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# Down, Sentence, Down

## COMMANDING LANGUAGE

Sitting at home bemoaning the raise you didn't get? Wondering why the people who report to you don't seem to follow your instructions? It could be the way you talk. A speech pattern called uptalk—ending sentences with an upward inflection that makes it seem like you're asking a question—is inhibiting success in many people, especially women. So says **Diane DiResta**, author of [Knockout Presentations: How to Deliver Your Message with Power, Punch and Pizzazz](#) (Chandler House Press, 1998).



"Voice is the biggest barometer of your emotions," DiResta says. "If you don't feel you have a right to say what you're saying, your voice will start to betray you." Uptalk affects mostly women because they're not brought up to be assertive, she adds.

Once you've identified that you have this problem, there are simple steps to correct it, DiResta says. First, choose a sentence and say it using uptalk, then repeat the sentence with a downward inflection. That trains your ear to notice the difference between tentative and commanding language. Second, introspect. That will help you learn which emotions trigger the rising inflection. Finally, have patience. Habits take about 30 days to break. After that, watch people obey your every command.

—Stephanie Viscasillas

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