

WILL JELBERT

Author · Word Wise (Running Press / Hachette) · The Happiness Animal

SESSION

Word Play

What we say when we are not saying what we mean

English has more than half a million words, and we still cannot find the right ones. So we pad with filler, adverbs doing no work, corporate jargon, and phrases that sound like meaning and are not. Those are the words that disconnect us from each other. This twenty-five-minute session illustrates what that padding is doing—why we reach for it and what it costs us.

The answer is not a bigger vocabulary. It is more specificity in the words we have, and less of the ego's appetite for more and for exaggeration. When we feel a word before reaching for it, it carries what we mean. The discipline is discernment—in our own words and in other people's.

Funny, practical, and for a general audience rather than a writing workshop. It ranges across small talk, emojis and social media, and ends with a live edit of a sentence from someone in the room—the part audiences remember.

FORMAT

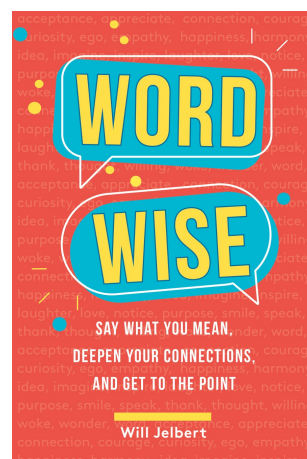
- 25-minute interview with a festival host, plus audience Q&A
- or 40 minutes in conversation, plus Q&A and signing, as delivered at Planet Word
- Also works as one voice on a panel about language, translation or plain speech
- No slides, no laptop, no AV requirements beyond a microphone

RECENT SPEAKING

- **Planet Word, Washington DC** the museum of words and language—an evening in conversation, audience Q&A and signing
- **Happiness & Its Causes, Sydney** the world's largest happiness conference—on a programme headlined by the Dalai Lama
- **Penzance Literary Festival, 2026** sold-out joint event with James Geary (The World in a Phrase)
- **Plymouth Literary Festival, April 2027** an hour in conversation, with a workshop
- **Warwick's, La Jolla and Kinokuniya, New York** author events at two landmark US bookstores

BIO

Will Jelbert is the author of Word Wise (Running Press / Hachette), called “a Marie Kondo for language”, and The Happiness Animal, translated into four languages and reissued in hardback and audiobook in January 2026. He read modern languages at the University of Exeter and worked as a translator for Reuters. An Australian citizen who lived there ten years, he has also lived in India and the USA, and grew up on a farm near Penzance.



Word Wise: Say What You Mean,
Deepen Your Connections,
and Get to the Point

AVAILABLE

UK and Ireland year-round.
Australian citizen — no visa,
available for Australian
programmes. US when
clustered with other dates.

MEDIA

Something You Should Know
with Mike Carruthers — ep. 830,
“Why The Right Words Matter”.
A top-100 Apple podcast.

Two BBC interviews.
Writes for Fast Company.
Word Wise apps, iOS/Android.