

# Challenge #1: Tick off verbal tics

Starting **every** sentence with words or phrases such as honestly, frankly, truly or in reality.

Describing things using the **same adjective or adverb** every single time. You know, that show was terrific, it was fantastic, it was tremendous.

(Over) relying on **certain expressions** (generally cliches) such as “at the end of the day” or “right back atcha” or “takes two to tango.”

I think of these as verbal tics. We are not even aware that we are using these verbal crutches. And they can creep into our writing, especially in social media posts. They may distract readers and listeners or even make them tune out what you are saying.

The summer’s first challenge is to rid yourself of verbal tics (or at least reduce them).

Here are the three steps to take:

1. **Identify** these verbal tics in your writing or speaking. Start paying attention to yourself and your writing. Do you find yourself saying certain things over and over?
2. **Figure** out why you are saying this. Why do you have to preface your statement with “honestly?” Are you generally not honest? Is it just habit? Is there any other way to say this?
3. Now, this is the hard part: **eliminate** the word or phrase completely. Try doing this for a day or two. If you catch yourself about to use one of your verbal tics, find another word or phrase to use instead.

This won't be easy. We get into patterns and it's hard to stop. And that's the point of this challenge: becoming aware of your patterns.

What do you think? What is your verbal tic? Are there verbal tics that your colleagues have that drive you nuts? Tell me!

UPDATE:

Seems that even the New York Times has verbal tics, as the article [The New York Times lists its crutch words](#) points out. Verbal tics are crutches for sure!