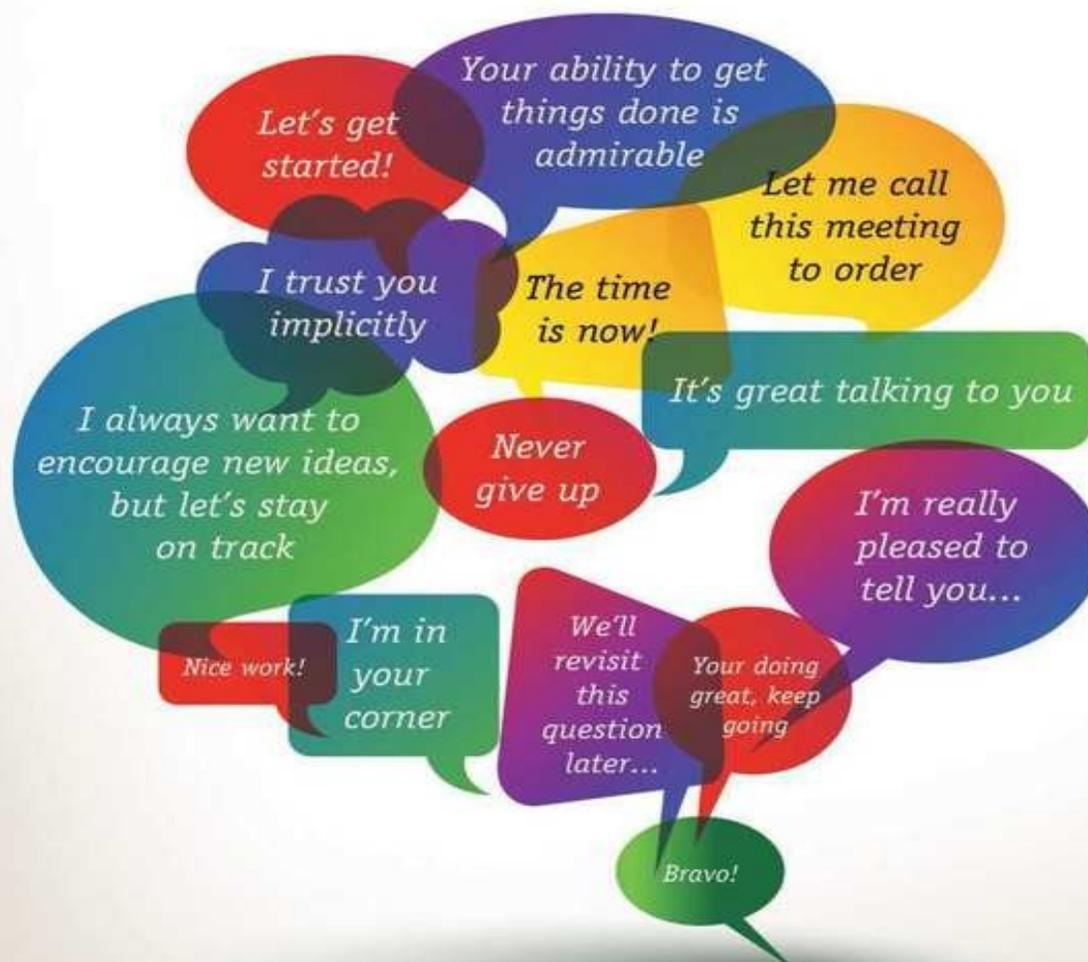


THE  
LEADER  
PHRASE  
BOOK

3,000+ Powerful Phrases That Put You In Command



PATRICK ALAIN

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# PART 1

## General Conversation

*A good conversationalist says what someone wants to remember.*

—John Mason Brown

Speaking well is an important skill to master. When you speak, it is crucial to not only say the right thing, but to avoid common pitfalls. Here are six invaluable tips to help you speak like a leader:

### 1. Speak clearly and briefly

Ordinary people who aspire to be leaders should express their thoughts with clarity and brevity. No one likes someone who hogs a conversation or who speaks in circles and endless tangents. Donald Trump, CEO and chairman of The Trump Organization, is a good example of a clear speaker. He doesn't try to blind anyone with meaningless words, but rather comes right at you with straight talk. As he wrote in his book *How to Get Rich*, “[B.S.] will only get you so far.” That is a clear thought in a few simple words. I couldn't have said it better myself!

### 2. Expand your vocabulary

Don't ever think that you have finally attained a great vocabulary. Make a commitment to learn one or two new words every day. Read magazines and books and underline words you don't know; learn their meanings and practice ways to include them in your everyday speech. If you know, say, a thousand more words than the average person, it will make you stand out from the crowd. You'll have the vocabulary of a leader.

### 3. Gain command of the idiom

Cultivate the nuances of your language and show them off. This is a process, not a goal. Whenever possible, incorporate colorful and vivid idiomatic phrases and terms—a “New York minute,” “punch drunk love”—into your spoken shorthand (being careful to avoid clichés, of course). This will make your communications that much more memorable and persuasive.

### 4. Delegate your communications whenever possible

The higher leaders get in the organizational food chain, the more risk they assume. Much more is riding on every communication than when they were, say, working in the mail room or as a minion on the sales team. Their words can create a cascade of positive effects or get them crushed as flat as a flounder. They can make the top story on the evening news or the front page of a scandal rag. Their words can create comfort or bring despair. The impact of what they say increases exponentially with their visibility, which is why many corporate and political leaders delegate many of their external communications to their PR handlers. If you can do this, by all means take advantage of it.

### 5. Learn from others' mistakes

When you notice someone communicating poorly, first check yourself to make sure you aren't doing the same thing. Model exemplary communication habits to those around you and you'll naturally become better at it over time.

## **6. Back up your ideas with knowledge**

Leaders tend to draw on personal anecdotes or their knowledge of current events and history to augment their arguments. For the biggest impact, focus on topical news items, recent sports results, new movie releases, or information you've gleaned from personal experience, and reference all of this in your conversations.

# PART 2

## At Work

*Great work is done by people who are not afraid to be great.*  
—Fernando Flores

Good communication in the workplace is just as crucial for the success of a low-level employee as it is for someone in management. However, for those who aspire to move up the corporate food chain, learning how to speak like a leader becomes even more important. Here are a few tips for anyone—whether entry level grunt or C-level honcho—to keep in mind:

### 1. Speak positively

Staying positive is one of the most important criteria for promotion. People who can put things in a positive light are proactive and tend to be well liked by their colleagues. Even while discussing a potentially negative topic, a positive speaker will always attempt to come up with solutions. Contrast this with the person who simply reports the negative situation without providing any helpful hints or strategies to deal with it. This kind of person will almost certainly be seen as a whiner or complainer—not exactly leadership material!

### 2. Think before you speak

Thinking of what you're going to say ahead of time is essential. Who hasn't made the mistake of jumping in and speaking too hastily, and harmed someone or revealed confidential information in the process? Crafting your thoughts before you open your mouth will prevent you from saying things that you regret or don't mean (politicians make this mistake all the time). The French have an expression for this: *Tourner sept fois sa langue dans sa bouche* (“Roll your tongue seven times in your mouth before you speak”).

### 3. Finish each thought before moving on

The pace of business has never been faster, so most people have the tendency to go off half cocked and rush through subjects without finishing. By slowing down and wrapping up each topic before moving on, you will present yourself as a thoughtful and measured person. This approach will also make your colleagues feel more involved in what's going on.

### 4. Prepare your speeches

A good speaker recognizes that preparation for a speech is often more important than the speech itself. Flesh out the outline of each presentation in advance, grouping your thoughts in a logical hierarchy. Index cards are a great way to do this because they can be easily sorted and moved around. If you feel uncomfortable with public speaking (as many people do), you can rehearse the presentation in front of friends and family. A good rehearsal confirms that the content, language, and pacing are all in place and ready to go. With every speech, always start with summarizing the presentation and announcing how long it is going to last. Finally, always finish on a positive note.

## 5. Write like a leader

Whenever you put your thoughts down in writing, regardless of whether it is in a letter, an e-mail, or a blog post, be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Keep your target audience in mind. Be clear but not overly formal—unless you are writing to the Queen. Seek common ground with your reader(s) and it won't fail you.
- Pay attention to proper grammar, syntax, and mechanics. Yes, you can use shorthand in text messages to your spouse, for example, but in official correspondence, your words convey your image and, as such, they need to be spelled correctly.
- Formatting matters. To provide greater clarity and understanding, use bullet points, different typefaces, boldface, italics, and underlining judiciously.

# PART 3

## Conflicts and Anger

*People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing.*  
—Will Rogers

Most of your relationships are going to involve conflict from time to time. It is inevitable. Following a few simple principles will help you build powerful synergy and relationships that last, even through the tough times.

### 1. Communication and compromise

The healthiest relationships involve two basic skills: open communication and compromise. Both of these allow you to effectively handle conflict. The key isn't to always avoid conflicts; rather, it's vital to talk things out openly and stay in control of your emotions—always remembering that the goal is resolution, not victory. If you are always trying to be “one-up” with everyone, you'll never have a satisfying or productive relationship, either at home or at work.

### 2. Keep on course

One of the most common causes of unresolved conflicts is a discussion that has gone off track or down a dead-end tangent. Stick to the core issue until the conflict is resolved or a compromise is reached. Forget anything that happened more than a month ago, even if you think it is relevant. It will only cause repressed emotions to flare up. Only by ignoring tangential issues that zap your energy, will, and patience will a satisfactory conclusion to the issue at hand be reached.

### 3. A calm attitude and a clear head

To move past conflict, always approach it with a calm attitude and a clear head. Stay positive, and don't ever resort to the abusive tactics of shouting, name-calling, or blaming. If you are feeling too angry or out of control, take a time-out to calm down. While you're away from the potential source of conflict, visualize the possible positive outcomes that you're working toward and then imagine how your discussion can focus on them. Whatever you do, stay positive during your break and try to avoid seething over the problem.

### 4. Listen with empathy

One of the most under-appreciated aspects of positive communication during conflict is to simply allow the other person to finish what they are trying to say. Don't interrupt, no matter how much you want to get a word in. Listen attentively and ensure that the other person knows it by keeping comfortable eye contact. When the other person is finished speaking, try to acknowledge and “mirror” their feelings and thoughts before moving on. This helps them feel heard and creates a more empathetic atmosphere. Remember, arguments aren't about winning and losing, but rather compromise and (hopefully) a mutually satisfactory win-win scenario for

all concerned.

# PART 4

## Diplomacy

*Diplomacy is the art of letting someone have your way.*

—Daniele Vare

Diplomats are people who have very specialized skills and who are tasked with an incredibly difficult mission. The forum for their activities is often quite public, so “working under the radar” is not always possible. If you need to engage in diplomatic tactics as part of your job, here are a few tips that will prove useful.

### **1. Engage the trust of the other side**

Imagine that you are a consul or an ambassador working to represent the interests of the U.S. government. During complex meetings and functions, you are in charge of discussing and resolving very delicate situations that have a great deal riding on them, all while maintaining friendly relations, if possible. If you are able to speak like a leader—someone who exudes confidence, respectfulness, authority, and above all, honesty—you will be trusted with critical information in turn.

### **2. Practice communication**

Polish your communication skills the way you tone your muscles at the gym. Attend speaking courses and communication classes, watch documentaries and interviews, and listen to podcasts from elites in their field. Make note of any interesting, compelling, or unusually persuasive language you learn and then use it to your advantage in your own communications.

### **3. Embrace the art of doubletalk**

It is important for a diplomat to know when to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and when to tell only the portion of the truth that is required by the situation at hand. As Carey McWilliams once said, “In order to be a diplomat one must speak a number of languages, including double-talk.” Or, as Emily Dickenson once wrote, “Tell the truth but tell it slant.”

### **4. Appear strong under pressure—even if you aren’t**

Winston Churchill displayed an amazing ability to adapt under conditions of great stress and pressure. He did so by mastering the language of a leader and by peppering his diplomacy with humor. When he was facing the tyranny of Adolph Hitler, Churchill said, “An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.” You can see that Churchill had absolute command of the idiom and could deploy it with great effect. By following his example, you’ll find that people will more quickly gravitate to your point of view, which is exactly what you hope to accomplish in any negotiation. (See [Part 5](#) for more on actual negotiation tactics.)

# PART 5

## Negotiation

*Negotiating means getting the best of your opponent.*

—Marvin Gaye

Knowing how to negotiate is one of the most important skills of a good leader. It pays to be good at it, and it isn't as difficult as it seems on the surface. Far from being the sole provenance of salespeople and buyers, anyone who needs to interact with other people will inevitably need to negotiate. A young married couple negotiates on how to share a living space. Teachers negotiate with children as a part of working with their class. Bankers almost never get what they want without working their deal. And musicians must negotiate a fair price for the fruits of their labor. If you don't know how to negotiate or are too afraid to, you risk becoming marginalized. Here are some tips to help you become a better negotiator (note that there is by necessity some overlap here with the section on diplomacy).

### 1. Gain the trust of others

Leaders who know how to negotiate well are able to quickly gain the trust of the parties involved. Part of gaining trust is having a certain amount of transparency—but not too much!—regarding your desires and goals. When people know what you want, they will be more likely to trust you.

### 2. Don't justify yourself

This is the downside and converse of the first point: the more you expose your thoughts and goals, the more you open yourself up to disapproval, criticism, and rejection. Sometimes being more inscrutable will work to your advantage. During negotiations, keep your cards close to your chest if it's something that could weaken your position. Likewise, when laying out your intentions, be succinct—say only what you need to and then stop talking. Leave a space for silence. By justifying your goals you may come across as underwhelming or indecisive or, worse yet, defensive.

### 3. Don't let them see you sweat

Poor or inexperienced negotiators allow their opponents to see their weakness. You never want to cede your advantage like this. Keep a poker face and project nerves of steel, even if you are quaking inside. Practice this with smaller deals and then work your way up to bigger ones.

### 4. Be willing to walk away

The person who is least invested in the outcome—or who *appears* to be the least invested—has the most power. You're in charge. You set the agenda, which includes when you will walk away.

### 5. Silence is golden

You do not always have to do all the talking. Sometimes a period of silence or even a break in negotiations can do more in less time than trying to ramrod a solution down the other side's throat. Silence also creates a space for discomfort and awkwardness, which unsettles your opponent and may make them more willing to concede.

# PART 6

## Problem Solving

*Leaders are problem solvers by talent and temperament, and by choice.*  
—Harlan Cleveland

Great leaders are great problem solvers. Being able to put solutions into action puts you at center stage and provides people with the direction they often need. Applying the following tips will help you attack and solve any issue with aplomb:

### 1. Diagnose

Ask an unlimited number of questions to first find out what the problem actually is—no sense in coming up with a great solution for the wrong problem! Think of a doctor who asks multiple searching questions while performing an examination. This gives her a great deal of information that will be invaluable in coming up with a diagnosis. And don't be afraid to ask "dumb" questions—give yourself permission to explore every possibility.

### 2. Advocate

Once you understand what you're up against you have to help people realize the magnitude of the problem and the potential pitfalls of not solving it effectively. This involves discussing the full scope of the issue, including any downstream effects, and persuading them that they need to be part of the solution.

### 3. Strategize

If you fail to plan, you may as well plan to fail. Outline a step-by-step plan as to how the problem will be tackled. Rather than merely giving commands, find a way to make people believe that the solution is their own idea. If you are facing opposition, help people recognize how your solution will benefit them personally.

### 4. Delegate and follow up

Be sure the group has a handle on the problem and can effectively put your plans into action. Don't be afraid to delegate, but be sure you check in regularly to see how things are progressing.

# PART 7

## Courtesy

*Courtesy is as much a mark of a gentleman as courage.*  
—Theodore Roosevelt

Even when there's no crisis, leaders must project their capability and charisma in the more mundane aspects of life, such as common courtesy. This is an area that can humble even the most dynamic leader because it can catch one off guard. To wit, here are a few tips to help you lead with courtesy:

### 1. Treat others as you want to be treated

You've undoubtedly seen it once or twice before: someone at your workplace unloads on someone else, using the imperative tense and a tone of voice that is simply outrageous. Did this help either person? Certainly not. A little courtesy, not to mention empathy and respect, would have served both of them better. If you find yourself in this position, take a deep breath, excuse yourself to calm down, and reconvene when the matter can be discussed more calmly and constructively—and courteously.

### 2. Smile

A simple smile goes a long way toward establishing you as an affable and approachable person. In fact, smiling is a great source of stress relief. Whenever you smile, others are likely to smile with you, effectively spreading the joy. Contrary to popular opinion, truly great leaders don't cultivate an unapproachable, testy, or even intimidating demeanor.

### 3. Be inclusive

People who are gifted at courteous conversation typically have an inclusive perspective, regardless of the other person's point of view or how it's expressed. Being inclusive means that a real leader will avoid discriminatory or sexist language. So for example, instead of saying "policeman" say "police officer," and instead of "stewardess" say "flight attendant." Language has the power to shape your life as well as the lives of those around you.

### 4. Use body language and tone of voice to your advantage

Body language is something you're going to need to master if you hope to be an effective communicator. John Borg states that human communication consists of 93 percent body language and paralinguistic cues, while only 7 percent of communication consists of the words themselves (Borg, *Body Language: 7 Easy Lessons to Master the Silent Language*, Prentice Hall Life, 2008). As such, body language can provide the best clues as to the real attitude or state of mind of a person. Examine the way you use your body in front of a mirror, or better yet, videotape yourself and then play it back (warning: you might be shocked at what you see!). Keep your gestures under control and look straight at the person or persons you're talking to. Also maintain a medium good voice level and avoid emotional outbursts that take you off track

and undermine your strategies.

## **5. Avoid gossip**

While it can be exciting to share juicy tidbits around the copy machine or the water cooler, it can really hurt you if your statements get back to the person(s) concerned. Although you may feel as though you are bonding with others, your gossip will make the people around you uneasy, even if they don't say so out loud. A truly courteous person will not talk trash about others. This will also have the effect of engendering trust in others: they know you don't talk about others, so it's likely you won't talk about them, either.

## **6. Don't interrupt**

If you tend to cut people off, you will be perceived as rude, argumentative, and egotistical, none of which will help your position as a leader. A truly courteous person always allows others to finish making their point before speaking. If you have two or more questions to interject, write them down and then refer to the list once you have the floor.

# PART 8

## Machiavellian Techniques

*It is better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both.*  
—Niccoló Machiavelli

Over the years, the adjective *Machiavellian* has become a term describing someone who manipulates others for personal advantage. A Machiavellian leader is often ingenious and insightful, although his tactics may seem ethically suspect to some. A true Machiavellian often has the reputation for being a cunning, sly master of social engineering. Of course, not every great leader could be considered Machiavellian, but some find that a judicious use of these tactics can be effective. But beware: you'll not endear yourself to others if you use these tactics!

### 1. Intimidate

If people are approaching you with a certain fear, uncertainty, or doubt, you're more than halfway to winning. Demonstrate that you always have higher priorities than what others are asking from you.

### 2. Build a firewall

Build an impenetrable wall around yourself and keep most people outside of it. Limit their access and frustrate their efforts to get to you. This will make them angry, but it will allow you to maneuver without encumbrance. Like a sailboat in a race, you can only maintain your top speed if you get rid of the barnacles that encrust your hull. By doing this, you will also be less likely to take the feelings of others into account, which is very Machiavellian.

### 3. Motivate

Freud said that people do things for two reasons: to obtain pleasure or to avoid pain. The Machiavellian knows how to leverage both the carrot and the stick to his/her advantage. A properly motivated employee works faster, requires less direction, and actually takes more pride in what he or she accomplishes.

### 4. Keep social climbers away from you

If you are successful, regardless of how you got to the top, you will be surrounded by social climbers. Limit access to yourself with a "recommend only" principle. If a newcomer arrives to you without being recommended by someone you trust, he/she doesn't get an audience. Period. Making it difficult for others to get an audience with you will also increase your value in their eyes.