



excess. Sometimes they are needed, sometimes they are not, it depends on the sentence. Whether or not each usage will count as a filler word is up to you. Was it distracting? If they removed that one word, would the sentence still make sense? Did they start the sentence with that word? If you answer yes to any of those questions, it's probably a filler word. If they are using the word to transition between thoughts, it might not be a filler.

Besides filler words, the ah counter also checks for other distracting speech patterns, such as false starts and word repetition. A false start is when the speaker starts one sentence or thought, and then changes direction without finishing what they were saying. An example of a false start is "Knowing that.. With that in mind". Thoughts that are incomplete are usually false starts. Word repetition is usually due to nervousness or forgetting what to say next. Examples are "that that", "I I", etc.

You want to pay attention and keep track during the whole meeting, for every person that speaks. If you have a speaking role (table topics or educational speaker, for example), someone else might mark your filler words while you are speaking. It's very hard to keep track of these for yourself!

Speaking of speaking roles (does that count as word repetition?), the Ah Counter has a few times in the meeting they have to present. It wouldn't be Toastmasters without making everyone have a speaking opportunity!

The first time is at the beginning of the meeting. The Toastmaster will call upon you, the Ah Counter, to explain what you will be doing. All you have to do is say a sentence or two, something like "I will be keeping track of the filler words used by all speakers during the meeting" (followed by a few examples of filler words) is enough.

Near the end of the meeting, the General Evaluator will call upon you to give your final report. This is when you will tell everyone how they did. Start by saying "*Thank you, Mister/Madame General Evaluator*". Go through your list of names, and tell each person their count for each filler word. If anyone has 5 or more of a certain word, those are called Bingo's, and you don't say the actual count. For example if Sally had seven um's, you would say, "*Sally, you had a bingo of um's, three ah's, and one but*". Don't forget to look at your camera while giving your report. When you are done, you can say something like "*Back to you, Mister/Madame General Evaluator*" or you can just stop talking and they will get the hint.

After giving your report, you are done with your role. Great job! This is a simple role to fill, but it makes all the difference for the speakers. Once they learn about the filler words they use, they are better able to catch themselves doing so and clean up their speech. Paying attention for those filler words can be hard at first, but once you get used to it, you might start noticing them everywhere, in the news or at work. Some people, after filling the Ah Counter role, have said they can't help but keep track of everyone's filler words. It really reprograms your brain to pay attention!