

What is Grammar, anyway?

As a Grammarian, your job is to monitor the language and grammar usage throughout the meeting. You also get the fun job of bringing the Word of the Day!

Grammar is defined as “the study of the classes of words, their inflections, and their functions and relations in the sentence”, “a system of rules that defines the grammatical structure of a language”, and “speech or writing evaluated according to its conformity to grammatical rules”. In simpler words, grammar is “English done good”.

Prior to the meeting, you will need to find a Word of the Day. It can be related to the theme if you wish, but that are not necessary. Along with the word, bring the pronunciation, definition, and an example of using it in a sentence.

At the start of the meeting, the Toastmaster will call on you to describe your role. You can give a brief summary of what you will be listening for (grammatical mistakes and exceptional uses of language) and then announce your Word of the Day. Share the information about the word as well, and then post it somewhere where people can see. During virtual meetings, post it in the chat. In person, hang up a piece of paper somewhere easily visible, such as on the podium.

Every time someone speaks during the meeting, listen carefully for any incomplete sentences, mispronunciations, grammatical mistakes, etc. Don't worry if you aren't entirely comfortable with grammar, you don't have to be overly stuffy. We aren't linguistics professors!

Your true goal here is to catch things that detract from the speaker's message, and also applaud the things that added to it. Did the speaker say “you and I” where they should have said “you and me”? You can take a note of that if it stood out to you, or ignore it if it wasn't distracting to the overall message. Or maybe the speaker kept switching back and forth between past and present tense, which was confusing to follow.

In addition to the grammar and sentence structure, pay attention to the words used. Does the speaker use “very” too often? Could they have substituted “extremely” or “enthusiastically” instead?

Don't forget to celebrate exceptional use of language! Did the speaker bring their story to life with their description of the “glittering waters”, or evoke any emotion with the “dreary droll day”? Take notes of anything you found especially interesting.

During the Table Topics section, the speakers need to use the Word of the Day you brought to qualify for the Best Table Topics award. Be sure to listen for usage of that word! The Table Topics Master will ask for a Grammarian report from you, where you say who remembered to use the word and who didn't.

Near the end of the meeting, the General Evaluator will call upon you to give your final report. List off each member and if you caught anything they might be able to improve upon or anything you might want to celebrate. In our club, we have a special award for the Grammarian to present to someone: the WIST award (Wish I Said That). If anyone said something that struck you as an especially interesting turn of phrase, present them with this (imaginary) award now.

Now you know how to fulfill the Grammarian role! If you need practice, go re-read this post and find the grammatical errors I snuck in. How many did you find? Did I have any

interesting use of language?