

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROGRAM

## Speech Patterns: Package Program

**Age Range:** 9-12th grade

**Goal:** To understand 2 different speech patterns that are common in young women and the consequences they have on our opportunities in society today.

**Estimated Time:** <40 min (20 min per speech pattern)

**Materials:** projector/tablet to view videos, whiteboard/poster to record information, worksheets and writing utensils for girls

**Important Note:** Emphasize that you are not telling them to change the way that they speak or imply that this is a fault they have. Make sure that they recognize this as a societal issue and don't let them blame themselves.

**The Issue: You can convey this in any way you'd like, but saying it directly has proved easiest and most effective in my experience!**

The speech patterns you will learn about today are widely used by other speakers regardless of gender or age, and they are often only marked and stigmatized when that speaker happens to be a young woman. In the research community right now, there is ample debate about whether to tell girls to change the way they speak based on societal reaction to their speech patterns. Some see it as avoiding the real problem, which is the stigma around feminine speech patterns, and that telling girls to change the way they speak does not solve anything. So, the goal of this exercise is to inform, not to make any recommendations.

### Speech Pattern #1: High Rising Terminal (“Uptalk”)

**Example:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPZMy\\_JWsOU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPZMy_JWsOU)

1. Watch the example and ask the girls what differences they noticed between the two versions. It would be helpful to make a list on a whiteboard/poster so that everyone can see and take notes. Once everyone who would like to share has done so, write the definition on the board (or say it) so that it is clear, and make sure everyone understands what it means.
  - a. Here is a definition that is widely accepted: “Uptalk is a manner of speaking in which declarative sentences are uttered with rising intonation at the end, as if they were questions.”
2. Next, begin a discussion on why you think uptalk is a commonly used speech pattern. Again, it is helpful to write down what the girls say on a whiteboard or screen. By the time everyone has contributed, add in any reasons that were not said.
  - a. Reasons that researchers suggest for why people use “uptalk”:
    - i. to avoid being interrupted or talked over
      1. because of the higher pitch at the end of the phrase
      2. signals that you are not done talking

- ii. to sound more invitational and friendly
  - iii. to check for understanding and support
    - 1. see if people are following what you say
- 3. Once everyone has contributed what they'd like and you have ensured that everyone understands, move on to the negative effects of "uptalk." Again, it is helpful to write down what the girls say on a whiteboard or screen. By the time everyone has contributed, add in any reasons that were not said.
  - a. Negative effects of "uptalk":
    - i. makes you seem less confident
      - 1. can hurt your credibility in a professional setting
    - ii. unassertive
      - 1. may be difficult to get your point across
      - 2. some studies have shown that you are perceived as less intelligent
- 4. Now that you have discussed the positive and negative aspects of this speech pattern, start brainstorming strategies to avoid it. This is also a good time to emphasize that you are not demanding that they suddenly change their way of speaking. Make clear that this is their choice, and you are just there to inform and assist them. Again, it is helpful to write down what the girls say on a whiteboard or screen. By the time everyone has contributed, add in any suggestions that were not said.
  - a. Strategies for avoiding "uptalk":
    - i. use short, declarative sentences
    - ii. focus on coming "down" at the end of every sentence
    - iii. when you know that you are right, be confident about it
      - 1. develop your sense of certainty
    - iv. catch yourself when you use "uptalk" and keep track of how often you do
- 5. Wrap up the discussion of "uptalk" and clarify any questions that they may have.

## **Speech Pattern #2: Sentence Fillers**

Example:

- 1. Watch the example and start making a list of common fillers.
  - a. Examples: "um," "like," "so," "just," "you know," "uh," "kind of," "and"
- 2. Begin a discussion by brainstorming reasons that people may use fillers when they speak. Again, it is helpful to write down what the girls say on a whiteboard or screen. By the time everyone has contributed, add in any reasons that were not said.
  - a. Some possible reasons
    - i. Make time to think about what to say next
    - ii. Habit, how you speak with friends, etc

3. Next, switch the discussion to reasons fillers are bad. Again, it is helpful to write down what the girls say on a whiteboard or screen. By the time everyone has contributed, add in any reasons that were not said.
  - a. Downsides:
    - i. distracts from what you are actually saying
    - ii. makes you seem unprepared or nervous
    - iii. makes you seem uninterested
    - iv. older people may discount you as too young
  
4. Finally, discuss strategies for avoiding fillers when you speak. Again, it is helpful to write down what the girls say on a whiteboard or screen. By the time everyone has contributed, add in any reasons that were not said.
  - a. Strategies: (from Alex Lyon and Kyle Ingham)
    - i. Get comfortable with silence! You won't use fillers and listeners will have more time to consider what you've said.
    - ii. Develop a new habit to replace the old one.
      1. For public speaking, it helps to practice your speech louder than you would normally say it so you can hear just how often you use fillers and are more aware of when you're likely to.
      2. You can fill in the silence with phrases like "period" or "pause" while practicing.
    - iii. Breathe more when you are talking - this is an easy way to create a pause.
    - iv. Have someone let you know every time they hear you use a certain filler.
    - v. Make eye contact with others.
  
5. Wrap up the discussion on fillers and clarify any questions that they may have.

At the very end, acknowledge that you are human too. You most likely used all of these speech patterns during the activity, and the girls most likely noticed.

## Speech Patterns

What does “uptalk” sound like?

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What are some reasons “uptalk” can be a good form of communication?

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What are some reasons “uptalk” can be a bad form of communication?

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What are some strategies you could use to help you avoid “uptalk?”

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What are some examples of fillers that you use in your day to day life?

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What are some reasons that you use these fillers?

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What are some downsides to using fillers?

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What are some strategies you could use to help you avoid using fillers?

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## Notes

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