precision in your speeches and stories. Focus on specificity in your

descriptions. Your readers and listeners will appreciate it.

Opening Salvos

Perhaps the most common cliché heard in Toastmasters is the speech opener "Mr./Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters and most welcome guests." Yet have you ever noticed that none of the contestants in the World Championship of Public Speaking starts his or her speech this way? It's not that they don't use this line, and they clearly mean no disrespect to the audience and judges, but they avoid muddling up their speech opening with a sentence so common and bland. Why would they?

While some would argue the merits of beginning each speech with the customary "Mr./Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters and most welcome guests," I believe strongly that each speech should begin not with a cliché (especially one that only applies to Toastmasters audiences) but with a unique statement, exclamation or question specific to that speech. You can easily follow up, after your speech's first sentence, or its first paragraph, with some sort of greeting. Don't miss the opportunity to open your speech powerfully with a tailor-made statement.

Can You Do the Twist?


Let's face it: Clichés are common. In place of clichés, be creative in your writing and speaking. Be inventive. Eschew the mundane.

Among the great joys of the English language are the creative ways in which sentences can be fashioned. Take pride in mixing and matching words to create new, evocative combinations that enrich your stories, speeches and essays. If nothing else, modify the cliché.

For example, at a recent meeting of the LaughLovers club in Oakland, California, I began my speech with the salutation “Good evening, ladies and Laughlovers!” Because it was a twist on a standard cliché (ladies and gentlemen), it garnered a laugh. You, too, can surprise and delight your audiences by employing twists to common clichés and create fresh word sequences that are simultaneously familiar and different.

Cliché Bingo

Bring this Cliché Bingo sheet to your next club meeting. See how

many of these clichés you hear during the meeting – but don’t yell “Bingo!” aloud. For advanced credit, expand this table to 4” x 4” or 5” x 5.” 

▼ Download a blank Cliché Bingo chart at: <http://tinyurl.com/yjxdr8j>

Mr./Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters & most welcome guests	Put your hands together for	This speaker needs no introduction
Without further ado	TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®	Think outside the box
And so on and so forth	In the final analysis	And in conclusion

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