

# PG-5: EF-B

## ELIMINATING HALTING OR CHOPPY PHRASING WITHIN UTTERANCES

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Generally people who use choppy phrasing or halting speech while cueing do this not because they lack any speech skills but because they are not quite sure how to cue the next word. Their cueing skills are not as automatic as their speech skills. It would be comforting to think that more experience in cueing eliminates this problem, but that isn't always the case. I'll explain. Many adults who are reasonably fluent in conversational speech become much less fluent when they attempt to read something aloud from a printed text. The act of reading while speaking causes them to become halting and choppy (i.e., pauses and hesitations occur in the wrong places). This is because reading-while-speaking is a much more complex skill -- one which the individual hasn't mastered. Ironically, most of us read aloud at about the fourth grade level because that's where the monitoring of such skills in school stops! Further development of oral reading skills beyond the fourth grade is the responsibility of the individual child.

By the same token, when one learns to cue, the emphasis is upon cueing syllables and then words with accuracy and good synchronization. You may recall that there was some practice in the final taped lesson for cueing phrases, short sentences, and liaison -- but not enough specific practice for some individuals. Consequently, those individuals let their *word* attack skills govern how they cue-and-say phrases and sentences. They actually build habits which work against normal oral phrasing for meaning. Pauses enter their Cued Speech for reasons other than phrase meanings or syntactical (sentence structure) rules. The end result is halting and choppy speech-with-cues.

### Phrasing for Meaning

Although we leave spaces between written words to aid the eye, we do not ordinarily leave "time" spaces between words in oral phrases or sentences to aid the ear. The ear relies on other information such as stress, pitch and juncture. We only leave spaces between spoken words to clear up any oral ambiguities. Notice that in the following spoken phrases there are no oral ambiguities:

- "Bob Jones" (that's his whole name -- no breaks!)
- "A Tale of Two Cities" (a book title -- all one unit)
- "in the park" (a prepositional phrase)
- "a little white house" (noun phrase)
- "sitting on a fence" (participial phrase)
- "Birds fly." (simple sentence)
- "Sam hit his first home run in the game on Saturday at Fenway Park." (simple sentence: subject+verb+object+modifiers)

Any pauses in the above units would have interfered with meaning. However, in the following examples there are *oral* ambiguities, and pauses are definitely necessary to convey appropriate meaning:

- "A man going to sea his wife requests the prayers of the church."

- "Mother did bad things ever happen to you?"
- "If you are naughty boys won't play with you."

And this sentence without appropriate oral pauses would be totally incomprehensible:

"That that is is that that is not is not is not that it it is." (If you can't figure it out, click [here](#).)

Sometimes the syntax of a phrase or sentence requires an oral pause. Usually there is a written comma, colon, semi-colon, or period. Here are some basic rules for use of the comma:

1. When listing a series of items.

Example: "I saw monkeys, tigers, elephants and snakes at the zoo." (Use oral pauses between items where there is a comma.)

2. To highlight a non-restrictive clause.

Example of a restrictive clause: "My brother who lives in Iowa is visiting us." (no pauses)

Example of a non-restrictive clause: "My brother Bob, who lives in Iowa, is visiting us." (Pauses are necessary because we already know which brother; the information about his living in Iowa is non-restrictive.)

3. To show apposition.

Example: "My brother, an electrical engineer, is visiting us from Iowa." (pauses because "engineer" and "brother" are one and the same subject)

Though far from exhaustive, the above examples should be sufficient to indicate when oral pauses are legitimate. The problem among cuers is the use of oral pauses where they are *not* appropriate.

1. Don't pause between the subject and verb of a sentence. "The baby is crying." "Birds fly" "She is my sister." "I feel fine."
2. Don't pause between verbs and their objects. "Bobby hit Sally." "I saw a robin." "Give me that book." "I'll tell you a story."
3. Don't pause between prepositions and their objects. "under the table" "on the roof" "over the rainbow" "at 10 o'clock"
4. Don't pause between modifiers (adjectives and adverbs) unless they are an independent series of describing words. "a little brown bug" "a very good book" "this very badly dented fender" (*Do pause* when you could insert the word "and" between adjectives or adverbs in a series: "a happy,[and] relaxed, [and]serene individual")

The above rules are ones you have been using all your life if American English is your first language. They were spelled out only because they don't seem to function efficiently when we are cueing at the same time. We speak in *thought groups of words* without pauses; we should cue-and-speak the same way. It goes without saying that when we converse we don't have the visual punctuation on a printed page to guide us. We must rely on the "punctuation" in our mental model of how we speak.

The following practice items were designed to refresh that mental model and to eliminate choppy or halting phrasepatterns while cueing. Use liaison (-) where indicated:

**"In-a minute"**  
**"Ready in-a minute"**  
**"I'll be ready in-a minute."**  
**"I said-I'll be ready in-a minute!" (no pauses, please!)**  
**"After school"**  
**"Home-after school"**  
**"Will you be home-after school?"**  
**"What-time will you be home-after school?"**  
**"Another hour"**  
**"In-another hour"**  
**"Here-in-another hour"**  
**"Daddy will be here-in-another hour."**  
**"In my bedroom."**  
**"On the dresser in my bedroom."**  
**"My purse-on the dresser in my bedroom."**  
**"Please get me my purse-on the dresser in my bedroom."**  
**"Of your bureau"**  
**"Of the bottom drawer of your bureau."**  
**"On the right hand side-of the bottom drawer of your bureau."**  
**"Your socks-are-on the right hand side-of the bottom drawer of your bureau."**  
**"For-awhile"**  
**"And play for-awhile"**  
**"Come-over and play for-awhile."**  
**"Bobby wants you to come-over and play for-awhile."**  
**"All-of your potatoes"**  
**"Until you've-eaten-all-of your potatoes" "No dessert-until you've-eaten-all-of your potatoes!"**  
**"I did yesterday"**  
**"Than-I did yesterday"**  
**"I love you even more today than-I did yesterday!"**  
**"For-an-hour" "Play outside for-an-hour" "Why don't you play outside for-an-hour?"**

Solution to ambiguous sentence:

"That that is, is. That that is not, is not. Is not that it? It is!"

Virtually every phrase and sentence for practice in this manual can be used to help eliminate the habit of choppy or halting speech while cueing. If you find that an entire sentence is too much to handle, break down the phrases -- and then rebuild them -- as we did in the above practice items.

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