



# The Shorter the Better

To someone who is impatient with wordiness, the fault of tautology, or unnecessary repeating of the same idea in different words, is to be condemned. Yet it is hard to avoid tautology in speech. Common examples of tautology include **unexpected surprise**, **close proximity**, **natural instinct**, **future plan**, **safe haven**, **rough approximation** and **three-part trilogy**. The adjective in each of these phrases is redundant because the information it provides is by definition already contained in the noun.

Admittedly, there is a fine line between tautology and intentional repetition for the sake of emphasis. For example, it is difficult to say for sure whether “There was no way out, no exit, no escape” sounds verbose or forceful. The device of repetition is frequently used in rhetoric. Many famous public speakers, like Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy, employed repetition skilfully to drive their message home. Moreover, not all tautologous expressions are universally agreed to be clumsy. To some they serve to spell the meaning out, such as “Let’s have lunch at **twelve noon**” and “Be home by **twelve midnight**”.

That said, too many words in both spoken and written English may obscure meaning and distract people’s attention. Obvious examples include “Written notice is given to all the

Members in writing” and “if he is found lunatic or becomes of **unsound mind**” — clauses in a certain constitution. People’s attention span is limited. For effective communication, often a terse sentence works better than a long one jammed with unnecessary information.

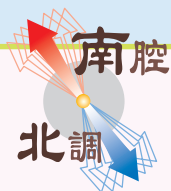
Embedded in the following passage are eight tautologous expressions. See if you can trim off the redundant words to make it more concise:

We’re now facing a difficult dilemma. Our staff strongly oppose the restructuring plan. To avoid direct confrontation, we have met with their representatives several times. But we failed to arrive at a consensus of opinion. At this point in time, it is unclear if they will go on strike. If so, business may possibly be disrupted. But we continue to remain optimistic. With careful advance planning, we will keep things under control. Later I will spell out our contingency measures in detail.

**Answer:** We’re now facing a difficult dilemma. Our staff strongly oppose the restructuring plan. To avoid direct confrontation, we have met with their representatives several times. But we failed to arrive at a consensus of opinion. At this point in time, it is unclear if they will go on strike. If so, business may possibly be disrupted. But we continue to remain optimistic. With careful advance planning, we will keep things under control. Later I will spell out our contingency measures in detail.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.

Alfred Tennyson



## 說好普通話

### 小錦囊四

談了三期說好普通話的竅門，說過以聽促說，還有聲母和韻母如何發準，現在談談聲調。

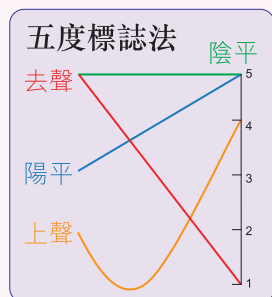
聲調具有區分語義的作用，馬虎不得。有位老外初到北京學習普通話時，就嘗過苦頭。一天，老外肚子打鼓了，到飯館找吃的。他吃得味重，跟服務員要鹽，人家卻給他拿了煙，可不就是因為他老兄一、二聲搞混了。

香港人常犯的聲調毛病主要是四聲不明顯，特別是一、四聲不分。

順勢帶動聲調降到 1 的最低位。第三聲當然也是個難點，往往是 214 成了 211 或 24。要調值到位，可按五度標誌法，鍛鍊發音時以手指比劃相關聲調的曲線。

用手指比劃調值的方法，可用來順序練單音節，然後雙音節詞組、四音節成語，最後是朗誦詩詞。如能堅持天天朗誦詩詞，哪怕只是每天一刻鐘，保證三至六個月後可見奇效，原因是詩詞抑揚的美，也就是聲調的美，多唸詩詞，能讓人在不知不覺間就掌握好了聲調。不信？試試看，頂多不就矇你幾個月嘛！

普通話小錦囊連載了四期，說的只是筆者學習普通話的個人體會，如有偏差，懇請批評指正。最後祝願各普通話同好快樂學習，普通話水平更上層樓！



聲調調值直接關係到發音的準確，所以必須到位。下文的聲調表和左列的五度標誌法可是非常管用的工具。首先記好聲調表的口訣，開始鍛鍊時要誇張點。第一聲得高，我們的通病往往是只從 4 度發聲，達不到 5 度。第四聲也得降得徹底，不是由 4 度降到 2 度，而是來個痛快的 5 至 1 全降，竅門是發音時注意 5 的調值必須到位，藉此

調類	調值	說明	
第一聲(陰平)	55	高平調	起音高高一路平
第二聲(陽平)	35	中升調	由中到高往上升
第三聲(上聲)	214	降升調	低降然後再揚起
第四聲(去聲)	51	全降調	高處降降到最低層

編按：公務員同事如有興趣聆聽普通話發音，可登入公務員易學網 (www.csb.gov.hk/clc) 語文天地的普通話天地。