



## Grammarian Role and Responsibilities

A Grammarian has two basic responsibilities:

1. To introduce the Word of the Day (WOD).
2. To comment on the use of the English language during the course of the meeting.

### I. Prior to the Meeting

- Consult with VP of Education (VPE) to select the WOD.
- Print the WOD on four 8.5 x 11 sheets (visual aids) with large letters.
- Prepare a brief definition of the WOD and prepare a sentence showing how the word is used. It should be a word that can be incorporated easily into everyday conversation but is different from the way people usually express themselves.

### II. Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- Paste your visual aids to the podium and the tables at the meeting so they can be visible to all meeting's attendees and speakers. Write WOD on white boards.
- Obtain a copy of the Grammarian Worksheet from VPE or Sergeant at Arms (SAA) (see below).

### III. During the Meeting

- When the Toastmaster calls upon you to explain your role, stand up and use the following as an example to explain your role to the audience.

**My role as Grammarian is to introduce the word of the day and encourage its use by speakers, evaluators and Table Topics participants. I will note who uses the WOD (or derivative of it) correctly or incorrectly. I will listen to word usage and note any awkward or misuse of the English language such as incomplete sentences, incorrect grammar, malapropisms etc.**

**The word of the (WOD) is:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**The meaning of the word is:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**Use the WOD in a sentence:** \_\_\_\_\_.

- Throughout the meeting, listen to everyone's word usage. Use the worksheet to record the names of all speakers, and track their usage of the WOD. Also, report on creative language usage and announce who used the WOD. Offer the correct usage in every instance where there was misuse instead of only explaining what was done incorrectly.
- When the General Evaluator calls on you to give your report, stand by your chair and use the worksheet to give your report.

IV. **After the Meeting**

- Give your completed report to the Secretary for filing.

CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

## GRAMMARIAN WORKSHEET

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SPEAKER									
Used Word of the Day									
Clear, concise (not too many words, not unrelated to point)									
Incomplete sentences (or, begin one sentence, then start another without finishing first)									
Subject/Verb Agreement (NOT- They was, She want, I seen)									
Dropped Endings (NOT - doin', gotta)									
Jargon, Slang, Clichés									
Wrong Pronouns ("Me and. ., " The member . . . They . .")									
Mispronounced Words / Words not used correctly									
Inconsistent Verb Tense (Present - Past - Future in same setting) (NOT - "I am here. Then he went there.")									
A and AN (NOT - A elephant, AN meeting)									
GOOD EXPRESSION (visual, descriptive)									
GOOD METAPHOR (comparisons)									
CLEAR, CONCISE explanation									
OTHER									

## LISTENING FOR PROPER GRAMMAR

The first rule to remember when you are the Grammarian is that, if the speaker is not clear, if (s)he uses poor sentence structure, mispronounces or misuses words, or if (s)he distracts from the point or confuses the audience, you have the duty to let the speaker know, and to suggest better ways of expressing the meaning. Here are some basic tips when you are the Grammarian.

**Clear. Concise Language:** The speaker should use as few words as necessary, including short sentences and conversational language. Less is better than more. Note when the speaker has strayed away from his/her message. Especially mention when there are too many details (as, "I said. . . Then he said . . . So I said . . .").

**Incomplete Sentences:** All sentences have a subject, verb and object. A common mistake in speaking is starting one sentence, then interrupting that sentence to begin another without completing the first.

**Subject-verb agreement.** If your subject is singular, your verb should be plural ("He wants an agreement"). If your subject is plural, the verb is singular ("They want an agreement"). Other examples of bad grammar are, "They was taking the bus", and "I seen the bird."

**Dropped endings:** Dropping the last letter of a word, or incorrectly contracting several words into one create a harsh tone. Common examples are: "gotta" and "gonna".

**Jargon, Slang, Clichés:** Some speakers use the latest buzz words, abbreviations, technical terms or overused clichés to appear to be more knowledgeable. These terms can confuse or even irritate the audience.

**Wrong Pronouns:** A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun. The most common errors involve the use of "I" vs. "me." The pronoun "I" is the subject in a sentence ("I want the project"). Me is the object ("Send the project to her and me").

NEVER begin with, "Me and . . ." (as, "Me and Mike went to the store" It should be "Mike and I went to the store."). When more than one person is mentioned, you go last (Mike and I). If not sure when to use "me" or "I", ask yourself which would you use if the other subject (Mike) was not mentioned.

Listen for mixed singular and plural pronouns referring to the same one individual (as, "The driver was in the left lane. They were going the speed limit."). Instead of "they," the speaker can use either a universal "he" or "she" if the gender is not known. "They" is incorrect. The audience may think there were more drivers.

**Mispronounced Words and Words Not Used Correctly:** Mispronounced words and words that are not used in the correct way make the audience think about what should be the correct pronunciation (or word), instead of the point the speaker is making.

**Inconsistent Verb Tense (Past - Present - Future):** When telling a story, the speaker must be consistent with action verbs (as, "I went to the store. Mark says he will drive", should be, "Mark said he will drive.")

**"A" vs. "AN."** Correct usage depends on the type of words that follow the "a" or "an." Use "A" when it precedes a noun that starts with a consonant or a consonant sound, as, "He wants a seat.", or, "That was a unicycle." Use "AN" before a noun starting with a vowel or a noun with a silent "h", "She wants an elephant," or "I want \$100 an hour."

**Highlight Exceptional Use Of Grammar And Words:** It is helpful to the speaker and to the audience when positive examples are recognized.

- *Visual, descriptive expressions:* as, "the diminutive customer stared aggressively at the distressed salesperson."
- *Strong metaphors:* comparisons that provide meaning, as: "the clock looked at me like the devil in disguise."
- *Overall, clear and concise explanations:* when the point or message is illustrated without a lot of extraneous words.

**Other:** if you hear other phrases, words or expressions that make a positive or negative impression, that catch your attention or distract from your listening.

## THE GRAMMARIAN FROM HEAVEN

You do not have to report every mistake that each speaker commits. Report the most obvious, and the ones that were most confusing or distracting to you. The Grammarian is an important role because it helps speakers get their message across more clearly and concisely. Proper use of the English language is essential to meeting that goal. Pay attention to each speaker.

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Fred Haley, published author and speaker, has been a member of Toastmasters for over 12 years. Fred has earned two Distinguished Toastmasters awards. His web site, [www.TOASTMENTOR.net](http://www.TOASTMENTOR.net) is "Every Toastmaster's first stop for advice and resources." Fred publishes a weekly ToastMentor newsletter. Contact Fred at [Fred@Toastmentor.com](mailto:Fred@Toastmentor.com).