



Choose your Words CAREFULLY

Communicating well is a significant career advantage. Words can make or break a career.

Words last. They cannot be unsaid or unwritten. Once we miscommunicate, we are left to damage control; we must revise and explain, apologize for any hurt or insult, or even admit to something better left unsaid.

Carefully choosing words that accurately express our thoughts and ideas is essential, but the power of word choice goes beyond simply conveying a message.

When considering words it is important to weigh their connotation and context. Imprecise communication increases the likelihood that the message will be misinterpreted by the audience.

It is equally imperative that language is appropriate for the intended audience. Using graduate level terminology to introduce a new program to parents in a low income neighbourhood, for example, would very likely be unsuitable and ineffective. Worse, it would probably appear self-important and condescending as well.

While some think using elevated vocabulary impresses others, it actually risks ridicule in nearly any setting except the most erudite.

Conversely, using middle school slang or over-simplified terminology to explain a concept to a crowd of attorneys and college professors is similarly ill-advised.

Too many words can blemish an impression as well. Droning on and on is seldom well-received and if done too often, can lead others to avoid contact. Monopolizing a discussion or conversation often annoying. Repeating the same phrases over and over suggests poor thought processes. Going into elaborate, but unnecessary, detail to establish credibility may instead achieve being labelled a bore.

High-profile professionals earn respect and credibility when they exercise great care in what they say and how they say it, in both formal and casual exchanges. Their comments reflect careful thought, and their messages are clear, concise, and appropriate for the time, place, and audience.