

15.1 Sound Bites and Quotables

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss elements that make a sound bite effective.
2. Choose a sound bite or quote from a written or verbal message.
3. Prepare a quote that is memorable.

Sometimes the words with the most impact are succinct, memorable statements. **Sound bites**, brief statements that zero in on the point of a larger or longer message, are often excised from interviews and articles, and presented apart from the context in which they were originally written or spoken. **Slogans** are phrases that express the goals, aims or nature of a product, service, person, or company. **Quotes** are memorable sayings extracted from written or verbal messages. Some move armies, while others make armies laugh. All are memorable and quickly become part of our cultural literacy, expressing a common sentiment or perception, and reinforcing our image of the speaker, business, product, or service. Taylor, I. (2004). *Mediaspeak: Strategy. Sound-Bites. Spin: The plain-talking guide to issues, reputation and message management*. Toronto, Canada: Hushion House Publishing.

Common Elements of Effective Sound Bites

Whether you are writing a document, preparing a presentation, or both, you will want to consider how others will summarize your main point. If you can provide a clear sound bite or quote, it is more likely to get picked up and repeated, reinforcing your message. By preparing your sound bites, you help control the interpretation of your message. Kerchner, K. (1997). *Soundbites: A business guide for working with the media*. Superior, WI: Savage Press. Here are four characteristics of effective sound bites:

1. Clear and concise
2. Use vivid, dynamic language
3. Easy to repeat
4. Memorable

Your goal when writing a sound bite or quote is to make sure your idea represents all four characteristics. You won't always be creating the message; in some cases you may be asked to summarize someone else's written or verbal message, such as an interview, with a quote or a sound bite. Look for one or more sentences or phrases that capture these elements and test them out on your classmates or colleagues. Can the sound bite, slogan, or quote be delivered without stumbling? Is it easy to read? Does it get the job done?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Sound bites are brief statements that are often quoted.

EXERCISES

- Choose a product or service that you find appealing. Try to come up with several sound bites, slogans, or quotes that meet all four criteria. You may look to company sales materials or interviews as a source for this exercise, and if you pull a quote from an online interview, please post the link when you complete your assignment. Discuss how the sound bite, slogan, or quote meets all four criteria in your response.
- Match these phrases with their sources.

Product, Business or Person	Sound Bite, Slogan, or Memorable Quote
A. Nike	1. Where's the beef?
B. Barack Obama	2. Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.
C. Homer Simpson	3. Huge. That's huge, or huge.
D. Wendy's	4. Just do it!
E. John F. Kennedy	5. It's amazing how much you can get done when you're not trying to take credit for it.
F. Neil Armstrong	6. D'oh!
G. Paris Hilton	7. That's one small step for a man; one giant leap for mankind.
H. Franklin D. Roosevelt	8. A diamond is forever.
I. De Beers Consolidated	9. The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

Answers: A-4, B-5, C-6, D-1, E-2, F-7, G-3, H-9, I-8

- Indicate at least one sound bite or memorable quote and who said it. Please share your results with classmates and compare your results.