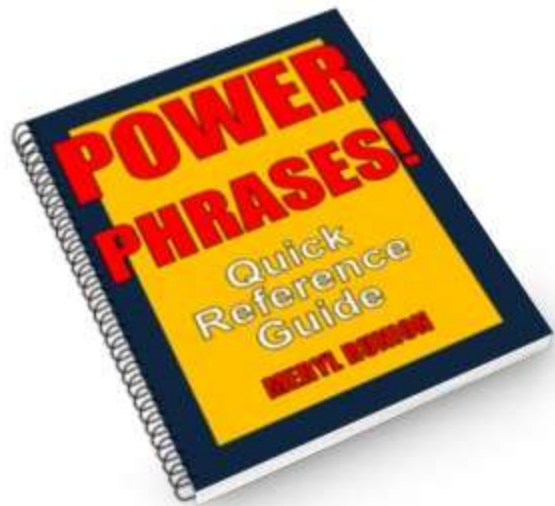


PowerPhrases® Quick Reference Guide

Quick phrases for common communication opportunities and challenges, by Meryl Runion, the author of SpeakSTRONG and PowerPhrases!

Acknowledge Comments without Agreeing

These phrases acknowledge someone's perspective without saying that perspective is right, or the only way someone might see things. It avoids resisting perspectives. They allow you to stand in someone else's shoes, which allows them to feel heard. These phrases are particularly helpful in defusing anger.



- I can see you feel strongly about this.
- I had no idea you felt that way.
- I see. Tell me more.
- What else concerns you?
- The point you made about ___ hits home.
- That may be...
- I don't blame you for being upset about...
- I hate it when that happens to me too!
- I get angry too when...
- I appreciate you sharing your experience. What else do I need to know?
- That may be.
- I might feel that way if I was in your shoes.
- That's an interesting perspective.

- I had not considered that perspective.
- I appreciate you sharing that with me.

Acknowledgment/Compliments

When you acknowledge or compliment someone, be specific. That's what separates acknowledgement from empty flattery.

- I appreciate ___ because...
- When you ___ I felt ___ because...
- Here are the reasons I value you (your)...
- I am grateful because...
- I couldn't have done this without you.
- What stands out for me with what you did is...
- I was thinking about how you... and decided I needed to tell you about it.

Advice/Recommendations/Suggestions

Offer advice and suggestions with care – especially if your recommendations are unsolicited. Advice-giving can be disempowering if you don't come across as an ally.

- May I tell you how I handle that?
- You didn't ask for feedback, but I have an idea that excites me. May I share it?
- I like the way you... Can I tell you what I would have done differently?
- Would you like to hear my thoughts about it? My approach isn't necessarily right, but it could inspire some ideas for you.
- I love improving on things even if they ain't broke. Would you be open to some ideas?
- Have you considered doing (alternative way)?
- You know your job a lot better than I do, so my questions may be irrelevant. May I ask them and see?
- I'd like to know why you do things that way. I might learn something or I might have some ideas for you.

- I wonder what would happen if you...
- You're already a pro. My job is to make your performance the best it can be. I want to understand your job and to see if there is anything I can recommend that will make your job easier.

Anger—Defusing and Responding to

Two keys to dealing with angry people are: don't drink the poison, and don't respond in kind. If you can stay calm yet caring, it will defuse most angry attacks.

- I can understand that.
- I can see why you would see it that way.
- You have put a lot of energy into...
- Darn! You're right about...
- You do have a right to...
- I can understand why you would be upset about...
- ___ is important to you, and my actions violated that.
- I want to resolve this because...
- I'm sorry this misunderstanding happened because I care about our relationship.
- I value your account and take your concerns to heart.
- I understand you're upset and your anger will not get me to change my policy.
- If I could give you what you are asking for I would without your anger. I can't and your anger will not change that.
- I am frightened by your anger. Please try to contain it.
- I am not frightened by anger.
- I want to focus on the issues but I find the intensity of your words distracting.
- It was not my intention to offend you.
- I'm sorry I wasn't clear.

Anger: Expressing

There is power in anger. Just stay aware of your long-term considerations as you express it. Avoid hurling anger, but don't be afraid to communicate it appropriately.

- I am angry because...
- That angers me.
- The reason why that infuriates me is...
- I am outraged by...
- I feel discounted because....
- I'm frustrated because (I have been on the phone for over forty minutes and shuffled from department to department thirteen times and still don't have the person who can help me.)
- I feel unvalued when....
- I am embarrassed and feel violated by...
- Yes, I am angry. It's a normal reaction to this kind of transgression.
- If this doesn't change I will...
- I need as much specific information as you can give me because I will discuss this with my attorney to see what my options are.
- In order to be able to continue here I need...

Apologizing Without Groveling

How do you say you're sorry? Some people over-apologize. Others avoid being accountable for errors and offenses. Here's how you find the balance.

- I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.
- I'm sorry. I truly intended to be helpful.
- I apologize. I did not mean to come across that way.
- What I said (did) was inappropriate because...
- Please forgive me.
- How can I make it up to you?
- You were counting on me and I let you down.

- I value our friendship and it makes me sad to know I did something that weakened it.
- I care about you and what I did doesn't honor that.
- I hate to see you hurting and hate even more to know I caused it.
- You would do me a great service to allow me to make amends.

Complaining Effectively

Don't be a whiner – but be willing to complain when appropriate. The best complaints are specific – both about the issue and what you want in order to make amends.

- I need your help. I am not happy about... because... and I need you to help me...
- Usually you do great work for me, but this time there's a problem.
- This is not what I usually experience with you/this company.
- I know your company places a high value on customer satisfaction.
- If the roles were reversed, I know I'd want to hear about it, so I'm telling you about an issue.
- I thought about putting up with the situation, but I realized it affects my attitude toward you and I wanted to give you the opportunity to address it.
- Boy, have I got a story for you! I'll keep it as short as I can, but I'll need your help unraveling it.
- The problem is... What would make it right for me is...
- I need your help to resolve this.
- If this is not resolved I will...
- What I want is...
- This is a problem. We need to find a solution.
- This is unacceptable and needs to be addressed.
- What would you do if the roles were reversed?

Compliments—Accepting

Accepting compliments is a pretty simple thing – and yet it's very difficult for many people. Too many people discount or dismiss compliments.

- Thank you. That means a lot, especially from you.
- Thank you. It helped that I had such great support from my team.
- Thank you. I feel great about it too.
- Thanks for noticing!
- Ah – it's too easy to see the flaws, so it's really great to hear about what's right.

Conflict—Addressing

The best way to address conflict is to address issues before they have the chance to become conflicts. The second best way is to address smaller issues before they become bigger issues. When they do become larger issues, look for opportunities in the conflict. Often things get heated right before a breakthrough.

- Things feel off, and I want to address it before it becomes a problem
- Do we need to talk? It seems like we're colliding, and if there's a problem, I'd like to address it.
- There is an issue I'd like to discuss. Can we meet?
- I feel some friction between us. I'd like to look at it from a no-fault perspective. Can we meet?
- I value our relationship too much to let anything that could be a barrier between us slide.
- When... the effect is... I understand... and what I suggest is...
- How can we make this work for both of us?
- Let's see if we can find a solution that works for both of us.
- Let's implement what we've decided and review how well it's working.
- If this continues I will...
- If this doesn't change I won't...

Criticism or Complaints-Receiving

- Thanks for letting me know. I will learn from your input.
- Tell me more.
- I'd like to reflect on what you're telling me. Can I respond later after I've had time to reflect?
- I wasn't aware there was a problem. I want to hear your feedback to understand what needs to be changed.
- I understand why you viewed it that way. Next time, I will handle it by doing...
- I want to do whatever I can to strengthen our working relationship. I consider us a team.
- I plan to use this information to improve...
- What else would you like to see me do differently?
- Could you be more specific? What do you mean by...?
- Do I understand you correctly that...?
- I understand the problem, but would like help figuring out what to do differently.
- What needs to happen now?
- Thanks for giving me your feedback. It is helpful for me to know how you view it.
- What else do you want to tell me?
- I will consider everything you told me and see how I can apply it.

Delegation

Start delegating with an opening line or icebreaker that respects the delegate. Offer a benefit if there is one. Then make sure your instructions are clear.

- I am aware of how busy you are. However, I have a request...
- I would never ask you to do something I would not do myself...
- There is an opportunity here for you to...
- I'm asking you because I know I can trust you...
- I have a project I can only trust my very best rep (manager, engineer etc.) with.
- I need your help.

- I have a project I think you will enjoy that is outside your usual area.
- What this means to you is...
- This will help you by...
- If you do this for me I will...
- I'll make sure my boss knows how you made a difference when I really needed you.
- This will be good, not only for me and the team, but for you because...
- I need _____ by _____ because_____.
- Here is what needs to happen...
- I have written out instructions. Let's go over them together.
- The deadline is ____.
- The quality specifications are ____.
- The budget is ____.
- Of these three, the priority in this project is ____.
- An example of what it will look like is...
- It is crucial that this is done exactly as I show you because...
- I have found that unless we walk through the process, there will be errors. Therefore, please bear with me as we walk through the process together.
- Let me make sure my instructions were clear. What is your understanding of how to do this?
- What questions have I not answered for you?
- What else can I tell you to be sure it's completely clear?

Disagreeing Gracefully

You can disagree without condemning or dismissing other opinions. If your words are an affront to a cherished idea, you're likely to create defensiveness that shuts your listener down.

- You're right, and I have a different opinion.
- I see it differently.
- That's one perspective. I have a different one.

- That may be. What makes sense to me is...
- You may be right. Let's look at the facts and see.
- That's an interesting perspective. What if...
- It looks like we are in agreement about a couple of things here...Where we are still at odds is...
- To really understand your point, I need specific examples.
- What I hear you saying is... Is my understanding correct?
- You just said that ... (I lied, I am stupid, etc...) Will you explain what you mean by that?
- Please continue.
- Your intentions are not clear to me. Can you help me out here?
- I have listened carefully to understand your position. Will you give me five minutes of uninterrupted time to explain mine?
- You make valid points that make a lot of sense from where you stand.
- Please hear me out as I describe how it looks to me.
- Are you ready to hear how I see it?
- Help me to understand how you see it that way.
- Can you clarify that?

Listening to Encourage Openness

Listening isn't a passive activity. These phrases will help you listen actively.

- I want to hear what you have to say.
- I didn't know you felt that way. Tell me more.
- What else can you tell me about that?
- That's an interesting point.
- What did you like about that?
- Help me to understand.
- I'm a bit confused about...

- What were you referring to when you said...?
- Let me make sure I understand what you are saying. I believe you are saying...
- So when ___ happened you felt___?
- What you need from me is... Am I right?
- I appreciate you being so open with me.
- You can talk to me.
- I want to hear what you have to say.

Negotiation

- Let's discuss the situation and come up with a solution we both are happy with. I do not want either of us to agree to anything that does not satisfy both our needs.
- What goals do you have for today?
- How would you like to see this discussion turn out?
- Let's talk specifics and see if there is a way we can make this work.
- In my view, a fair solution would be...
- Do you have any concerns with this proposal?
- Based on my research your offer seems out of range.
- I cannot come close to that because of the cost involved.
- How did you arrive at that figure?
- If you were in my seat would you consider that a reasonable offer?
- While I agree on the whole, I have trouble agreeing with the point about...

Put-Downs—Responses To

- I thought I heard a dig. Did I?
- Wow. Should I take that as feedback on (specific) or as a condemnation of me as a person?
- That remark sounded like a dig.
- I thought you were on my team. It feels more like I'm target practice. Let's get back on the same team.

- I am interested in your opinions, but not in your insults. Can you take the brutality out of your brutal honesty and talk about how to move forward?
- That remark hurts because I care about your opinion and it sounds like you are trying to discourage me. If you have an issue, let's discuss it directly.
- I worked very hard to (accomplishment). If I have not met your expectations, tell me what's wrong, but don't take pot shots.
- I think that remark was hurtful and uncalled for.
- I feel disappointed and affronted.
- I expect to be treated with respect.
- That hurt.
- If you have an issue with me, let's talk about it. I don't want us to snipe at each other.
- I think there must be something else bothering you for you to make a remark like that.
- I feel offended.
- I want to discuss anything that may be creating tension between us.
- Ouch! How inappropriate...
- It's hard to learn from you when I feel like I have to dodge bullets. What would help me listen is...

Questions—Responding to Challenging

There's an automatic reflex to answer questions as asked, even if they're slanted, challenging or inappropriate. The phrases help you keep your dignity while responding to inappropriate questions.

- Why do you ask that?
- Are you asking me if...?
- What specifically do you want to know about...?
- How would YOU respond to that question?
- That question is phrased in a way that sets up the answer. I think a fairer question is...
- The way you ask that question sets me up no matter how I respond.

- I won't dignify that question with an answer.
- Counsel, that's a leading question.
- Let me rephrase your question in a way that will give a better answer.

Refusal/Saying No—

Act Formula: Acknowledge/Circumstance/Transform

A) Acknowledge

- Thanks for asking...
- I appreciate you thinking of me...
- That sounds like a worthwhile project...
- I see you need help here...
- I wish I could...

B) Circumstance

- I'm not comfortable...
- I would feel awkward...
- I have other priorities...
- I'm already committed...
- It doesn't work for me...
- I won't be able to...
- I don't want to...

C) Transform/Tag

- Thanks again for asking.
- Maybe next time.
- I hope you get the help you need.
- Let's do something else sometime.

Refusal/Saying NO—ACT Formula Applied

- I understand this is important. My situation is... Perhaps next time.

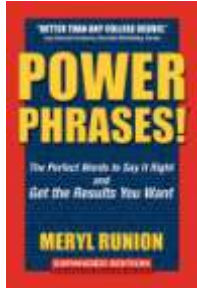
- I appreciate you thinking of me. I have other plans. I'm sure you'll find the person you need.
- I wish I could help out here. I'm not well suited to do what you want. Here's an option...
- I see you need help. After looking at my calendar I see I can't give you the help you need. Have you considered asking ___?
- I'm honored that you thought of me. After realizing the scope of the request, I choose to pass. I wish you success.
- Thanks for asking. Not this time.
- Sounds interesting. I have other commitments, however.
- I know this is important. I'm working on... for you already. What can I put aside to make time to complete this?

Small Talk/Conversational PowerPhrases

How do you start a conversation with someone you don't know? Here are some small talk ice-breakers. These phrases will get the ball rolling.

- What led you to do the kind of work you are doing?
- What do you enjoy most about the work you do?
- What did you like best about your vacation?
- What do you like about where you live?
- What advice would you give someone just starting in your business?
- The turnout is huge! I came for the talk on eWidgets. What brings you here?
- What got you interested in that?
- I want to get to know you better because...
- I am here because I am looking for information about...
- I'm looking for a good movie. Got any recommendations?
- What do you do to relax?
- What do you enjoy about your job?
- I'm in the (publishing industry). How about you?
- Tell me about your family

- That's a lovely necklace. What is there a story behind it?
- What would you recommend to someone who has never been here before?
- What did you do before you worked here?



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