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Tricks of Talking
by Marian Will

Take the knots out of your conversation for it may be the critical point in more than one instance. One author has said, "Nothing gives away so quickly your race, your locality, your family inheritance or environment, your culture, your intelligence, and your personality, as does your speech."

Since conversation is supposed to be the interchange of ideas, it follows that more than one person must voice his thoughts and ideas. However, you know a bore is "one who talks about himself when you want to talk about yourself." The great faults of conversation are said to be the want of ideas, want of words, and want of manners. One must be interested in everything that is said and express his opinions. To say too little is as bad as to say too much.

Charm in speech depends first on the tone and quality of the voice. Voice should express personality, and personality is the impression you make on others through what they can see and hear. Even the kindest words with a harsh, strident voice can produce an undesirable effect. On the other hand, who can endure the "Caspar Milquetoast" type?

The tones of the voice proclaim accurately the social background. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Talking is one of the fine arts—the noblest, the most important, and the most difficult. Its fluent harmonies may be spoiled by the intrusion of a single harsh note."

Too frequent use of slang is a sign of a limited vocabulary. It takes a little more of brain work to fit word to the thought and thought to fact. Being accurate does not mean being dull. Effective speech has much need for imagination but very little for common slang. Grammar is necessarily taken for granted. Correct use of our language is considered essential today.

Conversation is a case in which a fine comes in handy, but not the string-of-words-by-heart kind. It is the ability to express one's self and to speak out. However, talk that is just chatter is a successor to boredom.

And now, that stumbling-block in conversation—what to talk about! It is hardly cricket to use the weather as a conversation-starter. Certainly it is a challenge to the imagination to find some less trite subject to start the ball rolling.

A knowledge gained by reading good books, better magazines, and daily newspapers, and listening to good radio programs offers topics of importance and interest in the contemporary world. Be enthusiastic, cheerful and fair, and you will become a welcomed part of any group. Original ideas are a stimulus to any conversation.

"The person who is going to interest other people must have something more than a voice and a power of energizing it. He must have something to say."

Number, Please?
by Harriet Graves

Silky eyelashes and an imported French crepe may be sure-fire when the lights are low and the music soft, but they're of no value at the end of a telephone wire. Our voices and manners are all we have to portray (and sometimes betray) us, so we took an inventory and this is what we found.

Of great importance is a pleasing voice. A harshly belligerent or bored tone can be very disillusioning, while "the voice with a smile" has a charm not to be disregarded.

Cooperation with the operator is the proverbial stitch in time. A "please" or "thank you" gets much better service from the operator than a frenzied jiggling of the hook. It is your privilege to be pleasant, but she has to be.

A coy "Guess who?" or a blunt "Who is this?" have a most dampering effect. Ask for the person to whom you wish to speak. If he or she is not there it often facilitates matters for you to leave your name and phone number, or a message. Calls should be made at convenient times—if you're human you don't like crawling out of bed to be asked what the history lesson for tomorrow is.

Arrange to call from a place where you can hear the person at the other end of the wire. Irritating indeed are "I don't getcha" and "What's that?"

Calm the gang down, plug your other ear with cotton and say, "I beg your pardon?" or "Will you please repeat?"

The person who calls is usually the one to end the conversation. Close a call by saying "Goodbye." Childish "Well, bye bye" and slangy "So long" are on the list of "don'ts." Slamming the receiver is like a slap in the face.

Thoughtfulness in writing messages down and delivering them promptly is appreciated.

When you are busy it is correct to say, "May I call you back?" or "May I call you back in 15 minutes?" If you have left the iron on, or the water running in the tub, don't just vanish. Give a reason for leaving and ask if the person will hold the line a minute. When back, say "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting."

If someone has called to inquire how you are or to show an interest in your activities, thank him for calling before you hang up. Make conversations as brief as possible when you have guests.

If you find the conversation boring, carry on. You wouldn't put a guest out of your home if she were there talking to you.

Some ordinarily courteous people make a telephone conversation gruesome, but good manners over the wire are a real test.