

# It's About Them: Public Speaking in the 21st Century



# IT'S ABOUT THEM: PUBLIC SPEAKING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

DOUGLAS MARSHALL; JAMES YEARGAIN; JUNE PULLIAM; SARA  
KIM; AND VICTORIA VANNEST

LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network



*It's About Them: Public Speaking in the 21st Century* Copyright © 2022 by LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

In addition to original material this book is an adaptation of the following books:

[\*Introduction to Speech Communication\*](#) authored by Sarah E. Hollingsworth, Kathryn Weinland, Sasha Hanrahan, and Mary Walker with a CC BY-NC-SA license.

[\*Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy\*](#) authored by Meggie Mapes that is licensed CC BY-NC-SA.

The information on “What is an Open Textbook?” is adapted from [\*Introduction to Philosophy: Epistemology\*](#) by Christina Hendricks with a CC-BY license.

# CONTENTS

Preface	xi
What Is an Open Textbook?	1

## Chapter 1: Why Public Speaking Matters Today

1.1 Public Speaking in the Twenty-First Century	5
1.2 Why Is Public Speaking Important?	9
1.3 The Process of Public Speaking	19

## Chapter 2: Building Confidence

2.1 What is Communication Apprehension?	33
2.2 Classifying PSA	36
2.3 Learning Confidence	41

## Chapter 3: Audience Analysis

3.1 What Is Audience Analysis? Why Conduct It?	51
3.2 Why Conduct an Audience Analysis?	52
3.3 Three Types of Audience Analysis	59
3.4 Conducting Audience Analysis	68
3.5 Using Your Audience Analysis	72

## Chapter 4: The Importance of Listening

4.1 Importance of Listening	79
4.2 Listening vs. Hearing	80
4.3 Listening Styles	83
4.4 Why Listening Is Difficult	86
4.5 Stages of Listening	91
4.6 Listening Critically	95

## Chapter 5: Ethics

5.1 The Ethics Pyramid	105
5.2 Ethics in Public Speaking	109
5.3 Free Speech	120
5.4 Mass Communication and Ethics	123

## Chapter 6: Researching Your Speech

6.1 Beginning the Research Process	135
6.2 What Is Research?	137
6.3 Developing a Research Strategy	140
6.4 Citing Sources	150

## Chapter 7: Supporting Ideas and Building Arguments

7.1 Crafting Supporting Ideas	161
7.2 Using Research as Support	162
7.3 Exploring Types of Support	165
7.4 Using Support and Creating Arguments	175

## Chapter 8: Organizing and Outlining

8.1 Why is Organizing and Outlining Important	187
8.2 The Topic, General Purpose, Specific Purpose, and Thesis	189
8.3 Organizational Patterns of Arrangement for Informative Speeches	194
8.4 Outlining Your Speech	199

## Chapter 9: Delivery

9.1 The Importance of Delivery	207
9.2 Methods of Speech Delivery	209
9.3 Preparing for Your Delivery	213
9.4 Practicing Your Delivery	217
9.5 What to Do When Delivering Your Speech	224

## Chapter 10: Introductions and Conclusions

10.1 Introductions	235
10.2 Conclusions	241

## Chapter 11: Language

11.1 What Language Is and Does	247
11.2 Standards for Language in Public	251
11.3 Using Effective Language in Public Speaking	260

## Chapter 12: Presentation Aids

12.1 What Are Presentation Aids?	265
12.2 Functions of Presentation Aids	267
12.3 Types of Presentation Aids	274
12.4 Using Presentation Slides	292
12.5 Low-Tech Presentation Aids	302

## Chapter 13 Informative Speaking

13.1 What is an Informative Speech?	307
13.2 Types of Informative Speeches	309
13.3 Guidelines for Informative Speech Topic Selection and Preparation	312
13.4 Sample Informative Speeches and Speech Outlines	316

## Chapter 14: Persuasive Speaking

14.1 Why Persuade?	323
14.2 A Definition of Persuasion	325
14.3 Why is Persuasion Hard?	328
14.4 Traditional Views of Persuasion	331
14.5 Constructing a Persuasive Speech	335
14.6 Sample Persuasive Speech Outlines	345

## Chapter 15: Special Occasion Speaking

15.1 Understanding Special Occasion Speaking	355
15.2 Types of Special Occasion Speeches	359
15.3 Special Occasion Language	367



15.4 Special Occasion Delivery	368
15.5 Sample Special Occasion Speech Outline	369

## Chapter 16: Online Public Speaking

16.1 Online Public Speaking	373
About the Contributors	381
Adaptations	383
Glossary	391
Appendix A: Checklist for Accessibility	420



# PREFACE

---

## The Creation of This Book

This textbook was created as part of the Interactive OER for Dual Enrollment project, facilitated by [LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network](#) and funded by a \$2 million [Open Textbooks Pilot Program grant from the Department of Education](#).

This project supports the extension of access to high-quality post-secondary opportunities to high school students across Louisiana and beyond by creating materials that can be adopted for dual enrollment environments. Dual enrollment is the opportunity for a student to be enrolled in high school and college at the same time.

The cohort-developed OER course materials are released under a license that permits their free use, reuse, modification and sharing with others. This includes a corresponding course available in [MoodleNet](#) and [Canvas Commons](#) that can be imported to other Learning Management System platforms. For access/questions, contact [Affordable Learning Louisiana](#).

If you are adopting this textbook, we would be glad to know of your use via this [brief survey](#).

## Review Statement

This textbook and its accompanying course materials went through at least two review processes:

- Peer reviewers, coordinated by Jared Eusea, River Parish Community College, used an online course development standard rubric for assessing the quality and content of each course to ensure that the courses developed through Interactive OER for Dual Enrollment support online learners in that environment. The evaluation framework reflects a commitment to accessibility and usability for all learners.
  - Reviewers:
    - Melissa Parks
    - Casey Merrell
    - Adrienne Abel
- The Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) collaborated with LOUIS to review course materials and ensure their appropriateness for dual enrollment audiences. Review criteria were drawn from factors that apply across dual enrollment courses and subject

areas, such as determining appropriate reading levels, assessing the fit of topics and examples for high school DE students; applying high-level principles for quality curriculum design, including designing for accessibility, appropriate student knowledge checks, and effective scaffolding of student tasks and prior knowledge requirements, addressing adaptability and open educational practices, and principles related to inclusion and representational social justice.

- Reviewers:
  - Elisabeth Cason
  - Elizabeth Hornsby

## A Note About Citations

This text was written in and chapters have been edited to reflect the 7th edition of APA.

## Companion LMS

A public speaking course was created to accompany this book. The course includes assignments, discussion questions, quiz questions, and more. For access and more information please contact this email [alearningla@laregents.edu](mailto:alearningla@laregents.edu).

## Adaptation Statement

In addition to original material this book is an adaptation of [\*Introduction to Speech Communication\*](#) authored by Sarah E. Hollingsworth, Kathryn Weinland, Sasha Hanrahan, and Mary Walker with a CC BY-NC-SA license. *Introduction to Speech Communication* includes original work as well as adapted and remixed material from [\*Exploring Public Speaking: 4th Edition\*](#) licensed CC BY-NC-SA, [\*Stand Up, Speak Out\*](#) licensed CC BY-NC-SA, and [\*Fundamentals of Public Speaking\*](#) licensed CC BY.

*It's About Them: Public Speaking in the 21st Century* also adapted a chapter from [\*Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy\*](#) authored by Meggie Mapes that is licensed CC BY-NC-SA.

The information on “What is an Open Textbook?” is adapted from [\*Introduction to Philosophy: Epistemology\*](#) by Christina Hendricks with a CC-BY license.

See the [Adaptations](#) section for specific changes.

# WHAT IS AN OPEN TEXTBOOK?

---

An open textbook is like a commercial textbook, except: (1) it is publicly available online free of charge (and at low-cost in print), and (2) it has an open license that allows others to reuse it, download and revise it, and redistribute it. This book has a [Creative Commons Attribution](#) license, which allows reuse, revision, and redistribution so long as the original creator is attributed.

In addition to saving students money, an open textbook can be revised to be better contextualized to one's own teaching. In a recent study of undergraduate students in an introductory level physics course, students reported that the thing they most appreciated about the open textbook used in that course was that it was customized to fit the course, followed very closely by the fact that it was free of cost ([Hendricks, Reinsberg, and Rieger 2017](#)). For example, in an open textbook one may add in examples more relevant to one's own context or the topic of a course, or embedded slides, videos, or other resources.

A number of commercial publishers offer relatively inexpensive digital textbooks (whether on their own or available through an access code that students must pay to purchase), but these may have certain limitations and other issues:

- Access for students is often limited to a short period of time;
- Students cannot buy used copies from others, nor sell their own copies to others, to save money;
- Depending on the platform, there may be limits to how students can interact with and take notes on the books (and they may not be able to export their notes outside the book, so lose access to those as well when they lose access to the book).

None of these is the case with open textbooks like *It's About Them: Public Speaking in the 21st Century*. Students can download any book in this series and keep it for as long as they wish. They can interact with it in multiple formats: on the web; as editable word processing formats; offline as PDF, EPUB; as a physical print book, and more.

Each book can be read online, and is also downloadable in multiple formats, from their respective book home pages (e.g., *It's About Them: Public Speaking in the 21st Century*). The multiple editable formats allow instructors to adapt the books as needed to fit their contexts. Another way to create adaptations is to involve students in contributing to open textbooks. Students may add new sections to an adapted book, link to other resources, create discussion questions or quiz questions, and more. Please see Rebus Community's [A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students](#) for more information and ideas.



# CHAPTER 1: WHY PUBLIC SPEAKING MATTERS TODAY

## Learning Objectives

- Describe the three types of public speaking in everyday life: informative, persuasive, and entertaining.
- Explain the benefits of taking a course in and engaging in public speaking.
- Identify the three components of getting your message across to others.
- Distinguish between the interactional model of communication and the transactional model of communication.
- Explain the three principles discussed in the dialogical theory of public speaking.

## Key Terms

- **Channel**
- **Cultural Dimension**
- **Decoding**
- **Dialogic Theory of Public Speaking**
- **Dialogue**
- **Encoding**
- **Entertaining Speaking**
- **Feedback**
- **Informative Speaking**
- **Interactional Model of Public Speaking**
- **Linear Model of Public Speaking**
- **Mediated**

- **Message**
- **Monologue**
- **Noise**
- **Nonverbal Communication**
- **Persuasive Speaking**
- **Physical Dimension**
- **Receiver**
- **Social-Psychological Dimension**
- **Source**
- **Temporal Dimension**
- **Thought Leader**
- **Transactional Model of Public Speaking**
- **Verbal Communication**







## 1.1 Public Speaking in the Twenty-First Century



Public speaking is the process of designing and delivering a **message** to an audience. Effective public speaking involves understanding your audience and speaking goals, choosing elements for the speech that will engage your audience with your topic, and delivering your message skillfully. Good public speakers understand that they must plan, organize, and revise their material in order to develop an effective speech. This book will help you understand the basics of effective public speaking and guide you through the process of creating your own presentations. We'll begin by discussing the ways in which public speaking is relevant to you and can benefit you in your career, education, and personal life.

In a world where people are bombarded with messages through television, social media, and the Internet, one of the first questions you may ask is, “Do people still give speeches?” Well, type the words “public speaking” into Amazon.com or Barnesandnoble.com, and you will find more than two thousand books with the words “public speaking” in the title. Most of these and other books related to public speaking are not college textbooks. In fact, many books written about public speaking are intended for very specific audiences: *A Handbook of Public Speaking for Scientists and Engineers* (by Peter Kenny), *Excuse Me! Let Me Speak! A Young Person's Guide to Public Speaking* (by Michelle J. Dyett-Welcome), *Professionally Speaking: Public Speaking for Health Professionals* (by Frank De Piano and Arnold Melnick), and *Speaking Effectively: A Guide for Air Force Speakers* (by John A. Kline). Although these different books address specific issues related to nurses, engineers, or air force officers, the content is basically the same. If you search for “public speaking” in an online academic database, you'll find numerous articles on public speaking in business magazines (e.g., *BusinessWeek*, *Nonprofit World*) and academic journals (e.g., *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Business Communication*). There is so much information available about public speaking because it continues to be relevant even with the growth of technological means of communication. Technology can also help public speakers reach audiences that were not possible to reach in the past (Singh, 2020). People continue to spend millions of dollars every year to listen to professional speakers. For example, attendees of TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conferences,

which invite speakers from around the world to share their ideas in short, eighteen-minute presentations, paid six thousand dollars per person to listen to fifty speeches over a four-day period.

We realize that you may not be invited to TED to give the speech of your life or create a speech so inspirational that it touches the lives of millions via YouTube; however, all of us will find ourselves in situations where we will be asked to give a speech, make a presentation, or just deliver a few words. In this chapter, we will first address why public speaking is important, and then we will discuss models that illustrate the process of public speaking itself.





## 1.2 Why Is Public Speaking Important?



In today's world, we are constantly bombarded with messages both good and bad. No matter where you live, where you work or go to school, or what kinds of media you use, you are probably exposed to hundreds, if not thousands, of advertising messages every day. In 2020, the amount of knowledge in the world doubled every twelve hours (Ray, 2020). Because we live in a world where we are overwhelmed with content, communicating information in a way that is accessible to others is more important today than ever before. To help us further understand why public speaking is important, we will first examine public speaking in everyday life. We will then discuss how public speaking can benefit you personally.

## EVERYDAY PUBLIC SPEAKING

Every single day, people across the United States and around the world stand up in front of some kind of audience and speak. In fact, there's even a monthly publication that reproduces some of the top speeches from around the United States called *Vital Speeches of the Day* (<http://www.vsotd.com>). Although public speeches are of various types, they can generally be grouped into three categories based on their intended purpose: informative, persuasive, and entertaining.

# INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

Informative speaking is presented for the purpose of sharing knowledge with the audience, teaching the audience about a topic.

One of the most common types of public speaking is **informative speaking**. The primary purpose of informative presentations is to share one's knowledge of a subject with an audience, teaching and providing information for the purpose of expanding the audience's knowledge. Reasons for making an informative speech vary widely. For example, you might be asked to instruct a group of coworkers on how to use new computer software or to report to a group of managers how your latest project is coming along. A local community group might wish to hear about your volunteer activities in New

Orleans during spring break, or your classmates may want you to share your expertise on Mediterranean cooking. What all these examples have in common is the goal of imparting information to an audience.

Informative speaking is integrated into many different occupations. Physicians often lecture about their areas of expertise to medical students, other physicians, and patients. Teachers find themselves presenting to parents as well as to their students. Firefighters give demonstrations about how to effectively control a fire in the house. Informative speaking is a common part of numerous jobs and other everyday activities. As a result, learning how to speak effectively has become an essential skill in today's world.

# PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

Persuasive speaking is presented to persuade the audience to take action or to reinforce or change their beliefs.

A second common reason for speaking to an audience is to **persuade** others. In our everyday lives, we are often called on to convince, motivate, or call to action others to change their beliefs, take an action, or reconsider a decision. From the days of Ancient Greeks and Aristotle, the importance of **persuasive speaking** has been studied, as the ability to motivate someone to take action or believe your side of the argument is a key skill that matters in business and in our personal lives. Advocating for music education in your local school district, convincing clients to purchase your company's



products, or inspiring high school students to attend college all involve influencing other people through public speaking.

For some people, such as elected officials, giving persuasive speeches is a crucial part of attaining and continuing career success. Other people make careers out of speaking to groups of people who pay to listen to them. Motivational authors and speakers, such as Les Brown (<http://www.lesbrown.com>), make millions of dollars each year from people who want to be motivated to do better in their lives. Brian Tracy, another professional speaker and author, specializes in helping business leaders become more productive and effective in the workplace (<http://www.briantracy.com>).

Whether public speaking is something you do every day or just a few times a year, persuading others is a challenging task. If you develop the skill to persuade effectively, it can be personally and professionally rewarding.

## SPEECHES TO ENTERTAIN

**Speeches to Entertain** involve an array of speaking occasions ranging from introductions to wedding toasts, to presenting and accepting awards, to delivering eulogies at funerals and memorial services in addition to after-dinner speeches and motivational speeches. Speeches to Entertain have been important since the time of the ancient Greeks, when Aristotle identified epideictic speaking (speaking in a ceremonial context) as an important type of address. As with persuasive and informative speaking, there are professionals, from religious leaders to comedians, who make a living simply from delivering entertaining speeches. As anyone who has watched an awards show on television or has seen an incoherent best man deliver a wedding toast can attest, speaking to entertain is a task that requires preparation and practice to be effective.

Speeches to Entertain happen at special occasions and are focused on creating ceremony.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it*

online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=33#h5p-3>

## PERSONAL BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Communication skills are in the top 10 required skills for business success (Hicks, 2020). That fact alone makes learning about public speaking worthwhile. However, there are many other benefits of communicating effectively for the hundreds of thousands of college students every year who take public speaking courses. Let's take a look at some of the personal benefits you'll get both from a course in public speaking and from giving public speeches.

## BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSES

In addition to learning the process of creating and delivering an effective speech, students of public speaking leave the class with a number of other benefits as well. Some of these benefits include

Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel  
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

- developing critical thinking skills,
- fine-tuning verbal and nonverbal skills,
- overcoming fear of public speaking.

# DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

One of the very first benefits you will gain from your public speaking course is an increased ability to think critically. Problem solving is one of many critical thinking skills you will engage in during this course. For example, when preparing a persuasive speech, you'll have to think through real problems affecting your campus, community, or the world and provide possible solutions to those problems. You'll also have to think about the positive and negative consequences of your solutions and then communicate your ideas to others. At first, it may seem easy to come up with solutions for a campus problem such as a shortage of parking spaces: just build more spaces. But after thinking and researching further, you may find out that building costs, environmental impacts from loss of green space, maintenance needs, or limited locations for additional spaces make this solution impractical. Being able to think through problems and analyze the potential costs and benefits of solutions is an essential part of critical thinking and of public speaking aimed at persuading others. These skills will help you not only in public speaking contexts but throughout your life as well.

Another benefit of public speaking is that it will enhance your ability to conduct and analyze research. Public speakers must provide credible evidence within their speeches. Your public speaking course will further refine your ability to find and utilize a range of sources. And finally, your speeches will be timed, and you will be required to fit the most important information into a short time frame. Since you can't say everything about your topic, you will need to choose the most important information to help your audience understand your topic.

# FINE-TUNING VERBAL AND NONVERBAL SKILLS

A second benefit of taking a public speaking course is that it will help you fine-tune your verbal and nonverbal communication skills. Whether you competed in public speaking in high school or this is your first time speaking in front of an audience, having the opportunity to actively practice communication skills and receive professional feedback will help you become a better overall communicator. Often, people don't even realize that they twirl their hair or repeatedly mispronounce words while speaking in public settings until they receive feedback from a teacher during a public speaking course. People around the United States will often pay speech coaches over one hundred dollars per hour to help them enhance their speaking skills. You have a built-in

speech coach right in your classroom, so it is to your advantage to use the opportunity to improve your verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

## OVERCOMING FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

An additional benefit of taking a public speaking class is that it will help reduce your fear of public speaking. Whether they've spoken in public a lot or are just getting started, most people experience some anxiety when engaging in public speaking. Fear of public speaking is a learned skill that can be overcome by practicing and engaging in public speaking forums (Raja, 2017). By taking a course in public speaking, students become better acquainted with the public speaking process, making them more confident and less apprehensive. In addition, you will learn specific strategies for overcoming the challenges of speech anxiety. We will discuss this topic in greater detail throughout this book.

## PROFESSIONAL BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Once you've learned the basic skills associated with public speaking, you'll find that being able to effectively speak in public has profound benefits, including

- influencing the world around you,
- developing leadership skills,
- becoming a thought leader.

# INFLUENCING THE WORLD AROUND YOU

If you don't like something about your local government, then speak out about your issue! One of the best ways to get our society to change is through the power of speech. Common citizens in the United States and around the world, like you, are influencing the world in real ways through the power of speech. Just type the words "citizens speak out" into a search engine, and you'll find numerous examples of how common citizens use the power of speech to make real changes in the world—for example, by speaking out against "fracking" for natural gas (a process in which chemicals are injected into rocks in an attempt to open them up for fast flow of natural gas or oil). One of the amazing parts of being a citizen in a democracy is the right to stand up and speak out, which is a luxury many people in the world do not have. If you don't like something, be the force of change you're looking for through the power of speech.

## DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Have you ever thought about climbing the corporate ladder and eventually finding yourself in a management or other leadership position? If so, then public speaking skills are very important. If you want people to follow you, you have to communicate effectively and clearly what followers should do. For a leader, communication skills are powerful tools that inspire change from those around them and those working toward a common object (Landry, 2019).

## BECOMING A THOUGHT LEADER

Even if you are not in an official leadership position, effective public speaking can help you become a "**thought leader**." Joel Kurtzman, editor of *Strategy & Business*, coined this term to call attention to individuals who contribute new ideas to the world of business. A thought leader, or influencer, is someone who, based on their expertise and perspective in an industry, offers unique guidance, inspires innovation, and influences others (Schooley, 2021). To achieve thought leader status, individuals must communicate their ideas to others

through both writing and public speaking. Lizotte demonstrates how becoming a thought leader can be personally and financially rewarding at the same time: when others look to you as a thought leader, you will be more desired and make more money as a result. Whether standing before a group of executives discussing the next great trend in business or delivering a webinar, thought leaders use public speaking every day to create the future that the rest of us live in.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=33#oembed-1>*







## 1.3 The Process of Public Speaking



As noted earlier, all of us encounter thousands of messages in our everyday environments, so getting your idea heard above all the other ones is a constant battle. Some speakers will try gimmicks, but we strongly believe that getting your message heard depends on three fundamental components: message, skill, and passion. The first part of getting your message across is the message itself. When what you are saying is clear and coherent, people are more likely to pay attention to it. On the other hand, when a message is ambiguous, people will often stop paying attention. Our discussions in the first part of this book involve how to have clear and coherent content.

The second part of getting your message heard is having effective communication skills. You may have the best ideas in the world, but if you do not possess basic public speaking skills, you're going to have a problem getting anyone to listen. In this book, we will address the skills you must possess to effectively communicate your ideas to others.

Lastly, if you want your message to be heard, you must communicate passion for your message. One mistake that novice public speakers make is picking topics in which they have no emotional investment. If an audience can tell that you don't really care about your topic, they will just tune you out. Passion is the extra spark that draws people's attention and makes them want to listen to your message.

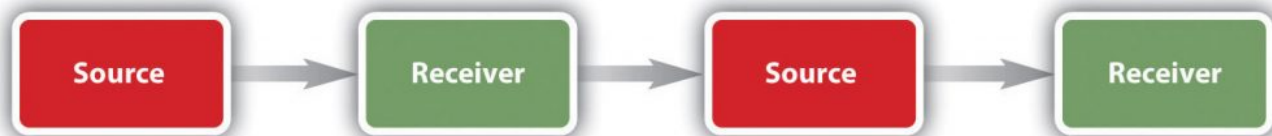
In this section, we're going to examine the process of public speaking by first introducing you to a basic model of public speaking and then discussing how public speaking functions as dialogue. These models will give you a basic understanding of the communication process and some challenges that you may face as a speaker.

# MODELS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

A basic model of human communication is one of the first topics that most communication teachers start with in any class. For our focus on public speaking, we will introduce two widely discussed models in communication: interactional and transactional.

## INTERACTIONAL MODELS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

### LINEAR MODEL



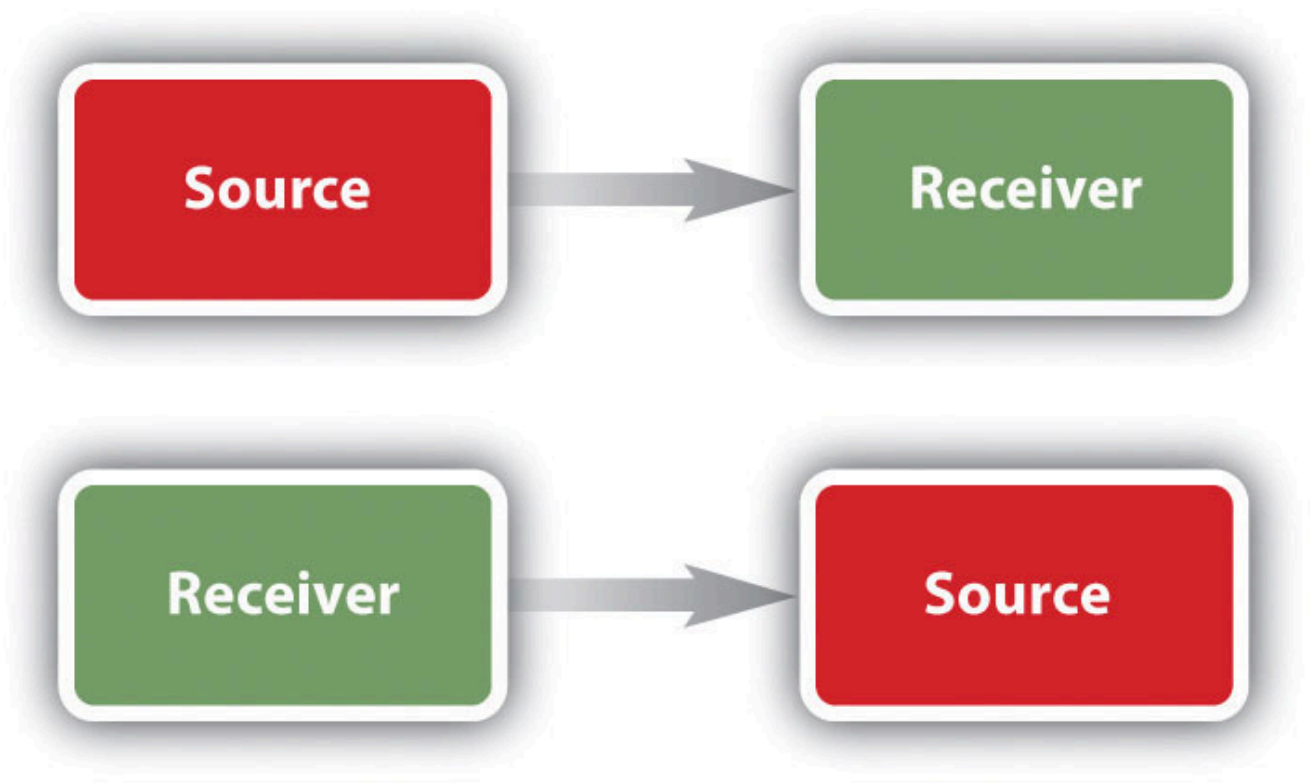
Source -> Receiver -> Source -> Receiver

The interactional model of public speaking comes from the work of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The original model mirrored how radio and telephone technologies functioned and consisted of three primary parts: source, channel, and receiver. The **source** was the part of a telephone a person spoke into, the **channel** was the telephone itself, and the **receiver** was the part of the phone where one could hear the other person. Shannon and Weaver also recognized that often there is static that interferes with listening to a telephone conversation, which they called noise.

Although there are a number of problems with applying this model to human communication, it does have some useful parallels to public speaking. In public speaking, the source is the person who is giving the speech, the channel is the speaker's use of **verbal** and **nonverbal communication**, and the receivers are the audience

members listening to the speech. As with a telephone call, a wide range of distractions (**noise**) can inhibit an audience member from accurately attending to a speaker's speech. Avoiding or adapting to these types of noise is an important challenge for public speakers.

## INTERACTIONAL MODEL



Source -> Receiver. Receiver -> Source

The interactional model of communication developed by Wilbur Schramm builds upon the linear model (Schramm, 1954). Schramm added three major components to the Shannon and Weaver model. First, Schramm identified two basic processes of communication: encoding and decoding. **Encoding** is what a source does when “creating a message, adapting it to the receiver, and transmitting it across some source-selected channel” (Wrench, McCroskey & Richmond, 2008). When you are at home preparing your speech or standing in front of your classroom talking to your peers, you are participating in the encoding process.

The second major process is the **decoding** process, or “sensing (for example, hearing or seeing) a source’s

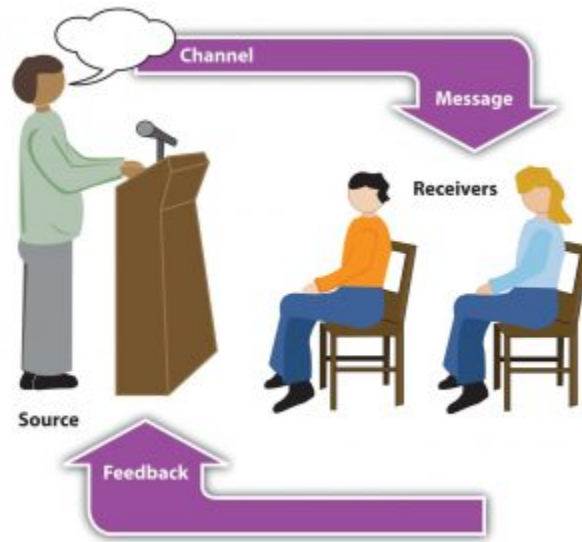
message, interpreting the source's message, evaluating the source's message, and responding to the source's message" (Wrench, McCroskey & Richmond, 2008). Decoding is relevant in the public speaking context when, as an audience member, you listen to the words of the speech, pay attention to nonverbal behaviors of the speaker, and attend to any presentation aids that the speaker uses. You must then interpret what the speaker is saying.

Although interpreting a speaker's message may sound easy in theory, in practice many problems can arise. A speaker's verbal message, nonverbal communication, and **mediated** presentation aids can all make a **message** either clearer or harder to understand. For example, unfamiliar vocabulary, speaking too fast or too softly, or small print on presentation aids may make it difficult for you to figure out what the speaker means. Conversely, by providing definitions of complex terms, using well-timed gestures, or displaying graphs of quantitative information, the speaker can help you interpret his or her meaning.

Once you have interpreted what the speaker is communicating, you then evaluate the message. Was it good? Do you agree or disagree with the speaker? Is the speaker's argument logical? These are all questions that you may ask yourself when evaluating a speech.

The last part of decoding is "responding to a source's message," when the receiver encodes a message to send to the source. When a receiver sends a message back to a source, we call this process **feedback**. Schramm talks about three types of feedback: direct, moderately direct, and indirect (Schramm, 1954). The first type, direct feedback, occurs when the receiver directly talks to the source. For example, if a speech ends with a question-and-answer period, listeners will openly agree or disagree with the speaker. The second type of feedback, moderately direct, focuses on nonverbal messages sent while a source is speaking, such as audience members smiling and nodding their heads in agreement or looking at their watches or surreptitiously sending text messages during the speech. The final type of feedback, indirect, often involves a greater time gap between the actual message and the receiver's feedback. For example, suppose you run for student body president and give speeches to a variety of groups all over campus, only to lose on student election day. Your audiences (the different groups you spoke to) have offered you indirect feedback on your message through their votes. One of the challenges you'll face as a public speaker is how to respond effectively to audience feedback, particularly the direct and moderately direct forms of feedback you receive during your presentation.

# TRANSACTIONAL MODEL OF PUBLIC SPEAKING



The source speaks a message through a channel to receivers. Feedback is then given to the source by the receivers.

One of the biggest concerns that some people have with the interactional model of communication is that it tends to place people into the category of either source or receiver with no overlap. Even with Schramm's model, encoding and decoding are perceived as distinct for sources and receivers. Furthermore, the interactional model cannot handle situations where multiple sources are interacting at the same time (Mortenson, 1972). To address these weaknesses, Dean Barnlund proposed a **transactional model** of communication (Barnlund, 2008). The basic premise of the transactional model is that individuals are sending and receiving messages at the same time. Whereas the interactional model has individuals engaging in the role of either source or receiver and the meaning of a message is sent from the source to the receiver, the transactional model assumes that meaning is cocreated by both people interacting together.

The idea that meanings are co-created between people is based on a concept called the “field of experience.” According to West and Turner, a field of experience involves “how a person’s culture, experiences, and heredity influence his or her ability to communicate with another” (West & Turner, 2010). Our education, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, personality, beliefs, actions, attitudes, languages, social status, past experiences, and customs are all aspects of our field of experience, which we bring to every interaction. For meaning to occur, we must have some shared experiences with our audience; this makes it challenging to speak effectively to audiences with very different experiences from our own. Our goal as public speakers is to build upon shared fields of experience so that we can help audience members interpret our message.

# DIALOGIC THEORY OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Most people think of public speaking as engaging in a **monologue** where the speaker stands and delivers information and the audience passively listens. Based on the work of numerous philosophers, however, Ronald Arnett and Pat Arneson proposed that all communication, even public speaking, could be viewed as a dialogue (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). The **dialogic theory** is based on three overarching principles:

1. Dialogue is more natural than monologue.
2. Meanings are in people not words.
3. Contexts and social situations impact perceived meanings (Bakhtin, 2001a; Bakhtin, 2001b).

Let's look at each of these in turn.

## DIALOGUE VS. MONOLOGUE

The first tenet of the dialogic perspective is that communication should be a dialogue and not a monologue. Lev Yakubinsky argued that even public speaking situations often turn into dialogues when audience members actively engage speakers by asking questions. He even claimed that nonverbal behavior (e.g., nodding one's head in agreement or scowling) functions as feedback for speakers and contributes to a dialogue (Yakubinsky, 1997). Overall, if you approach your public speaking experience as a dialogue, you'll be more actively engaged as a speaker and more attentive to how your audience is responding, which will, in turn, lead to more actively engaged audience members.

## MEANINGS ARE IN PEOPLE, NOT WORDS

Part of the dialogic process in public speaking is realizing that you and your audience may differ in how you see your speech. Hellmut Geissner and Edith Slembeck (1986) discussed Geissner's idea of responsibility, or

the notion that the meanings of words must be mutually agreed upon by people interacting with each other (Geissner & Slembeck, 1986). If you say the word “dog” and think of a soft, furry pet and your audience member thinks of the animal that attacked him as a child, the two of you perceive the word from very different vantage points. As speakers, we must do our best to craft messages that take our audience into account and use audience feedback to determine whether the meaning we intend is the one that is received. To be successful at conveying our desired meaning, we must know quite a bit about our audience so we can make language choices that will be the most appropriate for the context. Although we cannot predict how all our audience members will interpret specific words, we do know that—for example—using teenage slang when speaking to the audience at a senior center would most likely hurt our ability to convey our meaning clearly.

## CONTEXTS AND SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin notes that human interactions take place according to cultural norms and rules (Bakhtin, 2001a; Bakhtin, 2001b). How we approach people, the words we choose, and how we deliver speeches are all dependent on different speaking contexts and social situations. On September 8, 2009, President Barack Obama addressed school children with a televised speech (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-a-national-address-americas-schoolchildren>). If you look at the speech he delivered to kids around the country and then at his speeches targeted toward adults, you’ll see lots of differences. These dissimilar speeches are necessary because the audiences (speaking to kids vs. speaking to adults) have different experiences and levels of knowledge. Ultimately, good public speaking is a matter of taking into account the cultural background of your audience and attempting to engage your audience in a dialogue from their own vantage point.

Considering the **context** of a public speech involves thinking about four dimensions: physical, temporal, social-psychological, and cultural (DeVito, 2009).

## PHYSICAL DIMENSION

The **physical dimension** of communication involves the real or touchable environment where

communication occurs. For example, you may find yourself speaking in a classroom, a corporate board room, or a large amphitheater. Each of these real environments will influence your ability to interact with your audience. Larger physical spaces may require you to use a microphone and speaker system to make yourself heard or to use projected presentation aids to convey visual material.

How the room is physically decorated or designed can also impact your interaction with your audience. If the room is dimly lit or is decorated with interesting posters, audience members' minds may start wandering. If the room is too hot, you'll find people becoming sleepy. As speakers, we often have little or no control over our physical environment, but we always need to take it into account when planning and delivering our messages.

## TEMPORAL DIMENSION

According to Joseph DeVito, the **temporal dimension** “has to do not only with the time of day and moment in history but also with where a particular message fits into the sequence of communication events” (DeVito, 2009). The time of day can have a dramatic effect on how alert one's audience is. Don't believe us? Try giving a speech in front of a class around 12:30 p.m. when no one's had lunch. It's amazing how impatient audience members get once hunger sets in.

In addition to the time of day, we often face temporal dimensions related to how our speech will be viewed in light of societal events. Imagine how a speech on the importance of campus security would be interpreted on the day after a shooting occurred. Compare this with the interpretation of the same speech given at a time when the campus had not had any shootings for years, if ever.

Another element of the temporal dimension is how a message fits with what happens immediately before it. For example, if another speaker has just given an intense speech on death and dying and you stand up to speak about something more trivial, people may downplay your message because it doesn't fit with the serious tone established by the earlier speech. You never want to be the funny speaker who has to follow an emotional speech where people cried. Most of the time in a speech class, you will have no advance notice as to what the speaker before you will be talking about. Therefore, it is wise to plan on being sensitive to previous topics and be prepared to ease your way subtly into your message if the situation so dictates.



# SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION

The **social-psychological** dimension of context refers to “status relationships among participants, roles and games that people play, norms of the society or group, and the friendliness, formality, or gravity of the situation” (DeVito, 2009). You have to know the types of people in your audience and how they react to a wide range of messages.

# CULTURAL DIMENSION

The final context dimension Joseph DeVito mentions is the **cultural dimension** (DeVito, 2009). When we interact with others from different cultures, misunderstandings can result from differing cultural beliefs, norms, and practices. As public speakers engaging in a dialogue with our audience members, we must attempt to understand the cultural makeup of our audience so that we can avoid these misunderstandings as much as possible.

Each of these elements of context is a challenge for you as a speaker. Throughout the rest of the book, we’ll discuss how you can meet the challenges presented by the audience and context and become a more effective public speaker in the process.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=38#oembed-1>

## References

Arnett, R. C., & Arneson, P. (1999). Dialogic civility in a cynical age: Community, hope, and interpersonal relationships. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Bakhtin, M. (2001a). The problem of speech genres. (V. W. McGee, Trans., 1986). In P. Bizzell & B. Herzberg (Eds.), The rhetorical tradition (pp. 1227–1245). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s. (Original work published in 1953.)

- Bakhtin, M. (2001b). *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. (L. Matejka & I. R. Titunik, Trans., 1973). In P. Bizzell & B. Herzberg (Eds.), *The rhetorical tradition* (pp. 1210–1226). Boston, MA: Medford/St. Martin's. (Original work published in 1953).
- Barnlund, D. C. (2008). A transactional model of communication. In C. D. Mortensen (Ed.), *Communication theory* (2nd ed., pp. 47–57). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- DeVito, J. A. (2009). *The interpersonal communication book* (12th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Geissner, H., & Slembek, E. (1986). *Miteinander sprechen und handeln* [Speak and act: Living and working together]. Frankfurt, Germany: Scriptor.
- Mortenson, C. D. (1972). *Communication: The study of human communication*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Schramm, W. (1954). How communication works. In W. Schramm (Ed.), *The process and effects of communication* (pp. 3–26). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Shannon, C. E., & Weaver, W. (1949). *The mathematical theory of communication*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- West, R., & Turner, L. H. (2010). *Introducing communication theory: Analysis and application* (4th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, p. 13.
- Wrench, J. S., McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (2008). *Human communication in everyday life: Explanations and applications*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, p. 17.
- Yakubinsky, L. P. (1997). On dialogic speech. (M. Eskin, Trans.). *PMLA*, 112(2), 249–256. (Original work published in 1923).

# CHAPTER 2: BUILDING CONFIDENCE

## Learning Objectives

- Learn methods to build public speaking confidence.
- Identify and deal with your own brand of public speaking anxiety.
- Apply cognitive restructuring (CR) techniques to create a more positive frame of reference.
- Recognize the importance of customized practice to become conversant in your topic.
- Create a personal preparation routine to minimize your apprehension.

## Key Terms

- **“Breathe and Release”**
- **Cognitive Restructuring (CR)**
- **Glossophobia**
- **Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA)**
- **Scrutiny Fear**
- **State-Anxiety**
- **Trait-Anxiety**







## 2.1 What is Communication Apprehension?



*“I have to do what?”*

*On the first day of history class, you see the syllabus and see that a significant percentage of your overall grade in the course will be determined by a ten-minute oral presentation that each student must give in front of the class. The presentation, due in eight weeks, will be based on an original research project.*

*After a very positive job interview, you receive an email asking you to return for a second interview, prepared to answer several questions in front of a panel of senior managers. The questions are contained in an attachment. “Please be ready to stand in the front of the room to answer,” the email reads. “See you next week!”*

*You will be having dinner Saturday to meet your fiancé’s family. Then, just days from the dinner, your fiancé tells you that her father, a former Marine and retired police officer, will want to talk about politics and current events, and will likely judge what sort of person you are based on how well you defend your ideas.*

Each of these scenarios might provoke one of the most common fears in our society: **public speaking anxiety (PSA)** or **glossophobia**. PSA is “a situation specific social anxiety” arising “from the real or anticipated enactment of an oral presentation” (Bodie 2010). If you experience PSA, you are not alone: approximately a quarter of all people report having this fear. (Drevitch, 2017). However, overcoming PSA is important if you are to grow personally and professionally. PSA can “prevent you from taking risks to share your ideas, to speak about your work, and to present your solutions to problems that affect many people” (Drevitch, 2017). Even mild PSA can affect your self-esteem (Adler, 1980), how you are perceived by others (Dwyer & Cruz, 1998), as well as success in school and in landing job interviews (Daly & Leth, 1976).

Effective public speaking is not simply about learning what to say, but about developing the confidence to say it. “Fear of public speaking is not so much related to the quality of a speech as it is to how the speaker feels, thinks, or acts when faced with speaking in public” (Drevitch, 2017). The most effective way to deal with PSA is to identify your own “brand” of this fear, then take specific steps to overcome this apprehension.





## 2.2 Classifying PSA

### Forms of PSA

The causes of PSA, public speaking anxiety, vary from person to person and are rooted in unique life experiences. Following are several contributing factors to public speaking anxiety.

#### Trait-anxiety

PSA can be aligned with an individual's personality (McCroskey et al., 1976). For example, people who would describe themselves as “shy” often seek to avoid interaction with others because they are uncertain of how they will be perceived. Because avoiding such judgment is generally not difficult, this avoidance becomes a pattern of behavior. As a result, those with **trait-anxiety** are likely to view any chance to express themselves publicly with skepticism and hesitation.

#### State-anxiety

PSA can also be derived from the external situation in which individuals find themselves (Beatty, 1988), or state-anxiety. While people with trait-anxiety are predisposed to fear how others might perceive them, state anxiety is the result of a previous adverse situation. Those with state-anxiety might have had a negative experience in public at an early age such as forgetting a line in a play, losing a spelling bee, or doing poorly when called on in class, resulting in public embarrassment. These experiences often lead to the formation of state-anxiety.

#### Scrutiny Fear

Other researchers describe PSA as deriving from a fear of scrutiny (Mattick et al., 1989). This anxiety is simply the fear of being in a situation where one is being watched or observed.

Those who struggle with PSA will recognize varying intensities associated with different situations or triggers. Therefore, overcoming PSA requires first that you recognize, and then minimize, your own personal cause of this fear.

Both **state-anxiety** and **scrutiny fear** can be effectively addressed through **cognitive restructuring (CR)** and thoughtful, deliberate experience.

## Cognitive Restructuring

The major difference between “presenting” to a public audience versus “presenting” to a small group of close friends involves one’s attitude about the situation. Overcoming PSA is as much a matter of changing one’s attitude as it is developing one’s skills as a speaker. A change in attitude can be fostered through a self-reflective regimen called cognitive restructuring (CR), which is an internal process through which individuals deliberately adjust their perceptions of an action or experience (Mattick et al., 1989).

Cognitive Restructuring is a three-step internal process:

1. Identify objectively what you think
2. Identify any inconsistencies between perception and reality
3. Replace destructive thinking with supportive thinking

These steps are easy to understand, but perhaps difficult to execute!

The first step is to objectively identify what you are thinking about as you approach a public speaking opportunity. Recall your habitual frame of reference: shine a bright light directly on it. The results will be different for each student, as this is an internal process based on unique individual experiences.

## Sources of Apprehension

Two common concerns described by those with PSA are the fear of being under scrutiny, as if you are under some collective microscope with everybody’s eyes on you, and the fear that the audience is just waiting for you to slip up so they can immediately render an embarrassing judgment.

How might CR be applied to each of these widely held perceptions?

### Center of Attention

When people describe this specific scrutiny fear, they use phrases like “everyone just stares at me” or “I don’t like having all eyes on me.” Consider for a moment what your experiences have been like when you have been a member of the audience listening to someone else speak. Where did you look while the person spoke? Did you look at the speaker?

Direct eye contact means different things in different cultures, but in the United States, eye contact is the primary means for an audience to demonstrate to the speaker that they are listening. Nobody likes to be ignored, and most members of an audience would not want to be perceived as ignoring the speaker—that would be rude!—so the audience looks at the speaker as a sign of respect.

Compare: before CR, the frame of reference reflects the idea that “everyone is staring at me”; after CR, the

perception is altered to “the audience is looking at me to be supportive and polite—after all, I’m the one doing the talking.”

## Fear of Judgement

Another common concern is the fear of being judged harshly or making an embarrassing mistake. Go back to that memory of you as an audience member, but this time reflect on what sort of expectations you had at the time. Did you expect the speaker to be flawless and riveting? Did you have in mind some super-high level of performance—below which the speaker would have disappointed you? You probably did not (unless you had the chance to watch some prominent speaker).

Think back to any experiences you may have had watching another speaker struggle—perhaps a classmate during one of their presentations. Witnessing something like that can be uncomfortable. Did you feel empathy for the person struggling? Isn’t it a much more pleasant experience when the speaker does well? Again, the vast majority of people empathize with the speaker when it comes to the quality of the presentation. They are willing to give the speaker a chance to say what they want to say.

Too, if the speaker stumbles over her words or misspeaks, she notices the flaw much more than the audience does because they do not expect a flawless performance. They know the difference between a live presentation and a carefully edited performance. Think about when you have watched professionals speak live in front of a camera to deliver the news or provide commentary about a sporting or political event. When these professionals occasionally stumble over their words or mispronounce something, how upset does the audience become? Can you even remember the specific misstep made by one of these professionals? More than likely you can’t because when that person flubbed his lines, your brain just processed it as normal human speech. So even if you misspeak a word or even forget a line, your experience will be more frustrating and memorable for you than it will be for your audience.

Thus, before CR, the frame of reference reflects the idea that “everyone is judging me harshly,” and after CR, the perception is altered to “the audience is willing to listen to what I have to say because it’s a more pleasant experience for them if the speaker is successful.”

Consider what comes into your mind if you are to deliver a public presentation. Are your thoughts consumed with many uncertainties? What if I make a mistake? What if they don’t like what I’m talking about? What if? Try your own version of CR. Put yourself in the role of audience member and ask yourself whether your fears as a speaker are consistent with your expectations as an audience member. Remember that, just like you, the audience wants the speaker to succeed.

Of course CR is always easier said than done. It is a process that takes time, patience, and practice. The most important thing to remember is that you are trying CR as a means of breaking a habit, and habits are formed over periods of time, never instantaneously. Breaking a habit can only be accomplished gradually and with deliberate effort.

Changing your attitude is only one element in overcoming PSA. The other involves improving your skills as a speaker, including diligently preparing for your presentation.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=41#h5p-8>





## 2.3 Learning Confidence



### Techniques for Building Confidence

A speaker's nervousness is linked to her level of preparation. The best, most consistent and direct way to minimize the level of nervousness you feel is through effective preparation. This is always true. More practice results in less nervousness.

Michael Jordan was once asked the best way to learn how to shoot free throws. To everyone's surprise, the first step he described did not entail shooting the ball. Instead, he described how the first step in learning to shoot free throws is to run sprints—run until your body is under the same stress as it would be in a game when you need to make those free throws—because your practice will only be truly productive when performed under those conditions. Only then do you pick up the ball and shoot.

All types of preparation and practice yield benefits, but there is a significant difference between merely helpful practice and sufficient practice, or “knowing what you are talking about,” and “knowing what you are going to say.” While thinking about your presentation can be helpful, that sort of preparation will not give you a sense of what you are actually going to say. Athletes know that the best practices will re-create game conditions and test their abilities to perform in real-life scenarios. Sufficient practice for public speaking re-creates those real-life scenarios.

Many students do not practice effectively before speaking in public, causing them to believe that practice isn't helpful. Unfortunately, these same students usually have had little, if any, training in how to prepare for a presentation, and so they employ the scholastic training they are most familiar with—how to write a paper. However, this is not the same activity as giving an oral presentation, and their lack of proper preparation only contributes to their lack of confidence.

Let's look at a few elements of effective practice.

## Visualize Success

Athletes and performers are often coached to visualize what they are trying to do as a way of performing correctly. Football and basketball players must envision how each member of the team will move during a particular play because team success depends on speedy and flawless coordination among individuals. Dancers, body builders, and people practicing yoga are trained to visualize the form and positioning of their bodies as they execute their moves. Engaging the imagination in this way can improve performance.

Speakers, too, should visualize success. As you practice, visualize yourself presenting with confidence to a receptive audience. “See” your relaxed facial expressions and “hear” your confident tone of voice. Imagine yourself moving gracefully, complementing what you say with expressive gestures. Imagine the audience reacting appropriately—nodding appreciatively and giving thoughtful consideration to your points. Imagine the gratification of watching the audience really “get it.” When you can honestly envision yourself performing at this level, you are taking an important step toward achieving that goal.

## Avoid Gimmicks

Some acting coaches (and speech teachers) encourage their students to practice in front of mirrors, so that they can watch themselves perform and evaluate how they move. In acting, this can be very useful, but in speaking, it is less so. When you practice your presentation, the most important element is expressiveness. You want to become more familiar with how much material you have to present, the order in which you plan to present it, and the phrasing you think would be most effective to express it. Watching yourself perform in a mirror will focus your attention on your appearance first—and on what you express second. This makes using a mirror during practice a distraction from what the practice ought to achieve.

For some reason, the myth persists that imagining your audience in their underwear is an effective way to make standing in front of them seem less frightening. These sorts of gimmicks don’t work! In fact, concentrating on anything other than what you are doing is distracting and not beneficial at all. Do your best to avoid such advice. Visualize success!

## Breathe and Release

Here, we will discuss a shortened version of the **“breathe and release”** technique. This relaxation technique could be useful for nervous speakers—especially those who are concerned with the physiological manifestations of nervousness, such as shaky hands or knees.

The key to “breathe and release” is to understand that when nervous tension results in minor trembling, the effort of trying to keep one’s hands from shaking contributes to the whole situation—that is, trying to stop literally makes the problem worse! Therefore, the best approach is through relaxation.



## How to Breathe and Release

1. Imagine the nervousness within your body.
2. Imagine the energy bubbling inside you, like boiling water.
3. Draw that energy to a high point within your body through a deep, cleansing breath.
4. Imagine this cleansing breath like a vacuum, inhaling all of the bubbling liquid.
5. Release the energy by deliberately relaxing your upper body, all the way from your fingertips to your shoulder blades.
6. Imagine how keeping any part of your upper extremities tense would result in a “kink” in the release valve, and so complete relaxation is the key to success.

## Minimize What You Memorize

Another important hint for speech preparation is to avoid writing an entirely scripted version of the presentation. A speech outline is not a monologue or manuscript; it is a guideline and should be used as a roadmap for your speech.

Remember that lunch with your friends? When you were describing the movie plot, you were being conversant in a prepared way. This means that you knew what you were describing, but you were not concerned with the specific words you were using. Being conversant is the condition of being prepared to discuss an issue intelligently.

A well-prepared speaker is conversant regarding her topic. Consider how being conversant in this manner allows for freer, more fluid communication, with no stress associated with your ability to remember the exact words you wanted to use. Being conversant also gives the speaker the best chance to recognize and react to audience feedback.

If you are completely focused on the integrity of scripted comments, then you will be unable to read and react to your audience in any meaningful way. Imagine how frustrating it would be for your friends at that lunch if you would not respond to any of their questions until you were finished reading a few descriptive paragraphs about the movie. They would probably just wait until you were done reading and then try to engage you in a conversation!

## Practice Out Loud

Remember the very first time you tried to do anything – a game, a sport, an activity, anything at all. How good were you out of the gate? Perhaps you had talent or were gifted with a “feel” for what you were doing. But even then, didn’t you get better with more experience? Nobody does anything the very best on their very first attempt, and everyone—even the most talented among us—benefits from effective practice.

In this way, speaking in public is no different from any other activity. To maximize the chance that your

presentation will come out smooth and polished, you will need to hear it all the way through. By practicing out loud, from the beginning to the ending, you will be able to listen to your whole speech and properly gauge the flow of your entire presentation.

Additionally, without at least one complete out-loud practice, there will be no way to accurately estimate the length of your speech, and your preparation will remain insufficient.

The out-loud “dress rehearsal” is the single most important element of your preparation. Without it, you will be delivering your presentation in full for the first time when it counts the most. Putting yourself at that sort of disadvantage isn’t wise and is easily avoided.

You might even consider trying that initial practice without the benefit of any notes. Stand up; start speaking; see what comes out!

During your initial practice, consider these questions:

- Where, during your presentation, are you most—and least—conversant?
- Where, during your presentation, are you most in need of supportive notes?
- What do your notes need to contain?

Prepare for your public presentation by speaking and listening to yourself, rather than by writing, editing, and rewriting. Remember that when you are having a conversation, you never use the same sort of language and syntax as you do when you are writing a formal paper. Practice with the goal of becoming conversant in your topic, not fluent with a script.

## Customize Your Practice

Depending on your personal level of PSA, you may choose to implement techniques previously mentioned in different ways. Take a moment to reflect on what triggers your PSA. Do you dislike the feeling of being the center of attention? Are you more concerned with who is in the audience and what they might think of you? Or are you worried about “freezing” in front of the audience and forgetting what you wanted to say?

Write some of these concerns down and put them into a priority order. If you are worried about a particular issue or problem, how might you prepare to minimize the chance of that issue arising?

Now, consider your current method of preparation. Do you prepare more for a written paper than for an oral presentation? Do you have the goal of presenting a scripted message? Do you practice out loud? When, during your process, do you practice aloud? Do you practice at all before you begin to compose your speaking notes, or do you only practice after? Remember that dealing with PSA often requires breaking a mental habit. It is a good idea to change what you have done previously. Be deliberate. Observe what works for your situation.

As stated earlier, everyone deals with PSA most effectively through increased self-awareness and a willingness

to complete each of the steps in the entire process. After you acknowledge your reality, then take the steps necessary to overcome apprehension.

After reading about the ways to overcome the debilitating impact of PSA, experiment and see what works best for you. Do not continue to prepare in the same way that you did in the past. Speak more; write and revise less. Be sure to practice out loud at least once during your preparation to prepare yourself sufficiently. Reflect on your personal concerns and try Cognitive Restructuring to reframe them. Take your time. Do the work. Have confidence that your preparation will yield positive results.

## Conclusion

PSA is a real issue, but it need not be an obstacle to success. Take the time to become more aware of your personal brand of PSA. Take positive steps to minimize its impact. Your willingness to work and your positive attitude are the keys to your success.

## References

- Adler, R. B., (1980). Integrating reticence management into the basic communication curriculum. *Communication Education*, 29, 215-221.
- Beatty, M.J. (1988). Public speaking apprehension, decision-making errors in the selection of speech introduction strategies and adherence to strategy. *Communication Education*, 37, 297 – 311.
- Bodie, GrahamD. “A Racing Heart, Rattling Knees, and Ruminative Thoughts: Defining, Explaining, and Treating Public Speaking Anxiety.” *Communication Education*, vol. 59, no. 1, Jan. 2010, pp. 70–105.
- Daly, J. A. & Leth, S. A., (1976), *Communication Apprehension and the Personnel Selection Decision*, Paper presented at the International Communication Association Convention, Portland, OR.
- Drevitch, Gary. “Why Are We Scared of Public Speaking?” *Psychology Today*. 27 November 2017. Web. 8 February 2022.
- Dwyer, K. & Cruz, A (1998), *Communication Apprehension, Personality, and Grades in the Basic Course: Are There Correlations?* *Communication Research Reports*, 15(4), 436-444.
- Mattick, R. P., Peters, L., & Clarke, J. C., (1989) Exposure and cognitive restructuring for social phobia: A controlled study. *Behavior Therapy*, 20, 3-23.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Anderson, J. (1976). The relationship between communication apprehension and academic achievement among college students, *Human Communication Research*, 3, 73-81.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Oral Communication Apprehension: A summary of recent theory and research. *Human Communication Research*, 4, 78-96.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1984). The communication apprehensive perspective. In J. A. Daly & J. C. McCroskey

(Eds.), *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication apprehension*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

McCroskey, J. C. (1976) *The Problem of Communication Apprehension in the Classroom*, Paper prepared for the special edition of *Communication*, Journal of the Communication Association of the Pacific compiled for the C.A.P. Convention (Kobe, Japan, June 1976).

Menzel, K. E., & Carrell, L. J., (1994). The relationship between preparation and performance in public speaking, *Communication Education*, 43, 17-26.

Pelias, M. H. (1989). Communication apprehension in basic public speaking texts: An examination of contemporary textbooks. *Communication Education*, 38(1), 41-53.

# CHAPTER 3: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

## Learning Objectives

- Recognize the importance of audience-centered speech.
- Know how to adapt your speech to your audience.
- Learn how to gather and use demographic, psychographic, and situational information.
- Learn to use effective tools for gathering audience information.
- Use your audience analysis to prepare a speech and to alter your speech while speaking.

## Key Terms

- **Ageism**
- **Audience Analysis**
- **Captive Audience**
- **Chronocentrism**
- **Credibility**
- **Demographic Analysis**
- **Demographic Information**
- **Diversity**
- **Elitism**
- **Ethnocentrism**
- **Ethos**
- **Focus Group**
- **Frame of Reference**
- **Idiom**

- **Interview**
- **Psychographic Analysis**
- **Psychographic Information**
- **Racism**
- **Sexism**
- **Situational Analysis**
- **Socioeconomic Status**
- **Stereotyping**
- **Survey**
- **Voluntary Audience**

## 3.1 What Is Audience Analysis? Why Conduct It?



The act of public speaking is a shared activity that involves interaction between speaker and audience. In order for your speech to get a fair hearing, you need to create a relationship with your listeners. Scholars Sprague, Stuart, and Bodary explain, “Speakers do not give speeches to audiences; they jointly create meaning *with* audiences” (Sprague et al., 2010). The success of your speech rests in large part on how your audience receives and understands it.

Think of a time when you heard a speech that sounded “canned” or that fell flat because the audience didn’t “get it.” Chances are that this happened because the speaker neglected to consider that public speaking is an audience-centered activity. Worse, lack of consideration for one’s audience can result in the embarrassment of alienating listeners by telling a joke they don’t appreciate, or using language they find offensive. The best way to reduce the risk of such situations is to conduct an audience analysis as you prepare your speech.

**Audience analysis** is the process of gathering information about the people in your audience so that you can understand their needs, expectations, beliefs, values, attitudes, and likely opinions. In this chapter, we will first examine some reasons why audience analysis is important. We will then describe three different types of audience analysis and some techniques to use in conducting audience analysis. Finally, we will explain how you can use your audience analysis not only during the creation of your speech but also while you are delivering it.

## 3.2 Why Conduct an Audience Analysis?



Conducting audience analysis is important for successful public speaking. Audience members are neither predisposed nor obligated to listen to public speakers. People are concerned with their own values, beliefs, and well-being. Therefore, unless they find the message conveyed meaningful, useful, and relatable, they have no reason to pay attention and listen to a particular speech.

Imagine you are giving a speech on recycling to your classmates, who are mainly from Louisiana. According to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality “2018 Recycling Report,” the recycling rate in Louisiana is 12.9%, which makes it one of the top 10 worst-performing states in recycling. Given this context, it is likely that most of your classmates do not recycle regularly and have minimum knowledge of recycling. Hence in your speech you could provide details on the importance of recycling, the benefits of recycling, and instructions for how to recycle in Louisiana. However, if your target audience was residents in Maine state, which has been a leader of recycling legislation in the US with a recycling rate of 72% (50 States of Recycling Eunomia Report Final, 2021), you would outline your speech differently, with less information about basic instructions for how to recycle.

To be able to adapt your speech to your target audience, audience analysis is necessary. Audience analysis allows public speakers to be audience-centered, keeping the audience in mind as they prepare and deliver the speech. Through audience analysis, speakers can choose a worthwhile topic and learn about audience disposition, diversity, and needs, which helps to avoid offensive remarks and deliver an ethical speech.

### Audience Analysis Allows to Choose a Worthwhile Topic

Audience analysis helps to select a topic that your audience is concerned about. Your selection of a topic



should reflect your regard for the audience. There is no universal list of good or bad topics, but you have an ethical responsibility to select a topic that will be worth listening to. As a student, you are probably sensitive to how unpleasant it would be to listen to a speech on a highly complex or technical topic that you found impossible to understand. However, have you considered that audiences do not want to waste their time or attention listening to a speech that is too simple? Many students find themselves tempted to choose an easy topic, or a topic they already know a great deal about. This is an understandable temptation; if you are like most students, you have many commitments and the demands on your time are considerable. Many experts encourage students to begin with something they already know. However, our experience tells us that students often do this simply to reduce their workload. For example, if the purpose of your speech is to inform or persuade students in your public speaking class, a topic such as fitness, drunk driving, the Greek system (campus fraternities and sororities), or credit card responsibility may be easy for you to address, but it is unlikely to go very far toward informing your audience, and in all likelihood, it will not be persuading them either. Instead, your audience members and your professor will quickly recognize that you were thinking of your own needs rather than those of your audience.

To avoid this trap, it is a good idea to conduct an audience analysis, which can help find a topic that will be novel and interesting both for you and for your audience. Audience analysis will help you to find a topic about which even the most informed audience members will learn something from you. There are many topics that could provide a refreshing departure from your usual academic studies. Topics such as the Bermuda Triangle, biopiracy, the environmental niche of sharks, the green lifestyle, and the historic Oneida Community all provide interesting views of human and natural phenomena not usually provided in public education. Such topics might be more likely to hold the interest of your classroom audience than topics they've heard about time and time again.

You should be aware that your audience will not have the same set of knowledge that you do. For instance, if you are speaking about biopiracy, you should probably define it and give a clear example. If your speech is on the green lifestyle, it would be important to frame it as a realistic choice, not a goal so remote as to be hopeless. In each case, you should use audience analysis to consider how your audience will respond to you, your topic, and your message.

## Audience Analysis Informs about Audience Disposition toward Controversial Topics

Some of the most interesting topics are controversial. They are controversial topics because people have deeply felt values and beliefs on different sides of those topics. For instance, before you choose nuclear energy as your topic, investigate the many voices speaking out both in favor and against increasing its use. Many people perceive nuclear energy as a clean, reliable, and much-needed source of energy. Others say that even the mining of uranium is harmful to the environment, that we lack satisfactory solutions for storing nuclear waste, and that nuclear power plants are vulnerable to errors and attacks. Another group might view the issue

economically, believing that industry needs nuclear energy. Engineers might believe that if the national grid could be modernized, we would have enough energy, and that we should strive to use and waste less energy until modernization is feasible. Some might feel deep concern about our reliance on foreign oil. Others might view nuclear energy as more tried-and-true than other alternatives. The topic is extremely controversial, and yet it is interesting and very important.

You shouldn't avoid controversy altogether, but you should choose your topic carefully. Moreover, how you treat your audience is just as important as how you treat your topic. If your audience has widely diverse views, take the time to acknowledge the concerns they have. Treat them as intelligent people, even if you don't agree with the completeness or the accuracy of their beliefs about your topic.

## Audience Analysis Allows to Adapt Your Speech to Audience Needs

When preparing a speech for a classroom audience consisting of other students and your professor, you may feel that you know their interests and expectations fairly well. However, we learn public speaking in order to be able to address other audiences where we can do some good. In some cases, your audience might consist of young children who are not ready to accept the fact that a whale is not a fish or that the moon is always round even though it sometimes appears to be a crescent or a half circle. In other cases, your audience might include retirees living on fixed incomes and who therefore might not agree that raising local taxes is a vital “investment in the future.”

Even in an audience that appears to be homogeneous—composed of people who are very similar to one another—different listeners will understand the same ideas in different ways. Every member of every audience has his or her own **frame of reference**—the unique set of perspectives, experiences, knowledge, and values belonging to every individual. An audience member who has been in a car accident caused by a drunk driver might not appreciate a lighthearted joke about barhopping. Similarly, stressing the importance of graduate school might be discouraging to audience members who don't know whether they can even afford to stay in college to complete an undergraduate degree.

These examples illustrate why audience analysis—the process of learning all you reasonably can about your audience—is so centrally important. Audience analysis includes consideration of **demographic information**, such as the gender, age range, marital status, race, and ethnicity of the people in your audience. Another, perhaps less obvious demographic factor is **socioeconomic status**, which refers to a combination of characteristics including income, wealth, level of education, and occupational prestige. Each of these dimensions gives you some information about which kinds of topics, and which aspects of various topics, will be well received.

Suppose you are preparing to give an informative speech about early childhood health care. If your audience is a group of couples who have each recently had a new baby and who live in an affluent suburb, you can expect that they will be young adults with high socioeconomic status; they will likely be eager to know about the

very best available health care for their children, whether they are healthy or have various medical problems. In contrast, if your audience is a group of nurses, they may differ in age, but will be similar in education and occupational prestige. They will already know quite a lot about the topic, so you will want to find an aspect that may be new for them, such as community health care resources for families with limited financial resources or for referring children with special needs. As another example, if you are addressing a city council committee that is considering whether to fund a children’s health care initiative, your audience is likely to have very mixed demographics.

Audience analysis also takes into account what market researchers call **psychographic information**, which is more personal and more difficult to predict than demographics. Psychographic information involves the beliefs, attitudes, and values that your audience members embrace. A belief is defined as something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion: something believed. Beliefs are strongly held and often not supported by facts. An attitude would be thought of as a mental or emotional position with regard to a fact or state. We often change our attitudes, something we might have thought we didn’t like, we decide we do like, once we try it. Finally, values are something (such as a principle or quality) intrinsically valuable or desirable. Values are strongly held understandings of how we act, or what would be considered right and wrong. Respecting your audience means that you avoid offending, excluding, or trivializing the beliefs and values they hold. Returning to the topic of early childhood health care, you can expect new parents to be passionate about wanting the best for their child. The psychographics of a group of nurses would revolve around their professional competence and the need to provide a “standard of care” for their patients. In a city council committee meeting, the topic of early childhood health care may be a highly personal and emotional issue for some of your listeners, while for others it may be strictly a matter of dollars and cents.

## Audience Analysis Informs about Audience Diversity

**Diversity** is a key dimension of audience membership and, therefore, of audience analysis. While the term “diversity” is often used to refer to racial and ethnic minorities, it is important to realize that audiences can be diverse in many other ways as well. Being mindful of diversity means being respectful of all people and striving to avoid **racism**, **ethnocentrism**, **sexism**, **ageism**, **elitism**, and other assumptions. An interesting “ism” that is not often mentioned is **chronocentrism**, or the assumption that people today are superior to people who lived in earlier eras (Russell, 1991).

Sociologists John R. Logan and Wenquan Zhang analyzed racial and ethnic diversity in US cities and observed a pattern that rewrites the traditional “rules” of neighborhood change (Logan & Zhang, 2010). Whereas in our grandparents’ day, a racially mixed neighborhood was one with African American and white residents, in recent decades, many more people from a variety of Asian and Latin American countries have immigrated to the United States. As a result, many cities have neighborhoods that are richly diverse with Asian, Hispanic, and African American cultural influences as well as those of white European Americans. Each cultural group consists of people from many communities and occupations. Each cultural group came to the

United States for different reasons and came from different communities and occupations within their original cultures. Even though it can be easy to assume that people from a culture are exactly like one another, we undermine our credibility when we create our message as though members of these cultures are carbon copies of one another.

One of the author's classes included two students from China. During a discussion of cultural similarity and difference, one remarked, "I thought we would have the same tastes in food because we are both from China, but she likes different spices and cooking techniques than I do."

While race, ethnicity, and culture may be relatively visible aspects of diversity, there are many other aspects that are less obvious, so your audience is often more diverse than you might initially think. Suppose you are going to give a talk on pool safety to residents of a very affluent suburban community—will all your audience members be wealthy? No. There might be some who are unemployed, some who are behind on their mortgage payments, some who live in rented rooms, not to mention some who work as babysitters or housekeepers. Furthermore, if your listeners have some characteristic in common, it doesn't mean that they all think alike. For instance, if your audience consists of people who are members of military families, don't assume that they all have identical beliefs about national security. If there are many business students in your audience, don't assume they all agree about the relative importance of ethics and profits. Instead, recognize that a range of opinions exists.

This is where the *frame of reference* becomes an important concept. People have a wide variety of reasons for making the choices they make and for doing the things they do. For instance, a business student, while knowing that profitability is important, might have a strong interest in green lifestyles, low energy use, and alternative energy sources, areas of economic development that might require a great deal of investment before profits are realized. In fact, some business students may want to be involved in a paradigm shift away from "business as usual."

These examples illustrate how important it is to use audience analysis to avoid ***stereotyping***—taking for granted that people with a certain characteristic in common have the same likes, dislikes, values, and beliefs. All members of our audiences deserve to have the same sensitivity and the same respect extended to them as unique individuals. Respecting diversity is not merely a responsibility within public speaking; it should be a responsibility we strive to embrace in all our human interactions.

## Audience Analysis Helps to Avoid Offensive Remarks

It might seem obvious that speakers should use audience analysis to avoid making offensive remarks, but even very experienced speakers sometimes forget this basic rule. We didn't choose our race, ethnicity, sex, age, sexual orientation, intellectual potential, or appearance. We already know that jokes aimed at people because of their membership in these groups are not just politically incorrect but also ethically wrong.

It is not only insensitive humor that can offend an audience. Speakers also need to be aware of language and nonverbal behaviors that state or imply a negative message about people based on their various membership

groups. Examples include language that suggests that all scientists are men, that all relationships are heterosexual, or that all ethnic minorities are unpatriotic. By the same token, we should avoid embedding assumptions about people in our messages. Even the most subtle suggestion may not go unnoticed. For example, if, in your speech, you assume that elderly people are frail and expensively medicated, you may offend people whose elder loved ones do not conform in any way to your assumptions.

Scholars Samovar and McDaniel tell us that ethical language choices require four guidelines:

1. Be accurate; present the facts accurately.
2. Be aware of the emotional impact; make sure that you don't manipulate feelings.
3. Avoid hateful words; refrain from language that disparages or belittles people.
4. Be sensitive to the audience; know how audience members prefer to be identified (e.g., Native American instead of Indian, women instead of girls, African American instead of black, disabled instead of crippled) (Samovar & McDaniel, 2007).

If you alienate your audience, they will stop listening. They will refuse to accept your message, no matter how true or important it is. They might even become hostile. If you fail to recognize the complexity of your audience members and if you treat them as stereotypes, they will resent your assumptions and doubt your credibility.

## Audience Analysis Allows to Deliver Ethical Speech

**Ethos** is the term Aristotle used to refer to what we now call **credibility**: the perception that the speaker is honest, knowledgeable, and rightly motivated. Your ethos, or credibility, must be established as you build rapport with your listeners. Have you put forth the effort to learn who they are and what you can offer to them in your speech? Do you respect them as individual human beings? Do you respect them enough to serve their needs and interests? Is your topic relevant and appropriate for them? Is your approach honest and sensitive to their preexisting beliefs? Your ability to answer these questions in a constructive way must be based on the best demographic and psychographic information you can use to learn about your listeners.

The audience needs to know they can trust the speaker's motivations, intentions, and knowledge. They must believe that the speaker has no hidden motives, will not manipulate or trick them, and has their best interests at heart.

In order to convey regard and respect for the audience, you must be sincere. You must examine the motives behind your topic choice, the true purpose of your speech, and your willingness to do the work of making sure the content of the speech is true and represents reality. This can be difficult for students who face time constraints and multiple demands on their efforts. However, the attitude you assume for this task represents, in part, the kind of professional, citizen, parent, and human being you want to be. Even if you've given this

issue little thought up to now, you can examine your motives and the integrity of your research and message construction. Ethically, you should.

### Exercises

1. Brainstorm a list of topics for an informative or persuasive speech. By yourself or with a partner, identify the kinds of information you need about your audience in order to make ethical decisions about how you approach the speech.
2. Make a list of values or opinions you have that might not conform to popular views. Why might these be important for a speaker to know before attempting to inform or persuade you?
3. Pretend you have been asked to give a speech about environmental conservation in the United States. What audience beliefs, attitudes, values, concerns, and other variables should you consider?

## 3.3 Three Types of Audience Analysis



While audience analysis does not guarantee against errors in judgment, it will help you make good choices in topic, language, style of presentation, and other aspects of your speech. The more you know about your audience, the better you can serve their interests and needs. There are certainly limits to what we can learn through information collection, and we need to acknowledge that before making assumptions, but knowing how to gather and use information through audience analysis is an essential skill for successful speakers.

Demographic		Psychographic	Situational
Age	Group membership	Preexisting notions about the topic	Audience size
Gender	Education	Preexisting notions about you	Occasion
Culture	Occupation		Voluntariness of audience
Religion			Physical setting

Three types of audience analysis.



## Demographic Analysis

As indicated earlier, demographic information includes factors such as gender, age range, marital status, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. In your public speaking class, you probably already know students' approximate ages, and so forth. But how can you assess the demographics of an audience ahead of time if you have had no previous contact with them? In many cases, you can ask the person or organization that has invited you to speak; it's likely that they can tell you a lot about the demographics of the people who are expected to come to hear you.

Whatever method you use for your **demographic analysis**, exercise respect from the outset. For instance, if you are collecting information about whether audience members have ever been divorced, be aware that not everyone will want to answer your questions. You can't require them to do so, and you may not make assumptions about their reluctance to discuss the topic. You must allow them their privacy.

### Age

There are certain things you can learn about an audience based on age. For instance, if your audience members are first-year college students, you can assume that they have grown up in the post-9/11 era and have limited memory of what life was like before the "war on terror." If your audience includes people in their forties and fifties, it is likely they remember a time when people feared they would contract the AIDS virus from shaking hands or using a public restroom. People who are in their sixties today came of age during the 1960s, the era of the Vietnam War and a time of social confrontation and experimentation. They also have frames of reference that contribute to the way they think, but it may not be easy to predict which side of the issues they support.

### Gender

Gender can define human experience. Clearly, most women have had a different cultural experience from that of men within the same culture. Some women have found themselves excluded from certain careers. Some men have found themselves blamed for the limitations imposed on women. In books such as *You Just Don't Understand* and *Talking from 9 to 5*, linguist Deborah Tannen has written extensively on differences between men's and women's communication styles. Tannen explains, "This is not to say that all women and all men, or all boys and girls, behave any one way. Many factors influence our styles, including regional and ethnic backgrounds, family experience and individual personality. But gender is a key factor, and understanding its influence can help clarify what happens when we talk" (Tannen, 1994).

Marriage tends to impose additional roles on both men and women and divorce even more so, especially if there are children. Even if your audience consists of young adults who have not yet made occupational or marital commitments, they are still aware that gender and the choices they make about issues such as careers and relationships will influence their experience as adults.



## Culture

In past generations, Americans often used the metaphor of a “melting pot” to symbolize the assimilation of immigrants from various countries and cultures into a unified, harmonious “American people.” Today, we are aware of the limitations in that metaphor, and have largely replaced it with a multiculturalist view that describes the American fabric as a “patchwork” or a “mosaic.” We know that people who immigrate do not abandon their cultures of origin in order to conform to a standard American identity. In fact, cultural continuity is now viewed as a healthy source of identity.

We also know that subcultures and co-cultures exist within and alongside larger cultural groups. For example, while we are aware that Native American people do not all embrace the same values, beliefs, and customs as mainstream Americans, we also know that members of the Navajo nation have different values, beliefs, and customs from those of members of the Sioux or the Seneca. We know that African American people in urban centers like Detroit and Boston do not share the same cultural experiences as those living in rural Mississippi. Similarly, white Americans in San Francisco may be culturally rooted in the narrative of distant ancestors from Scotland, Italy, or Sweden or in the experience of having emigrated much more recently from Australia, Croatia, or Poland.

Not all cultural membership is visibly obvious. For example, people in German American and Italian American families have widely different sets of values and practices, yet others may not be able to differentiate members of these groups. Differences are what make each group interesting and are important sources of knowledge, perspectives, and creativity.

## Religion

There is wide variability in religion as well. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found in a nationwide survey that 84 percent of Americans identify with at least one of a dozen major religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and others. Within Christianity alone, there are half a dozen categories, including Roman Catholic, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, Orthodox (Greek and Russian), and a variety of Protestant denominations. Another 6 percent said they were unaffiliated but religious, meaning that only one American in ten is atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008).

Even within a given denomination, a great deal of diversity can be found. For instance, among Roman Catholics alone, there are people who are devoutly religious, people who self-identify as Catholic but do not attend mass or engage in other religious practices, and others who faithfully make confession and attend mass but who openly question Papal doctrine on various issues.

Catholicism among immigrants from the Caribbean and Brazil is often blended with indigenous religion or with religion imported from the west coast of Africa. It is very different from Catholicism in the Vatican.

The dimensions of diversity in the religion demographic are almost endless, and they are not limited by

denomination. Imagine conducting an audience analysis of people belonging to an individual congregation rather than a denomination: even there, you will most likely find a multitude of variations that involve how one was brought up, adoption of a faith system as an adult, how strictly one observes religious practices, and so on.

Yet, even with these multiple facets, religion is still a meaningful demographic lens. It can be an indicator of probable patterns in family relationships, family size, and moral attitudes.

## Group Membership

In your classroom audience alone, there will be students from a variety of academic majors. Every major has its own set of values, goals, principles, and codes of ethics. A political science student preparing for law school might seem to have little in common with a student of music therapy, for instance. In addition, there are other group memberships that influence how audience members understand the world. Fraternities and sororities, sports teams, campus organizations, political parties, volunteerism, and cultural communities all provide people with ways of understanding the world as it is and as we think it should be.

Because public speaking audiences are very often members of one group or another, group membership is a useful and often easy-to-access facet of audience analysis. The more you know about the associations of your audience members, the better prepared you will be to tailor your speech to their interests, expectations, and needs.

## Education

Education is expensive, and people pursue education for many reasons. Some people seek to become educated, while others seek to earn professional credentials. Both are important motivations. If you know the education levels attained by members of your audience, you might not know their motivations, but you will know to what extent they could somehow afford the money for an education, afford the time to get an education, and survive educational demands successfully.

The kind of education is also important. For instance, an airplane mechanic undergoes a very different kind of education and training from that of an accountant or a software engineer. This means that not only the attained level of education but also the particular field is important in your understanding of your audience.

## Occupation

People choose occupations for reasons of motivation and interest, but their occupations also influence their perceptions and their interests. There are many misconceptions about most occupations. For instance, many people believe that teachers work an eight-hour day and have summers off. When you ask teachers, however, you might be surprised to find out that they take work home with them for evenings and weekends, and

during the summer, they may teach summer school as well as take courses in order to keep up with new developments in their fields. But even if you don't know those things, you would still know that teachers have had rigorous generalized and specialized qualifying education, that they have a complex set of responsibilities in the classroom and the institution, and that, to some extent, they have chosen a relatively low-paying occupation over such fields as law, advertising, media, fine and performing arts, or medicine. If your audience includes doctors and nurses, you know that you are speaking to people with differing but important philosophies of health and illness. Learning about those occupational realities is important in avoiding wrong assumptions and stereotypes.

## Psychographic Analysis

Earlier, we mentioned psychographic information, which includes such things as values, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. Authors Grice and Skinner present a model in which values are the basis for beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Grice & Skinner, 2009). Values are the foundation of their pyramid model. They say, "A value expresses a judgment of what is desirable and undesirable, right and wrong, or good and evil. Values are usually stated in the form of a word or phrase. For example, most of us probably share the values of equality, freedom, honesty, fairness, justice, good health, and family. These values compose the principles or standards we use to judge and develop our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors."

It is important to recognize that, while demographic information is fairly straightforward and verifiable, psychographic information is much less clear-cut. Two different people who both say they believe in equal educational opportunity may have very different interpretations of what "equal opportunity" means. People who say they don't buy junk food may have very different standards for what specific kinds of foods are considered "junk food."

We also acknowledge that people inherit some values from their family upbringing, cultural influences, and life experiences. The extent to which someone values family loyalty and obedience to parents, thrift, humility, and work may be determined by these influences more than by individual choice.

**Psychographic analysis** can reveal preexisting notions that limit your audience's frame of reference. By knowing about such notions ahead of time, you can address them in your speech. Audiences are likely to have two basic kinds of preexisting notions: those about the topic and those about the speaker.

## Preexisting Notions about Your Topic

Many topics are a great deal more complex than we realize. Media stereotypes often contribute to our oversimplifications. For instance, one of your authors, teaching public speaking in the past decade, was surprised to hear a student claim that "the hippies meant well, but they did it wrong." Aside from the question of the "it" that was done wrong, there was a question about how little the student actually knew about the diverse hippy cultures and their aspirations. The student seemed unaware that some of "the hippies" were the

forebears of such things as organic bakeries, natural food co-ops, urban gardens, recycling, alternative energy, wellness, and other arguably positive developments.

It's important to know your audience in order to make a rational judgment about how their views of your topic might be shaped. In speaking to an audience that might have differing definitions, you should take care to define your terms in a clear, honest way.

At the opposite end of oversimplification is the level of sophistication your audience might embody. Your audience analysis should include factors that reveal it. Suppose you are speaking about trends in civil rights in the United States. You cannot pretend that advancement of civil rights is virtually complete nor can you claim that no progress has been made. It is likely that in a college classroom, the audience will know that although much progress has been made, there are still pockets of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. When you speak to an audience that is cognitively complex, your strategy must be different from one you would use for an audience that is less educated on the topic. With a cognitively complex audience, you must acknowledge the overall complexity while stating that your focus will be on only one dimension. With an audience that's uninformed about your topic, that strategy in a persuasive speech could confuse them; they might well prefer a black-and-white message with no gray areas. You must decide whether it is ethical to represent your topic this way.

When you prepare to do your audience analysis, include questions that reveal how much your audience already knows about your topic. Try to ascertain the existence of stereotyped, oversimplified, or prejudiced attitudes about it. This could make a difference in your choice of topic or in your approach to the audience and topic.

## Preexisting Notions about You

People form opinions readily. For instance, we know that students form impressions of teachers the moment they walk into our classrooms on the first day. You get an immediate impression of our age, competence, and attitude simply from our appearance and nonverbal behavior. In addition, many have heard other students say what they think of us.

The same is almost certainly true of you. But it's not always easy to get others to be honest about their impressions of you. They're likely to tell you what they think you want to hear. Sometimes, however, you do know what others think. They might think of you as a jock, a suit-wearing conservative, a nature lover, and so on. Based on these impressions, your audience might expect a boring speech, a shallow speech, a sermon, and so on. However, your concern should still be serving your audience's needs and interests, not debunking their opinions of you or managing your image. In order to help them be receptive, you address their interests directly, and make sure they get an interesting, ethical speech.

## Situational Analysis

The next type of analysis is called the situational audience analysis because it focuses on characteristics related to the specific speaking situation. The **situational audience analysis** can be divided into two main questions:

1. How many people came to hear my speech, and why are they here? What events, concerns, and needs motivated them to come? What is their interest level, and what else might be competing for their attention?
2. What is the physical environment of the speaking situation? What is the size of the audience, layout of the room, existence of a podium or a microphone, and availability of digital media for visual aids? Are there any distractions, such as traffic noise?

### Audience Size

In a typical class, your audience is likely to consist of twenty to thirty listeners. This audience size gives you the latitude to be relatively informal within the bounds of good judgment. It isn't too difficult to let each audience member feel as though you're speaking to him or her. However, you would not become so informal that you allow your carefully prepared speech to lapse into shallow entertainment. With larger audiences, it's more difficult to reach out to each listener, and your speech will tend to be more formal, staying more strictly within its careful outline. You will have to work harder to prepare visual and audio material that reaches the people sitting at the back of the room, including possibly using amplification.

### Occasion

There are many occasions for speeches. Awards ceremonies, conventions and conferences, holidays, and other celebrations are some examples. However, there are also less joyful reasons for a speech, such as funerals, disasters, and the delivery of bad news. As always, there are likely to be mixed reactions. For instance, award ceremonies are good for community and institutional morale, but we wouldn't be surprised to find at least a little resentment from listeners who feel deserving but were overlooked. Likewise, for a speech announcing bad news, it is likely that at least a few listeners will be glad the bad news wasn't even worse. If your speech is to deliver bad news, it's important to be honest but also to avoid traumatizing your audience. For instance, if you are a condominium board member speaking to a residents' meeting after the building was damaged by a hurricane, you will need to provide accurate data about the extent of the damage and the anticipated cost and time required for repairs. At the same time, it would be needlessly upsetting to launch into a graphic description of injuries suffered by people, animals, and property in neighboring areas not connected to your condominium complex.

Some of the most successful speeches benefit from situational analysis to identify audience concerns related to the occasion. For example, when the president of the United States gives the annual State of the Union address, the occasion calls for commenting on the condition of the nation and outlining the legislative agenda for the coming year. The speech could be a formality that would interest only “policy wonks,” or with the use of good situational audience analysis, it could be a popular event reinforcing the connection between the president and the American people. In January 2011, knowing that the United States’ economy was slowly recovering and that jobless rates were still very high, President Barack Obama and his staff knew that the focus of the speech had to be on jobs. Similarly, in January 2003, President George W. Bush’s State of the Union speech focused on the “war on terror” and his reasons for justifying the invasion of Iraq. If you look at the history of State of the Union Addresses, you’ll often find that the speeches are tailored to the political, social, and economic situations facing the United States at those times.

## Voluntariness of Audience

A **voluntary audience** gathers because they want to hear the speech, attend the event, or participate in an event. A classroom audience, in contrast, is likely to be a captive audience. **Captive audiences** are required to be present or feel obligated to do so. Given the limited choices perceived, a captive audience might give only grudging attention. Even when there’s an element of choice, the likely consequences of nonattendance will keep audience members from leaving. The audience’s relative perception of choice increases the importance of holding their interest.

Whether or not the audience members chose to be present, you want them to be interested in what you have to say. Almost any audience will be interested in a topic that pertains directly to them. However, your audience might also be receptive to topics that are indirectly or potentially pertinent to their lives. This means that if you choose a topic such as advances in the treatment of spinal cord injury or advances in green technology, you should do your best to show how these topics are potentially relevant to their lives or careers.

However, there are some topics that appeal to audience curiosity even when it seems there’s little chance of direct pertinence. For instance, topics such as Blackbeard the pirate or ceremonial tattoos among the Maori might pique the interests of various audiences. Depending on the instructions you get from your instructor, you can consider building an interesting message about something outside the daily foci of our attention.

## Physical Setting

The physical setting can make or break even the best speeches, so it is important to exercise as much control as you can over it. In your classroom, conditions might not be ideal, but at least the setting is familiar. Still, you know your classroom from the perspective of an audience member, not a speaker standing in the front—which is why you should seek out any opportunity to rehearse your speech during a minute when the room is empty. If you will be giving your presentation somewhere else, it is a good idea to visit the venue ahead of time if at

all possible and make note of any factors that will affect how you present your speech. In any case, be sure to arrive well in advance of your speaking time so that you will have time to check that the microphone works, to test out any visual aids, and to request any needed adjustments in lighting, room ventilation, or other factors to eliminate distractions and make your audience more comfortable.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=654#h5p-9>

## 3.4 Conducting Audience Analysis



Now that we have described what audience analysis is and why it is important, let's examine some details of how to conduct it. Exactly how can you learn about the people who will make up your audience?

### Direct Observation

One way to learn about people is to observe them. By observing nonverbal patterns of behavior, you can learn a great deal as long as you are careful how you interpret the behaviors. For instance, do people greet each other with a handshake, a hug, a smile, or a nod? Do members of opposite sexes make physical contact? Does the setting suggest more conservative behavior? By listening in on conversations, you can find out the issues that concern people. Are people in the campus center talking about political unrest in the Middle East? About concerns over future Pell Grant funding? We suggest that you consider the ethical dimensions of eavesdropping, however. Are you simply overhearing an open conversation, or are you prying into a highly personal or private discussion?

### Interviews and Surveys

Because your demographic analysis will be limited to your most likely audience, your most accurate way to learn about them is to seek personal information through interviews and surveys. An **interview** is a one-on-one exchange in which you ask questions of a respondent, whereas a **survey** is a set of questions administered to several—or, preferably, many—respondents. Interviews may be conducted face-to-face, by phone, or by written means, such as texting. They allow more in-depth discussion than surveys, and they are also more time consuming to conduct. Surveys are also sometimes conducted face-to-face or by phone, but online surveys are



increasingly common. You may collect and tabulate survey results manually, or set up an automated online survey through the free or subscription portals of sites like SurveyMonkey and Zoomerang. Using an online survey provides the advantage of keeping responses anonymous, which may increase your audience members' willingness to participate and to answer personal questions. Surveys are an efficient way to collect information quickly; however, in contrast to interviews, they don't allow for follow-up questions to help you understand why your respondent gave a certain answer.

When you use interviews and surveys, there are several important things to keep in mind:

- Make sure your interview and survey questions are directly related to your speech topic. Do not use interviews to delve into private areas of people's lives. For instance, if your speech is about the debate between creationism and evolution, limit your questions to their opinions about that topic; do not meander into their beliefs about sexual behavior or their personal religious practices.
- Create and use a standard set of questions. If you "ad lib" your questions so that they are phrased differently for different interviewees, you will be comparing "apples and oranges" when you compare the responses you've obtained.
- Keep interviews and surveys short, or you could alienate your audience long before your speech is even outlined. Tell them the purpose of the interview or survey and make sure they understand that their participation is voluntary.
- Don't rely on just a few respondents to inform you about your entire audience. In all likelihood, you have a cognitively diverse audience. In order to accurately identify trends, you will likely need to interview or survey at least ten to twenty people.

In addition, when you conduct interviews and surveys, keep in mind that people are sometimes less than honest in describing their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. This widely recognized weakness of interviews and survey research is known as socially desirable responding: the tendency to give responses that are considered socially acceptable. Marketing professor Ashok Lalwani divides socially desirable responding into two types: (1) impression management, or intentionally portraying oneself in a favorable light, and (2) self-deceptive enhancement, or exaggerating one's good qualities, often unconsciously (Lalwani, 2009).

You can reduce the effects of socially desirable responding by choosing your questions carefully. As marketing consultant Terry Vavra advises, "one should never ask what one can't logically expect respondents to honestly reveal" (Vavra, 2009). For example, if you want to know audience members' attitudes about body piercing, you are likely to get more honest answers by asking "Do you think body piercing is attractive?" rather than "How many piercings do you have, and where on your body are they located?"

## Focus Groups

A **focus group** is a small group of people who give you feedback about their perceptions. As with interviews

and surveys, in a focus group, you should use a limited list of carefully prepared questions designed to get at the information you need to understand their beliefs, attitudes, and values specifically related to your topic.

If you conduct a focus group, part of your task will be striking a balance between allowing the discussion to flow freely according to what group members have to say and keeping the group focused on the questions. It's also your job to guide the group in maintaining responsible and respectful behavior toward each other.

In evaluating focus group feedback, do your best to be receptive to what people had to say, whether or not it conforms to what you expected. Your purpose in conducting the group was to understand group members' beliefs, attitudes, and values about your topic, not to confirm your assumptions.

## Existing Data about Your Audience

Occasionally, existing information will be available about your audience. For instance, if you have a student audience, it might not be difficult to find out what their academic majors are. You might also be able to find out their degree of investment in their educations; for instance, you could reasonably assume that the seniors in the audience have been successful students who have invested at least three years pursuing a higher education. Sophomores have at least survived their first year but may not have matched the seniors in demonstrating strong values toward education and the work ethic necessary to earn a degree.

In another kind of audience, you might be able to learn other significant facts. For instance, are they veterans? Are they retired teachers? Are they members of a voluntary civic organization such as the Lions Club or Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)? This kind of information should help you respond to their concerns and interests.

In other cases, you may be able to use demographics collected by public and private organizations. Demographic analysis is done by the US Census Bureau through the American Community Survey, which is conducted every year, and through other specialized demographic surveys (Bureau of the Census, 2011; Bureau of the Census, 2011). The Census Bureau analysis generally captures information about people in all the regions of the United States, but you can drill down in census data to see results by state, by age group, by gender, by race, and by other factors.

Demographic information about narrower segments of the United States, down to the level of individual zip codes, is available through private organizations such as the Nielsen Company and Sperling's Best Places (<http://www.bestplaces.net>). Sales and marketing professionals use this data, and you may find it useful for your audience analysis as well.

1. Write a coherent set of four clear questions about a given issue, such as campus library services, campus computer centers, or the process of course registration. Make your questions concrete and specific in order to address the information you seek. Do not allow opportunities for your respondent to change the subject. Test out your questions on a classmate.
2. Write a set of six questions about public speaking anxiety to be answered on a Likert-type scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree).
3. Create a seven-question set designed to discover your audience's attitudes about your speech topic. Have a partner evaluate your questions for clarity, respect for audience privacy, and relevance to your topic.

## 3.5 Using Your Audience Analysis



A good audience analysis takes time, thought, preparation, implementation, and processing. If done well, it will yield information that will help you interact effectively with your audience. Professional speakers, corporate executives, sales associates, and entertainers all rely on audience analysis to connect with their listeners. So do political candidates, whose chances of gaining votes depend on crafting the message and mood to appeal to each specific audience. One audience might be preoccupied with jobs, another with property taxes, and another with crime. Similarly, your audience analysis should help you identify the interests of your audience. Ultimately, a successful audience analysis can guide you in preparing the basic content of your speech and help you adjust your speech “on the fly.”

### Before Speech: Prepare Content with Your Audience in Mind

The first thing a good audience analysis can do is help you focus your content for your specific audience. If you are planning on delivering a persuasive speech on why people should become vegans, and you find out through analysis that half of your audience are daughters and sons of cattle ranchers, you need to carefully think through your approach to the content. Maybe you’ll need to tweak your topic to focus on just the benefits of veganism without trying to persuade the audience explicitly. The last thing you want to do as a speaker is stand before an audience who is highly negative toward your topic before you ever open your mouth. While there will always be some people who don’t agree in any audience, if you think through your topic with your audience in mind, you may be able to find a topic that will be both interesting to you as a speaker and beneficial to your audience as well.

In addition to adjusting the topic of your speech prior to the speaking event, you can also use your audience analysis to help ensure that the content of your speech will be as clear and understandable as humanly possible. We can use our audience analysis to help ensure that we are clear.

One area of clarity to be careful of is the use of idioms your audience may not know. An **idiom** is a word or phrase where the meaning cannot be predicted from normal dictionary definitions. Many idioms are culturally or temporally based. For example, the phrase “according to Hoyle” indicates that something is done “by the book” or “by the rules,” as in “These measurements aren’t according to Hoyle, but they’re close enough to give a general idea.” Most of us have no clue who Hoyle was or what this idiom means. It refers to Edmond Hoyle, who wrote some of the most popular card-playing rule books back in the 1700s in England. Today, card game enthusiasts may understand the intent of “according to Hoyle,” but for most people, it no longer carries specific meaning. When thinking about your speech, be careful not to accidentally use idioms that you find commonplace but your audience may not.

## Be Clear with Your Message

Nothing is more lamentable than a rhetorical actor who endeavors to make grandiose the impressions of others through the utilization of an elephantine albeit nonsensical argot—or nothing is worse than a speaker who tries to impress the audience with a giant vocabulary that no one understands. In the first portion of the preceding sentence, we pulled out as many polysyllabic words as we could find. Unfortunately, most people will just find the sentence wordy, and the meaning will pass right over their heads. As such, we as public speakers must ensure that we are clear in what we say.

Make sure that you state your topic clearly at the outset, using words that your audience will understand. Letting them know what to expect from your speech shows consideration for them as listeners and lets them know that you value their time and attention.

Throughout your speech, define your terms clearly and carefully in order to avoid misleading or alarming people by mistake. Be careful not to use jargon or “insider” language that will exclude listeners who aren’t “in the know.” If you approach audience analysis in haste, you might find yourself presenting a speech with no clear message. You might avoid making any statements outright for fear of offending. It is much better to know to whom you’re speaking and to present a clear, decisive message that lets listeners know what you think.

## During Speech: Adjusting Your Speech

In addition to using audience analysis to help formulate speech content, we can also use our audience analysis to make adjustments during the actual speech. These adjustments can pertain to the audience and to the physical setting.

The feedback you receive from your audience during your speech is a valuable indication of ways to adjust

your presentation. If you're speaking after lunch and notice audience members looking drowsy, you can make adjustments to liven up the tone of your speech. You could use humor. You could raise your voice slightly. You could pose some questions and ask for a show of hands to get your listeners actively involved. As another example, you may notice from frowns and headshaking that some listeners aren't convinced by the arguments you are presenting. In this case, you could spend more time on a specific area of your speech and provide more evidence than you originally intended. Good speakers can learn a lot by watching their audience while speaking and then make specific adjustments to both the content and delivery of the speech to enhance the speech's ultimate impact.

The second kind of adjustment has to do with the physical setting for your speech. For example, your situational analysis may reveal that you'll be speaking in a large auditorium when you had expected a nice, cozy conference room. If you've created visual aids for a small, intimate environment, you may have to omit it, or tell your listeners that they can view it after the presentation. You may also need to account for a microphone. If you're lucky enough to have a cordless microphone, then you won't have to make too many adjustments to your speaking style. If, on the other hand, the microphone is corded or is attached to an unmovable podium, you'll have to make adjustments to how you deliver the presentation.

In preparing a speech about wealth distribution in the United States, one of our students had the opposite problem. Anticipating a large room, she had planned to use a one-hundred-foot tape measure to illustrate the percentage of the nation's wealth owned by the top one-fifth of the population. However, when she arrived she found that the room was only twelve by twenty feet, so she had to walk back and forth zigzagging the tape from end to end to stretch out one hundred feet. Had she thought more creatively about how to adapt to the physical setting, she could have changed her plans to use just ten feet of the tape measure to symbolize 100 percent of the wealth. Making the right adjustments is an important part of a successful speech.

## Exercises

1. Choose a topic. Then write a different concrete thesis statement for each of six different audiences: students, military veterans, taxpayers, registered nurses, crime victims, and professional athletes, for instance.
2. Think of a controversial topic and list all the various perspectives about it that you can think of or discover. If people of various perspectives were in your audience, how might you acknowledge them during your introduction?

## References

- Bureau of the Census. (2011). About the American community survey. Retrieved from [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about\\_the\\_survey/american\\_community\\_survey/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/american_community_survey/).
- Bureau of the Census. (2011). Demographic surveys. Retrieved from [http://www.census.gov/aboutus/sur\\_demo.html](http://www.census.gov/aboutus/sur_demo.html)
- Coopman, S. J., & Lull, J. (2009). *Public speaking: The evolving art*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage.
- Eunomia, (2021, March 21). 50 States of Recycling. <https://www.ball.com/getattachment/37f5f87f-d462-44c5-913f-d3075754741a/50-States-of-Recycling-Eunomia-Report-Final-Published-March-30-2021-UPDATED-v2.pdf>
- Grice, G. L., & Skinner, J. F. (2009). *Mastering public speaking: The handbook* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Lalwani, A. K. (2009, August). The distinct influence of cognitive busyness and need for closure on cultural differences in socially desirable responding. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36, 305–316. Retrieved from [http://business.utsa.edu/marketing/files/phdpapers/lalwani2\\_2009-jcr.pdf](http://business.utsa.edu/marketing/files/phdpapers/lalwani2_2009-jcr.pdf)
- Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (2020). Annual Recycling Report – Calendar Year 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/Recycling/2018RecyclingAnnualReporttoLegislature.pdf>
- Logan, J. R., and Zhang, C. (2010). Global neighborhoods: New pathways to diversity and separation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 115, 1069–1109.
- Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008, February).
- Russell, J. (1991). Inventing the flat earth. *History Today*, 41(8), 13–19.
- Samovar, L. A., & McDaniel, E. R. (2007). *Public speaking in a multicultural society*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
- Shahid, A. (2011, June 24). Rick Perry’s Jose Cuervo joke at Latino convention bombs in Texas, as governor mulls 2012 GOP bid. *New York Daily News*. Retrieved from [http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/2011/06/24/2011-06-24\\_rick\\_perrys\\_jose\\_cuervo\\_joke\\_at\\_latino\\_convention\\_bombs\\_in\\_texas\\_as\\_governor\\_mul.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/2011/06/24/2011-06-24_rick_perrys_jose_cuervo_joke_at_latino_convention_bombs_in_texas_as_governor_mul.html)
- Sprague, J., Stuart, D., & Bodary, D. (2010). *The speaker’s handbook* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage.
- Summary of key findings. In U.S. religious landscape survey. Retrieved from <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports#>
- Tannen, D. (1994, December 11). The talk of the sandbox: How Johnny and Suzy’s playground chatter prepares them for life at the office. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/tannend/sandbox.htm>
- Vavra, T. G. (2009, June 14). The truth about truth in survey research. Retrieved from <http://www.terryvavra.com/customer-research/the-truth-about-truth-in-survey-research>





# CHAPTER 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

## Learning Objectives

- Describe the differences between listening and hearing.
- Explain the benefits of listening.
- Discern between the different listening styles.
- Identify the types of noise that can affect a listener's ability to attend to a message.
- Describe how a listener's attention span can limit the listener's ability to attend to a speaker's message.
- Analyze how a listener's personal biases can influence her or his ability to attend to a message.
- Define receiver apprehension and the impact it can have on a listener's ability to attend to a message.
- List and explain the different stages of listening.
- Understand the two types of feedback listeners give to speakers.
- Define and explain critical listening and its importance in the public speaking context.
- Understand six distinct ways to improve your ability to critically listen to speeches.
- Evaluate what it means to be an ethical listener.

## Key Terms

- **Action-Oriented Listeners**
- **Assumptions**

- **Content-Oriented Listeners**
- **Critical Listening**
- **Ethical Listening**
- **Evaluating**
- **Hearing**
- **Listening**
- **Listening or Receiver Apprehension**
- **Noise**
- **People-Oriented Listeners**
- **Physical Noise**
- **Physiological Noise**
- **Psychological Noise**
- **Receiver Biases**
- **Receiving**
- **Remembering**
- **Responding**
- **Semantic Noise**
- **Time-Oriented Listeners**
- **Understanding**

## 4.1 Importance of Listening



“Are you listening to me?” This question is often asked because the speaker thinks the listener is nodding off or daydreaming. We sometimes think that listening means we only have to sit back, stay barely awake, and let a speaker’s words wash over us. While many Americans look upon being active as something to admire, to engage in, and to excel at, listening is often understood as a “passive” activity. *O, the Oprah Magazine* featured a cover article with the title “How to Talk So People *Really* Listen: Four Ways to Make Yourself Heard.” This title leads us to expect a list of ways to leave the listening to others and insist that they do so, but the article contains a surprise ending. The final piece of advice is this: “You can’t go wrong by showing interest in what other people say and making them feel important. In other words, the better *you* listen, the more you’ll be listened to” (Jarvis, 2009).

You may have heard the adage “We have two ears but only one mouth”—an easy way to remember that listening can be twice as important as talking. As a student, you most likely spend many hours in a classroom doing a large amount of focused listening, yet sometimes it is difficult to apply those efforts to communication in other areas of your life. As a result, your listening skills may not be all they could be. In this chapter, we will examine listening versus hearing, listening styles, listening difficulties, listening stages, and listening critically.

## 4.2 Listening vs. Hearing

**Hearing** is an accidental and automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort. We are surrounded by sounds most of the time. For example, we are accustomed to the sounds of airplanes, lawn mowers, furnace blowers, the rattling of pots and pans, and so on. We hear those incidental sounds, and unless we have a reason to do otherwise, we train ourselves to ignore them. We learn to filter out sounds that mean little to us, just as we choose to hear our ringing cell phones and other sounds that are more important to us. Hearing is also an innate ability that people have unless they are hard of hearing (e.g., deaf).

Figure 4.1 Hearing vs. Listening

Hearing	Listening
Accidental	Focused
Involuntary	Voluntary
Effortless	Intentional
Innate skill	Learned skill

Listening, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. **Listening**, at its best, is active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker. We do not always listen at our best, not everyone has an ability to listen, and individuals vary in their listening skills. Listening is a communication skill that is acquired through accumulated experiences. Later in this chapter, we will examine some of the reasons why and some strategies for becoming more active critical listeners.

## Benefits of Listening

Listening should not be taken for granted. Before the invention of writing, people conveyed virtually all knowledge through some combination of showing and telling. Elders recited tribal histories to attentive audiences. Listeners received religious teachings enthusiastically. Myths, legends, folktales, and stories for entertainment survived only because audiences were eager to listen. Nowadays, however, you can gain information and entertainment through reading and electronic recordings rather than through real-time listening. If you become distracted and let your attention wander, you can go back and replay a recording.

Despite that fact, you can still gain at least four compelling benefits by becoming more active and competent at real-time listening.

## You Become a Better Student

Think about your college classes. You spend the majority of the class time listening to your instructors' lectures and your classmates' discussions. When you focus on the material presented in a classroom, you will be able to identify not only the words used in a lecture but also their emphasis and their more complex meanings. You will take better notes, and you will more accurately remember the instructor's claims, information, and conclusions. Many times, instructors give verbal cues about what information is important, specific expectations about assignments, and even what material is likely to be on an exam, so careful listening can be beneficial. Research shows that students who develop better listening skills are more likely to feel confident, comfortable, and prepared to succeed in school. (Waterford, 2020)

## You Can Build Strong Personal Relationships

Listening is important in initiating, developing, maintaining, and strengthening relationships. When you give your best attention to people expressing thoughts and experiences that are important to them, those individuals are likely to see you as someone who cares about their well-being. This fact is especially true when you give your attention only and refrain from interjecting opinions, judgments, and advice. Research shows that when a speaker perceives you as a good listener, they feel more supported (Trees, 2000) and satisfied about the relationship (Bodie & Fitch-Hauser, 2010), and listening helps form positive impressions (Bodie et al., 2010). When you listen well to others, you reveal yourself as being curious and interested in people and events. In addition, your ability to understand the meanings of what you hear will make you a more knowledgeable and thoughtful person.

## You Can Build a Successful Career

There are countless professional benefits that a good listening skill can bring. Effective listening enables gathering important information for decision-making and work productivity. Further listening is integral to building trust with customers, reducing misunderstandings and preventing conflicts with your supervisors, and developing positive relationships with your coworkers. No matter what occupation or position at work you have, listening is one of the most important communication skills that individuals need to have to successfully execute their work and develop a career.

## You Can Become a Better Public Speaker

When you listen well to others, you start to pick up more on the stylistic components related to how people form arguments and present information. As a result, you have the ability to analyze what you think works and doesn't work in others' speeches, which can help you transform your speeches in the process. For example, really paying attention to how others cite sources orally during their speeches may give you ideas about how to more effectively cite sources in your presentation.

## 4.3 Listening Styles



If listening were easy, and if all people went about it in the same way, the task for a public speaker would be much easier. Even Aristotle, as long ago as 325 BC, recognized that listeners in his audience were varied in listening style. He differentiated them as follows:

Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making—speaker, subject, and person addressed—it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech’s end and object. The hearer must be either a judge, with a decision to make about things past or future, or an observer. A member of the assembly decides about future events, a juryman about past events: while those who merely decide on the orator’s skill are observers (Aristotle, c. 350 BCE).

Thus Aristotle classified listeners into those who would be using the speech to make decisions about past events, those who would make decisions affecting the future, and those who would evaluate the speaker’s skills. This is all the more remarkable when we consider that Aristotle’s audiences were composed exclusively of male citizens of one city-state, all prosperous property owners.

Our audiences today are likely to be much more heterogeneous. Think about the classroom audience that will listen to your speeches in this course. Your classmates come from many religious and ethnic backgrounds. Some of them may speak English as a second language. Some might be survivors of war-torn parts of the world such as Bosnia, Darfur, or northwest China. Being mindful of such differences will help you prepare a speech in which you minimize the potential for misunderstanding.

Part of the potential for misunderstanding is the difference in listening styles. In an article in the *International Journal of Listening*, Watson, Barker, and Weaver (Watson, et al., 1995) identified four listening styles: people, action, content, and time.

## People

The **people-oriented listener** is interested in the speaker. People-oriented listeners listen to the message in order to learn how the speaker thinks and how they feel about their message. For instance, when people-oriented listeners listen to an interview with a famous rap artist, they are likely to be more curious about the artist as an individual than about music, even though the people-oriented listener might also appreciate the artist's work. If you are a people-oriented listener, you might have certain questions you hope will be answered, such as the following: Does the artist feel successful? What's it like to be famous? What kind of educational background does he or she have? In the same way, if we're listening to a doctor who responded to the earthquake crisis in Haiti, we might be more interested in the doctor as a person than in the state of affairs for Haitians. Why did he or she go to Haiti? How did he or she get away from his or her normal practice and patients? How many lives did he or she save? We might be less interested in the equally important and urgent needs for food, shelter, and sanitation following the earthquake.

The people-oriented listener is likely to be more attentive to the speaker than to the message. If you tend to be such a listener, understand that the message is about what is important to the speaker.

## Action

**Action-oriented listeners** are primarily interested in finding out what the speaker wants. Does the speaker want votes, donations, volunteers, or something else? It's sometimes difficult for an action-oriented speaker to listen through the descriptions, evidence, and explanations with which a speaker builds his or her case.

Action-oriented listening is sometimes called task-oriented listening. In it, the listener seeks a clear message about what needs to be done, and might have less patience for listening to the reasons behind the task. This can be especially true if the reasons are complicated. For example, when you're a passenger on an airplane waiting to push back from the gate, a flight attendant delivers a brief speech called the preflight safety briefing. The flight attendant does not read the findings of a safety study or the regulations about seat belts. The flight attendant doesn't explain that the content of his or her speech is actually mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration. Instead, the attendant says only to buckle up so we can leave. An action-oriented listener finds "buckling up" a more compelling message than a message about the underlying reasons.

## Content

**Content-oriented listeners** are interested in the message itself, whether it makes sense, what it means, and whether it's accurate. When you give a speech, many members of your classroom audience will be content-oriented listeners who will be interested in learning from you. You therefore have an obligation to represent the truth in the fullest way you can. You can emphasize an idea, but if you exaggerate, you could lose credibility in



the minds of your content-oriented audience. You can advocate ideas that are important to you, but if you omit important limitations, you are withholding part of the truth and could leave your audience with an inaccurate view.

Imagine you're delivering a speech on the importance of drinking water. If you don't explain the benefits of drinking more water, you'll sound like an infomercial. In such an instance, your audience's response is likely to be less enthusiastic than you might want. Instead, content-oriented listeners want to listen to well-developed information with solid explanations.

## Time

People using a **time-oriented listening** style prefer a message that gets to the point quickly. Time-oriented listeners can become impatient with slow delivery or lengthy explanations. This kind of listener may be receptive for only a brief amount of time and may become rude or even hostile if the speaker expects a longer focus of attention. Time-oriented listeners convey their impatience through eye rolling, shifting about in their seats, checking their cell phones, and other inappropriate behaviors. If you've been asked to speak to a group of middle-school students, you need to realize that their attention spans are simply not as long as those of college students. This is an important reason speeches to young audiences must be shorter or broken up by more variety than speeches to adults.

In your professional future, some of your audience members will have real time constraints, not merely perceived ones. Imagine that you've been asked to deliver a speech on a new project to the board of directors of a local corporation. Chances are the people on the board of directors are all pressed for time. If your speech is long and filled with overly detailed information, time-oriented listeners will simply start to tune you out as you're speaking. Obviously, if time-oriented listeners start tuning you out, they will not be listening to your message. This is not the same thing as being a time-oriented listener who might be less interested in the message content than in its length.

## 4.4 Why Listening Is Difficult

At times, everyone has difficulty staying completely focused during a lengthy presentation. We can sometimes have difficulty listening to even relatively brief messages. Some of the factors that interfere with good listening might exist beyond our control, but others are manageable. It's helpful to be aware of these factors so that they interfere as little as possible with understanding the message.

### Noise

**Noise** is one of the biggest factors that interferes with listening; it can be defined as anything that interferes with your ability to attend to and understand a message. There are many kinds of noise, but we will focus on only the four you are most likely to encounter in public speaking situations: physical noise, psychological noise, physiological noise, and semantic noise.

#### Physical Noise

**Physical noise** consists of various sounds in an environment that interfere with a source's ability to hear. Construction noises right outside a window, planes flying directly overhead, or loud music in the next room can make it difficult to hear the message being presented by a speaker even if a microphone is being used. It is sometimes possible to manage the context to reduce the noise. Closing a window might be helpful. Asking the people in the next room to turn their music down might be possible. Changing to a new location is more difficult, as it involves finding a new location and having everyone get there.

#### Psychological Noise

**Psychological noise** consists of distractions from a speaker's message caused by a receiver's internal thoughts. For example, if you are preoccupied with personal problems, it is difficult to give your full attention to understanding the meanings of a message. The presence of another person to whom you feel attracted, or perhaps a person you dislike intensely, can also be psychosocial noise that draws your attention away from the message.

## Physiological Noise

**Physiological noise** consists of distractions from a speaker's message caused by a listener's own body. Maybe you're listening to a speech in class around noon and you haven't eaten anything. Your stomach may be growling and your desk is starting to look tasty. Maybe the room is cold and you're thinking more about how to keep warm than about what the speaker is saying. In either case, your body can distract you from attending to the information being presented.

## Semantic Noise

**Semantic noise** occurs when a receiver experiences confusion over the meaning of a source's word choice. While you are attempting to understand a particular word or phrase, the speaker continues to present the message. While you are struggling with a word interpretation, you are distracted from listening to the rest of the message. One of the authors was listening to a speaker who mentioned using a sweeper to clean carpeting. The author was confused, as she did not see how a broom would be effective in cleaning carpeting. Later, the author found out that the speaker was using the word "sweeper" to refer to a vacuum cleaner; however, in the meantime, her listening was hurt by her inability to understand what the speaker meant. Another example of semantic noise is euphemism. Euphemism is diplomatic language used for delivering unpleasant information. For instance, if someone is said to be "flexible with the truth," it might take us a moment to understand that the speaker means this person sometimes lies.

### Physical Noise

- Construction activity
- Barking dogs
- Loud music
- Air conditioners
- Airplanes
- Noisy conflict nearby

### Psychological Noise

- Worries about money
- Crushing deadlines
- The presence of specific other people in the room
- Tight daily schedule
- Biases related to the speaker or the content

### Physiological Noise

- Feeling ill
- Having a headache
- Growling stomach
- Room is too cold or too hot

### Semantic Noise

- Special jargon
- Unique word usage
- Mispronunciation
- Euphemism
- Phrases from foreign languages

Figure 4.2 Types of Noise

Many distractions are the fault of neither the listener nor the speaker. However, when you are the speaker, being aware of these sources of noise can help you reduce some of the noise that interferes with your audience's ability to understand you.

## Attention Span

A person can only maintain focused attention for a finite length of time. In his 1985 book *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, New York University's Steinhardt School of Education professor Neil Postman argued that modern audiences have lost the ability to sustain attention to a message (Postman, 1985). More recently, researchers have engaged in an ongoing debate over whether Internet use is detrimental to attention span (Carr, 2010). Whether or not these concerns are well founded, you have probably noticed that even when your attention is “glued” to something in which you are deeply interested, every now and then you pause to do something else, such as getting a drink of water, stretching, or looking out the window.

The limits of the human attention span can interfere with listening, but listeners and speakers can use strategies to prevent this interference. As many classroom instructors know, listeners will readily renew their attention when the presentation includes frequent breaks in pacing (Middendorf & Kalish, 1996). For example, a fifty- to seventy-five-minute class session might include some lecture material alternated with questions for class discussion, video clips, handouts, and demonstrations. Instructors who are adept at holding listeners' attention also move about the front of the room, writing on the board, drawing diagrams, and intermittently using slide transparencies or PowerPoint slides.

If you have instructors who do a good job of keeping your attention, they are positive role models showing strategies you can use to accommodate the limitations of your audience's attention span.

## Receiver Biases

Good listening involves keeping an open mind and withholding judgment until the speaker has completed the message. Conversely, biased listening is characterized by jumping to conclusions; the biased listener believes, “I don't need to listen because I already know what I think.” **Receiver biases** can refer to two things: biases with reference to the speaker and preconceived ideas and **opinions** about the topic or message. Both can be considered noise. Everyone has biases, but good listeners have learned to hold them in check while listening.

The first type of bias listeners can have is related to the speaker. Often a speaker stands up and an audience member simply doesn't like the speaker, so the audience member may not listen to the speaker's message. Maybe you have a classmate who just gets under your skin for some reason, or maybe you question a classmate's

competence on a given topic. When we have preconceived notions about a speaker, those biases can interfere with our ability to listen accurately and competently to the speaker's message.

The second type of bias listeners can have is related to the topic or content of the speech. Maybe the speech topic is one you've heard a thousand times, so you just tune out the speech. Or maybe the speaker is presenting a topic or position you fundamentally disagree with. When listeners have strong preexisting opinions about a topic, such as the death penalty, religious issues, affirmative action, abortion, or global warming, their biases may make it difficult for them to even consider new information about the topic, especially if the new information is inconsistent with what they already believe to be true. As listeners, we have difficulty identifying our biases, especially when they seem to make sense. However, it is worth recognizing that our lives would be very difficult if no one ever considered new points of view or new information. We live in a world where everyone can benefit from clear thinking and open-minded listening.

## Listening or Receiver Apprehension

**Listening or receiver apprehension** is the fear that you might be unable to understand the message or process the information correctly or be able to adapt your thinking to include the new information coherently (Wheless, 1975). In some situations, you might worry that the information presented will be “over your head”—too complex, technical, or advanced for you to understand adequately.

Many students will actually avoid registering for courses in which they feel certain they will do poorly. In other cases, students will choose to take a challenging course only if it's a requirement. This avoidance might be understandable but is not a good strategy for success. To become educated people, students should take a few courses that can shed light on areas where their knowledge is limited.

As a speaker, you can reduce listener apprehension by defining terms clearly and using simple visual aids to hold the audience's attention. You don't want to underestimate or overestimate your audience's knowledge on a subject, so good audience analysis is always important. If you know your audience doesn't have special knowledge on a given topic, you should start by defining important terms. Research has shown us that when listeners do not feel they understand a speaker's message, their apprehension about receiving the message escalates. Imagine that you are listening to a speech about chemistry and the speaker begins talking about “colligative properties.” You may start questioning whether you're even in the right place. When this happens, apprehension clearly interferes with a listener's ability to accurately and competently understand a speaker's message. As a speaker, you can lessen the listener's apprehension by explaining that colligative properties focus on how much is dissolved in a solution, not on what is dissolved in a solution. You could also give an example that they might readily understand, such as saying that it doesn't matter what kind of salt you use in the winter to melt ice on your driveway; what is important is how much salt you use.

## 4.5 Stages of Listening

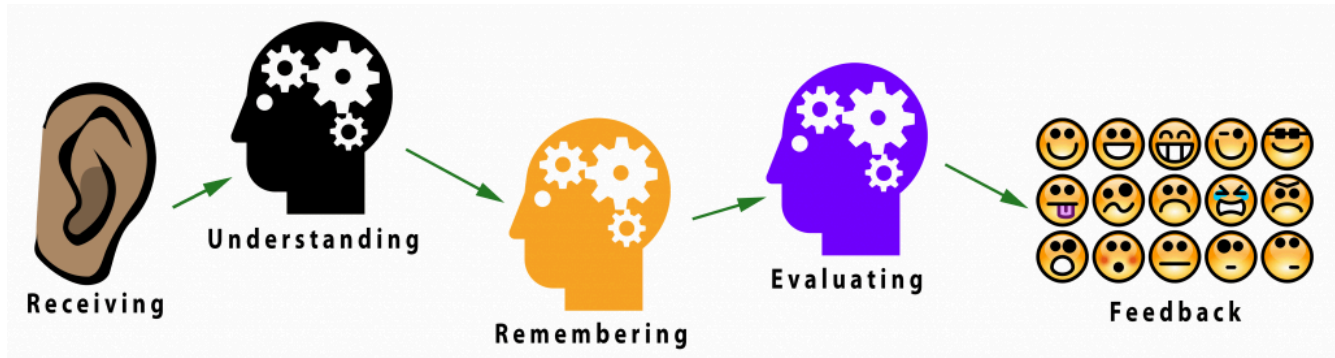


Figure 4.3 States of Listening

As you read earlier, there are many factors that can interfere with listening, so you need to be able to manage a number of mental tasks at the same time in order to be a successful listener. Author Joseph DeVito has divided the listening process into five stages: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding (DeVito, 2000).

### Receiving

**Receiving** is the intentional focus on hearing a speaker’s message, which happens when we filter out other sources so that we can isolate the message and avoid the confusing mixture of incoming stimuli. At this stage, we are still only hearing the message. Notice in Figure 4.3 “Stages of Listening” that this stage is represented by the ear because it is the primary tool involved with this stage of the listening process.

One of the authors of this book recalls attending a political rally for a presidential candidate at which about five thousand people were crowded into an outdoor amphitheater. When the candidate finally started speaking, the cheering and yelling were so loud that the candidate couldn’t be heard easily despite using a speaker system. In this example, our coauthor had difficulty receiving the message because of the external noise. This is only one example of the ways that hearing alone can require sincere effort, but you must hear the message before you can continue the process of listening.



## Understanding

In the **understanding** stage, we attempt to learn the meaning of the message, which is not always easy. For one thing, if a speaker does not enunciate clearly, it may be difficult to tell what the message was—did your friend say, “I think she’ll be late for class,” or “My teacher delayed the class”? Notice in Figure 4.3 “Stages of Listening” that stages two, three, and four are represented by the brain because it is the primary tool involved with these stages of the listening process.

Even when we have understood the words in a message, because of the differences in our backgrounds and experience, we sometimes make the mistake of attaching our own meanings to the words of others. For example, say you have made plans with your friends to meet at a certain movie theater, but you arrive and nobody else shows up. Eventually you find out that your friends are at a different theater all the way across town where the same movie is playing. Everyone else understood that the meeting place was the “west side” location, but you wrongly understood it as the “east side” location and therefore missed out on part of the fun.

The consequences of ineffective listening in a classroom can be much worse. When your professor advises students to get an “early start” on your speech, he or she probably hopes that you will begin your research right away and move on to developing a thesis statement and outlining the speech as soon as possible. However, students in your class might misunderstand the instructor’s meaning in several ways. One student might interpret the advice to mean that as long as she gets started, the rest of the assignment will have time to develop itself. Another student might instead think that to start early is to start on the Friday before the Monday due date instead of Sunday night.

So much of the way we understand others is influenced by our own perceptions and experiences. Therefore, at the understanding stage of listening, we should be on the lookout for places where our perceptions might differ from those of the speaker.

## Remembering

**Remembering** begins with listening; if you can’t remember something that was said, you might not have been listening effectively. Wolvin and Coakley note that the most common reason for not remembering a message after the fact is because it wasn’t really learned in the first place (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). However, even when you are listening attentively, some messages are more difficult than others to understand and remember. Highly complex messages that are filled with detail call for highly developed listening skills. Moreover, if something distracts your attention even for a moment, you could miss out on information that explains other new concepts you hear when you begin to listen fully again.

It’s also important to know that you can improve your memory of a message by processing it meaningfully—that is, by applying it in ways that are meaningful to you (Gluck et al., 2008). Instead of simply repeating a new acquaintance’s name over and over, for example, you might remember it by associating it with



something in your own life. “Emily,” you might say, “reminds me of the Emily I knew in middle school,” or “Mr. Impiari’s name reminds me of the Impala my father drives.”

Finally, if understanding has been inaccurate, recollection of the message will be inaccurate too.

## Evaluating

The fourth stage in the listening process is **evaluating**, or judging the value of the message. We might be thinking, “This makes sense” or, conversely, “This is very odd.” Because everyone embodies biases and perspectives learned from widely diverse sets of life experiences, evaluations of the same message can vary widely from one listener to another. Even the most open-minded listeners will have opinions of a speaker, and those opinions will influence how the message is evaluated. People are more likely to evaluate a message positively if the speaker speaks clearly, presents ideas logically, and gives reasons to support the points made.

Unfortunately, personal opinions sometimes result in prejudiced evaluations. Imagine you’re listening to a speech given by someone from another country and this person has an accent that is hard to understand. You may have a hard time simply making out the speaker’s message. Some people find a foreign accent to be interesting or even exotic, while others find it annoying or even take it as a sign of ignorance. If a listener has a strong bias against foreign accents, the listener may not even attempt to attend to the message. If you mistrust a speaker because of an accent, you could be rejecting important or personally enriching information. Good listeners have learned to refrain from making these judgments and instead to focus on the speaker’s meanings.

## Responding

**Responding**—sometimes referred to as feedback—is the fifth and final stage of the listening process. It’s the stage at which you indicate your involvement. Almost anything you do at this stage can be interpreted as feedback. For example, you are giving positive feedback to your instructor if at the end of class you stay behind to finish a sentence in your notes or approach the instructor to ask for clarification. The opposite kind of feedback is given by students who gather their belongings and rush out the door as soon as class is over. Notice in Figure 4.3 “Stages of Listening” that this stage is represented by the lips because we often give feedback in the form of verbal feedback; however, you can just as easily respond nonverbally.

### Formative Feedback

Not all responses occur at the end of the message. Formative feedback is a natural part of the ongoing transaction between a speaker and a listener. As the speaker delivers the message, a listener signals his or her involvement with focused attention, note-taking, nodding, and other behaviors that indicate understanding or failure to understand the message. These signals are important to the speaker, who is interested in whether the

message is clear and accepted or whether the content of the message is meeting the resistance of preconceived ideas. Speakers can use this feedback to decide whether additional examples, support materials, or explanation is needed.

## Summative Feedback

Summative feedback is given at the end of the communication. When you attend a political rally, a presentation given by a speaker you admire, or even a class, there are verbal and nonverbal ways of indicating your appreciation for or your disagreement with the messages or the speakers at the end of the message. Maybe you'll stand up and applaud a speaker you agreed with or just sit staring in silence after listening to a speaker you didn't like. In other cases, a speaker may be attempting to persuade you to donate to a charity, so if the speaker passes a bucket and you make a donation, you are providing feedback on the speaker's effectiveness. At the same time, we do not always listen most carefully to the messages of speakers we admire. Sometimes we simply enjoy being in their presence, and our summative feedback is not about the message but about our attitudes about the speaker. If your feedback is limited to something like "I just love your voice," you might be indicating that you did not listen carefully to the content of the message.

There is little doubt that by now, you are beginning to understand the complexity of listening and the great potential for errors. By becoming aware of what is involved with active listening and where difficulties might lie, you can prepare yourself both as a listener and as a speaker to minimize listening errors with your own public speeches.

## 4.6 Listening Critically



As a student, you are exposed to many kinds of messages. You receive messages conveying academic information, institutional rules, instructions, and warnings; you also receive messages through political discourse, advertisements, gossip, jokes, song lyrics, text messages, invitations, web links, and all other manners of communication. You know it's not all the same, but it isn't always clear how to separate the truth from the messages that are misleading or even blatantly false. Nor is it always clear which messages are intended to help the listener and which ones are merely self-serving for the speaker. Part of being a good listener is to learn when to use caution in evaluating the messages we hear.

**Critical listening** in this context means using careful, systematic thinking and reasoning to see whether a message makes sense in light of factual evidence. Critical listening can be learned with practice but is not necessarily easy to do. Some people never learn this skill; instead, they take every message at face value even when those messages are in conflict with their knowledge. Problems occur when messages are repeated to others who have not yet developed the skills to discern the difference between a valid message and a mistaken one. Critical listening can be particularly difficult when the message is complex. Unfortunately, some speakers may make their messages intentionally complex to avoid critical scrutiny. For example, a city treasurer giving a budget presentation might use very large words and technical jargon, which make it difficult for listeners to understand the proposed budget and ask probing questions.

### Six Ways to Improve Your Critical Listening

Critical listening is first and foremost a skill that can be learned and improved. In this section, we are going to explore six different techniques you can use to become a more critical listener.

## Recognizing the Difference between Facts and Opinions

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is credited with saying, “Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but they are not entitled to their own facts” (Wikiquote). Part of critical listening is learning to separate opinions from facts, and this works two ways: critical listeners are aware of whether a speaker is delivering a factual message or a message based on opinion, and they are also aware of the interplay between their own opinions and facts as they listen to messages.

In American politics, the issue of health care reform is heavily laden with both opinions and facts, and it is extremely difficult to sort some of them out. A clash of fact versus opinion happened on September 9, 2010, during President Obama’s nationally televised speech to a joint session of Congress outlining his health care reform plan. In this speech, President Obama responded to several rumors about the plan, including the claim “that our reform effort will insure illegal immigrants. This, too, is false—the reforms I’m proposing would not apply to those who are here illegally.” At this point, one congressman yelled out, “You lie!” Clearly, this congressman did not have a very high opinion of either the health care reform plan or the president. However, when the nonpartisan watch group Factcheck.org examined the language of the proposed bill, they found that it had a section titled “No Federal Payment for Undocumented Aliens” (Factcheck.org, 2009).

Often when people have a negative opinion about a topic, they are unwilling to accept facts. Instead, they question all aspects of the speech and have a negative predisposition toward both the speech and the speaker.

This is not to say that speakers should not express their opinions. Many of the greatest speeches in history include personal opinions. Consider, for example, Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech, in which he expressed his personal wish for the future of American society. Critical listeners may agree or disagree with a speaker’s opinions, but the point is that they know when a message they are hearing is based on opinion and when it is factual.

## Uncovering Assumptions

If something is factual, supporting evidence exists. However, we still need to be careful about what evidence does and does not mean. **Assumptions** are gaps in a logical sequence that listeners passively fill with their own ideas and opinions and may or may not be accurate. When listening to a public speech, you may find yourself being asked to assume something is a fact when in reality many people question that fact. For example, suppose you’re listening to a speech on weight loss. The speaker talks about how people who are overweight are simply not motivated or lack the self-discipline to lose weight. The speaker has built the speech on the assumption that motivation and self-discipline are the only reasons why people can’t lose weight. You may think to yourself, what about genetics? By listening critically, you will be more likely to notice unwarranted assumptions in a speech, which may prompt you to question the speaker if questions are taken or to do further research to examine the validity of the speaker’s assumptions. If, however, you sit passively by and let the speaker’s assumptions go unchallenged, you may find yourself persuaded by information that is not factual.

When you listen critically to a speech, you might hear information that appears unsupported by evidence. You shouldn't accept that information unconditionally. You would accept it under the condition that the speaker offers credible evidence that directly supports it.

## Be Open to New Ideas

Sometimes people are so fully invested in their perceptions of the world that they are unable to listen receptively to messages that make sense and would be of great benefit to them. Human progress has been possible, sometimes against great odds, because of the mental curiosity and discernment of a few people. In the late 1700s when the technique of vaccination to prevent smallpox was introduced, it was opposed by both medical professionals and everyday citizens who staged public protests (Edward Jenner Museum). More than two centuries later, vaccinations against smallpox, diphtheria, polio, and other infectious diseases have saved countless lives, yet popular opposition continues.

In the world of public speaking, we must be open to new ideas. Let's face it, people have a tendency to filter out information they disagree with and to filter in information that supports what they already believe. Nicolaus Copernicus was a sixteenth-century astronomer who dared to publish a treatise explaining that the earth revolves around the sun, which was a violation of Catholic doctrine. Copernicus's astronomical findings were labeled heretical and his treatise banned because a group of people at the time were not open to new ideas. In May of 2010, almost five hundred years after his death, the Roman Catholic Church admitted its error and reburied his remains with the full rites of Catholic burial (Owen, 2010).

While the Copernicus case is a fairly dramatic reversal, listeners should always be open to new ideas. We are not suggesting that you have to agree with every idea that you are faced with in life; rather, we are suggesting that you at least listen to the message and then evaluate the message.

## Rely on Reason and Common Sense

If you are listening to a speech and your common sense tells you that the message is illogical, you very well might be right. You should be thinking about whether the speech seems credible and coherent. In this way, your use of common sense can act as a warning system for you.

One of our coauthors once heard a speech on the environmental hazards of fireworks. The speaker argued that fireworks (the public kind, not the personal kind people buy and set off in their backyards) were environmentally hazardous because of litter. Although there is certainly some paper that makes it to the ground before burning up, the amount of litter created by fireworks displays is relatively small compared to other sources of litter, including trash left behind by all the spectators watching fireworks at public parks and other venues. It just does not make sense to identify a few bits of charred paper as a major environmental hazard.

If the message is inconsistent with things you already know, if the argument is illogical, or if the language is

exaggerated, you should investigate the issues before accepting or rejecting the message. Often, you will not be able to take this step during the presentation of the message; it may take longer to collect enough knowledge to make that decision for yourself.

However, when you are the speaker, you should not substitute common sense for evidence. That's why during a speech it's necessary to cite the authority of scholars whose research is irrefutable, or at least highly credible. It is all too easy to make a mistake in reasoning, sometimes called fallacy, in stating your case. One of the most common fallacies is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, a "common sense" form of logic that translates roughly as "after the fact, therefore because of the fact." The argument says that if A happened first, followed by B, then A caused B. We know the outcome cannot occur earlier than the cause, but we also know that the two events might be related indirectly or that causality works in a different direction. For instance, imagine a speaker arguing that because the sun rises after a rooster's crow, the rooster causes the sun to rise. This argument is clearly illogical because roosters crow many times each day, and the sun's rising and setting do not change according to crowing or lack thereof. But the two events are related in a different way. Roosters tend to wake up and begin crowing at first light, about forty-five minutes before sunrise. Thus it is the impending sunrise that causes the predawn crowing.

What is "common sense" for people of one generation or culture may be quite the opposite for people of a different generation or culture. Thus it is important not to assume that your audience shares the beliefs that are, for you, common sense. Likewise, if the message of your speech is complex or controversial, you should consider the needs of your audience and do your best to explain its complexities factually and logically, not intuitively.

## Relate New Ideas to Old Ones

As both a speaker and a listener, one of the most important things you can do to understand a message is to relate new ideas to previously held ideas. Imagine you're giving a speech about biological systems and you need to use the term "homeostasis," which refers to the ability of an organism to maintain stability by making constant adjustments. To help your audience understand homeostasis, you could show how homeostasis is similar to adjustments made by the thermostats that keep our homes at a more or less even temperature. If you set your thermostat for seventy degrees and it gets hotter, the central cooling will kick in and cool your house down. If your house gets below seventy degrees, your heater will kick in and heat your house up. Notice that in both cases your thermostat is making constant adjustments to stay at seventy degrees. Explaining that the body's homeostasis works in a similar way will make it more relevant to your listeners and will likely help them both understand and remember the idea because it links to something they have already experienced.

If you can make effective comparisons while you are listening, it can deepen your understanding of the message. If you can provide those comparisons for your listeners, you make it easier for them to give consideration to your ideas.

## Take Notes

Note-taking is a skill that improves with practice. You already know that it's nearly impossible to write down everything a speaker says. In fact, in your attempt to record everything, you might fall behind and wish you had divided your attention differently between writing and listening.

Careful, selective note-taking is important because we want an accurate record that reflects the meanings of the message. However much you might concentrate on the notes, you could inadvertently leave out an important word, such as *not*, and undermine the reliability of your otherwise carefully written notes. Instead, if you give the same care and attention to listening, you are less likely to make that kind of a mistake.

It's important to find a balance between listening well and taking good notes. Many people struggle with this balance for a long time. For example, if you try to write down only key phrases instead of full sentences, you might find that you can't remember how two ideas were related. In that case, too few notes were taken. At the opposite end, extensive note-taking can result in a loss of emphasis on the most important ideas.

To increase your critical listening skills, continue developing your ability to identify the central issues in messages so that you can take accurate notes that represent the meanings intended by the speaker.

## Listening Ethically

**Ethical listening** rests heavily on honest intentions. We should extend to speakers the same respect we want to receive when it's our turn to speak. We should be facing the speaker with our eyes open. We should not be checking our cell phones. We should avoid any behavior that belittles the speaker or the message.

Scholars Stephanie Coopman and James Lull emphasize the creation of a climate of caring and mutual understanding, observing that "respecting others' perspectives is one hallmark of the effective listener" (Coopman & Lull, 2008). Respect, or unconditional positive regard for others, means that you treat others with consideration and decency whether you agree with them or not. Professors Sprague, Stuart, and Bodary (Sprague et al., 2010). also urge us to treat the speaker with respect even when we disagree, don't understand the message, or find the speech boring.

Doug Lippman (1998) (Lippman, 1998), a storytelling coach, wrote powerfully and sensitively about listening in his book:

Like so many of us, I used to take listening for granted, glossing over this step as I rushed into the more active, visible ways of being helpful. Now, I am convinced that listening is the single most important element of any helping relationship.

Listening has great power. It draws thoughts and feelings out of people as nothing else can. When someone listens to you well, you become aware of feelings you may not have realized that you felt. You have ideas you may have never thought of before. You become more eloquent, more insightful....

As a helpful listener, I do not interrupt you. I do not give advice. I do not do something else while

listening to you. I do not convey distraction through nervous mannerisms. I do not finish your sentences for you. In spite of all my attempts to understand you, I do not assume I know what you mean.

I do not convey disapproval, impatience, or condescension. If I am confused, I show a desire for clarification, not dislike for your obtuseness. I do not act vindicated when you misspeak or correct yourself.

I do not sit impassively, withholding participation.

Instead, I project affection, approval, interest, and enthusiasm. I am your partner in communication. I am eager for your imminent success, fascinated by your struggles, forgiving of your mistakes, always expecting the best. I am your delighted listener (Lippman, 1998).

This excerpt expresses the decency with which people should treat each other. It doesn't mean we must accept everything we hear, but ethically, we should refrain from trivializing one another's concerns. We have all had the painful experience of being ignored or misunderstood. This is how we know that one of the greatest gifts one human can give to another is listening.

## Exercises

- Exercise critical listening.
  - Listen to the TedTalk [“How to Spot a Liar” by Pamela Meyer](#) (see below).
  - While listening to the talk, take notes.
  - Answer the following questions:
    - What are the main points of the speech?
    - What are some new things (ideas) that you've learned from the talk? Can you relate the speaker's ideas to old ideas you already had or knew about?
    - What evidence does the speaker provide to support her claims? Are there any unwarranted assumptions that the speaker makes? Does the speaker provide evidence for all her claims?
- Practice effective and active listening with your classmates.
  - In groups of two, share about a person that you admire the most.
  - Each person in the group must talk for 2-3 minutes. The other person cannot speak or intervene during this time, just listen quietly. You may engage in nonverbal feedback such as eye contact, nodding, etc.



- At the end of speaking, the listener paraphrases what the speaker said in their own words. The speaker can correct, confirm, or clarify what the listener has paraphrased.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1517#oembed-1>

## References

Aristotle. (c. 350 BCE). *Rhetoric* (W. Rhys Roberts, Trans.). Book I, Part 3, para. 1. Retrieved from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html>.

Bodie, G. D., & Fitch-Hauser, M. (2010). Quantitative research in listening: Explication and overview. In A. D. Wolvin (Ed.), *Listening and human communication in the 21st century* (pp. 46–93). Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Bodie, G. D., St. Cyr, K., Pence, M., Rold, M., & Honeycutt, J. M. (2010). Listening competence in initial interactions I: Distinguishing between what listening is and what listeners do. Unpublished manuscript, Baton Rouge, LA.

Carr, N. (2010, May 24). The Web shatters focus, rewires brains. *Wired Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.wired.com/2010/05/ff-nicholas-carr>.

Coopman, S. J., & Lull, J. (2008). *Public speaking: The evolving art*. Cengage Learning, p. 60.

DeVito, J. A. (2000). *The elements of public speaking* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.

Edward Jenner Museum. (n.d.). Vaccination. Retrieved from <https://jennermuseum.com/learning/vaccination>.

Factcheck.org, a Project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. (2009, September 10). Obama's health care speech. Retrieved from <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/09/obamas-health-care-speech>.

Gluck, M. A., Mercado, E., & Myers, C. E. (2008). *Learning and memory: From brain to behavior*. New York: Worth Publishers, pp. 172–173.

Jarvis, T. (2009, November). How to talk so people really listen: Four ways to make yourself heard. *O, the Oprah Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.oprah.com/relationships/Communication-Skills-How-to-Make-Yourself-Heard>.

Lippman, D. (1998). *The storytelling coach: How to listen, praise, and bring out people's best*. Little Rock, AR: August House.

Middendorf, J., & Kalish, A. (1996). The “change-up” in lectures. *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*, 5(2).

Owen, R. (2010, May 23). Catholic church reburies “heretic” Nicolaus Copernicus with honour. *Times Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article7134341.ece>

Postman, N. (1985). *Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business*. New York: Viking Press.

Sprague, J., Stuart, D., & Bodary, D. (2010). *The speaker's handbook* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage.

Trees, A. R. (2000). Nonverbal communication and the support process: Interactional sensitivity in interactions between mothers and young adult children. *Communication Monographs*, 67, 239–261. doi:10.1080/03637750009376509.

Waterford.org, (2020, March 3). *The Value of Listening in the Classroom: How to Teach Your Students Active Listening*. Retrieved from <https://www.waterford.org/education/active-listening-in-the-classroom/>.

Watson, K. W., Barker, L. L., & Weaver, J. B., III. (1995). The listening styles profile (LSP-16): Development and validation of an instrument to assess four listening styles. *International Journal of Listening*, 9, 1–13.

Watson, K. W., & Barker, L. L. (2000). *Watson/Barker Listening Test* (2nd ed.). New Orleans, LA: Spectra Inc.

Wheless, L. R. (1975). An investigation of receiver apprehension and social context dimensions of communication apprehension. *Speech Teacher*, 24, 261–268.

Wikiquote. (n.d.). Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Retrieved from [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Daniel\\_Patrick\\_Moynihan](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Daniel_Patrick_Moynihan)

Wolvin, A., & Coakley, C. G. (1996). *Listening* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

# CHAPTER 5: ETHICS

## Learning Objectives

- Explain the three levels of the ethics pyramid and how they might be used in evaluating the ethical choices of a public speaker or listener.
- Apply the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication to the context of public speaking.
- Apply ethics to your public speaking preparation process.
- Describe free speech as outlined in the First Amendment to the US Constitution and how free speech relates to other guaranteed freedoms.
- Discuss patterns of media ownership, the relationship of media and globalization, and the effects of diversity (or lack thereof) or media representations.
- Employ media-literacy skills to evaluate media messages.

## Key Terms

- **Ageism**
- **Distortion**
- **Ends**
- **Ethical Pyramid**
- **Free Speech**
- **Globalization**
- **Heterosexism**
- **Intent**
- **Means**

- **Media Convergence**
- **Media Imperialism**
- **Media Literacy**
- **Plagiarism**
- **Racism**
- **Social Learning Theory**
- **Sexism**

## 5.1 The Ethics Pyramid

### Ethics Today



Every day, people around the world make ethical decisions regarding public speech. Is it ever appropriate to lie to a group of people if it's in the group's best interest? As a speaker, should you use evidence within a speech that you are not sure is correct if it supports the speech's core argument? As a listener, should you refuse to listen to a speaker with whom you fundamentally disagree? These three examples represent ethical choices speakers and listeners face in the public speaking context. In this chapter, we will explore what it means to be both an ethical speaker and an ethical listener. To help you understand the issues involved with thinking about ethics, this chapter begins by presenting a model for ethical communication known as the ethics pyramid. We will then show how the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication can be applied to public speaking. The chapter will conclude with a general discussion of free speech.

The word "ethics" can mean different things to different people. Whether it is an ethical lapse in business or politics or a disagreement about medical treatments and end-of-life choices, people come into contact with ethical dilemmas regularly. Speakers and listeners of public speech face numerous ethical dilemmas as well. What kinds of support material and sources are ethical to use? How much should a speaker adapt to an audience without sacrificing his or her own views? What makes a speech ethical?

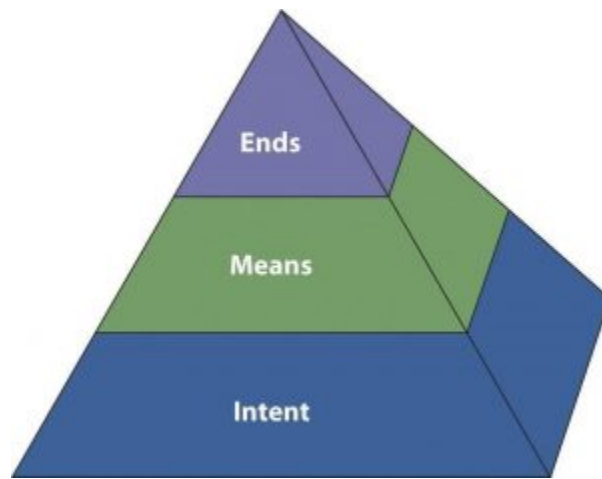


Figure 5.1 “Ethical Pyramid”

Elspeth Tilley, a public communication ethics expert from Massey University, proposes a structured approach to thinking about ethics (Tilley, 2005). Her **ethics pyramid** involves three basic concepts: intent, means, and ends. Figure 5.1 “Ethical Pyramid” illustrates the Tilley pyramid.

## Intent

According to Tilley, the first major consideration to be aware of when examining the ethicality of something is the issue of **intent**. To be an ethical speaker or listener, it is important to begin with ethical intentions. For example, if we agree that honesty is ethical, it follows that ethical speakers will prepare their remarks with the intention of telling the truth to their audiences. For example, a speaker from Pfizer giving a presentation at a medical conference about how the Covid-19 virus has mutated should disclose her affiliation with the drugmaker that formulated one of the vaccines against the virus so that audience members don’t suspect her of making statements that could be viewed as indicating that Pfizer’s vaccine is better than those of its competitors. Similarly, if we agree that it is ethical to listen with an open mind, it follows that ethical listeners will be intentional about letting a speaker make his or her case before forming judgments.

One option for assessing intent is to talk with others about how ethical they think a behavior is; if you get a variety of answers, that could be a sign that the behavior is not ethical and should be avoided. A second option is to check out existing codes of ethics. Many professional organizations, including the Independent Computer Consultants Association, American Counseling Association, and American Society of Home Inspectors, have codes of conduct or ethical guidelines for their members. Individual corporations such as Monsanto, Coca-Cola, Intel, and ConocoPhillips also have ethical guidelines for how their employees should interact with suppliers or clients. Even when specific ethical codes are not present, you can apply general ethical principles, such as whether a behavior is beneficial for the majority or whether you would approve of the same behavior if you were listening to a speech instead of giving it.

Additionally, be aware that people can engage in unethical behavior unintentionally. For example, suppose we agree that it is unethical to take someone else's words and pass them off as your own—a behavior known as plagiarism. What happens if a speaker makes a statement that he believes he thought of on his own, but the statement is actually quoted from a radio commentator whom he heard without clearly remembering doing so? The plagiarism was unintentional, but does that make it ethical?

## Means

The second level of the ethics pyramid is the **means** used to communicate with others (Tilley). According to McCroskey, Wrench, and Richmond (McCroskey, Wrench, & Richmond, 2003), “means” are the tools or behaviors we employ to achieve a desired outcome. We must realize that there are a range of possible behavioral choices for any situation and that some choices are good, some are bad, and some fall in between.

For example, suppose you want your friend Marty to spend an hour reviewing a draft of your speech according to criteria, such as audience appropriateness, adequate research, strong support of assertions, and dynamic introduction and conclusion. What means might you use to persuade Marty to do you this favor? You might explain that you value Marty's opinion and will gladly return the favor the next time Marty is preparing a speech (good means), or you might threaten to tell a professor that Marty cheated on a test (bad means). While both of these means may lead to the same end—having Marty agree to review your speech—one is clearly more ethical than the other.

## Ends

The final part of the ethics pyramid is the ends. According to McCroskey, Wrench, and Richmond (McCroskey, Wrench, & Richmond, 2003), **ends** are your desired outcomes. Examples of ends might include persuading your audience to make a financial contribution for your participation in Relay for Life, persuading a group of homeowners that your real estate agency would best meet their needs, or informing your fellow students about newly required university fees. While the means are the behavioral choices we make, the ends are the results of those choices.

Like intentions and means, ends can be good or bad, or they can fall into a gray area where it is unclear just how ethical or unethical they are. For example, suppose a city council wants to balance the city's annual budget. Balancing the budget may be a good end, assuming that the city has adequate tax revenues and areas of discretionary spending for nonessential services for the year in question. However, voters might argue that balancing the budget is a bad end if the city lacks these things for the year in question because balancing the budget would require raising taxes, curtailing essential city services, or both.

When examining ends, we need to think about both the source and the receiver of the message or behavior. Some end results could be good for the source but bad for the receiver, or vice versa. Suppose, for example, that Anita belongs to a club that is raffling off a course of dancing lessons. Anita sells Ben a ten-dollar raffle

ticket. However, Ben later thinks it over and realizes that he has no desire to take dancing lessons and that if he should win the raffle, he will never take the lessons. Anita's club has gained ten dollars—a good end—but Ben has lost ten dollars—a bad end. Again, the ethical standards you and your audience expect to be met will help in deciding whether a particular combination of speaker and audience ends is ethical.

## Thinking through the Pyramid

Ultimately, understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid: intent, means, and ends. When thinking about the ethics of a given behavior, Tilley recommends asking yourself three basic questions:

1. “Have I discussed the ethicality of the behavior with others and come to a general consensus that the behavior is ethical?”
2. “Does the behavior adhere to known codes of ethics?”
3. “Would I be happy if the outcomes of the behavior were reversed and applied to me?” (Tilley, 2005)

These questions provide a useful framework for thinking through a behavior when you are not sure whether a given action, or statement, may be unethical. Ultimately, understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid: intent, means, and ends.



## 5.2 Ethics in Public Speaking

The study of ethics in human communication is hardly a recent endeavor. One of the earliest discussions of ethics in communication (and particularly in public speaking) was conducted by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato in his dialogue *Phaedrus*. In the centuries since Plato's time, an entire subfield within the discipline of human communication has developed to explain and understand communication ethics.

### Communication Code of Ethics

In 1999, the National Communication Association officially adopted the Credo for Ethical Communication (see the text box). Ultimately, the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication is a set of beliefs communication scholars have about the ethics of human communication.

#### National Communication Association Credo for Ethical Communication

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision-making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication:

- We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision-making fundamental to a civil society.

- We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.
- We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences for our own communication and expect the same of others.

## Applying the NCA Credo to Public Speaking

The NCA Credo for Ethical Communication is designed to inspire discussions of ethics related to all aspects of human communication. For our purposes, we want to think about each of these principles in terms of how they affect public speaking.

## We Advocate Truthfulness, Accuracy, Honesty, and Reason as Essential to the Integrity of Communication



As public speakers, one of the first ethical areas we should be concerned with is information honesty. While there are cases where speakers have blatantly lied to an audience, it is more common for speakers to prove a point by exaggerating, omitting facts that weigh against their message, or distorting information. We believe that speakers build a relationship with their audiences, and that lying, exaggerating, or distorting information violates this relationship. Ultimately, a speaker will be more persuasive by using reason and logical arguments supported by facts rather than relying on emotional appeals designed to manipulate the audience.

It is also important to be honest about where all your information comes from in a speech. As speakers, examine your information sources and determine whether they are biased or have hidden agendas. For example, you are not likely to get accurate information about nonwhite individuals from a neo-Nazi website. While you may not know all your sources of information firsthand, you should attempt to find objective sources that do not have an overt or covert agenda that skews the argument you are making. The second part of information honesty is to fully disclose where we obtain the information in our speeches. As ethical speakers, it is important to always cite your sources of information within the body of a speech. Whether you conducted an interview or read a newspaper article, you must tell your listeners where the information came from. Using someone else's words or ideas without giving credit is called **plagiarism**. The word "plagiarism" stems from the Latin word *plagiaries*, or kidnapper. American Psychological Association states in its publication manual that ethical speakers do not claim "words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due" (American Psychological Association, 2001). In the previous sentence, we placed quotation marks around the sentence to indicate that the words came from the American Psychological Association and not from us. When speaking informally, people sometimes use "air quotes" to signal direct quotations—but this is not a recommended

technique in public speaking. Instead, speakers need to verbally tell an audience when they are using someone else's information. The consequences for failing to cite sources during public speeches can be substantial. When President Joseph Biden was a Senator running for President of the United States in 1988, reporters found that he had plagiarized portions of his stump speech from British politician Neil Kinnock. Biden was forced to drop out of the race as a result. More recently, the student newspaper at Malone University in Ohio alleged that the university president, Gary W. Streit, had plagiarized material in a public speech. Streit retired abruptly as a result.

Even if you are not running for President of the United States or serving as a college president, citing sources is important to you as a student. Many universities and high schools have policies that include dismissal from the institution for student plagiarism of academic work, including public speeches. Failing to cite your sources might result, at best, in lower credibility with your audience and, at worst, in a failing grade on your assignment or expulsion from your school. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of giving credit to the speakers and authors whose ideas we pass on within our own speeches and writing.

Speakers tend to fall into one of three major traps with plagiarism. The first trap is failing to tell the audience the source of a direct quotation. In the previous paragraph, we used a direct quotation from the American Psychological Association; if we had not used the quotation marks and clearly listed where the cited material came from, you, as a reader, wouldn't have known the source of that information. To avoid plagiarism, you always need to tell your audience when you are directly quoting information within a speech.

The second plagiarism trap public speakers fall into is paraphrasing what someone else said or wrote without giving credit to the speaker or author. For example, you may have read a book and learned that there are three types of schoolyard bullying. In the middle of your speech, you talk about those three types of schoolyard bullying. If you do not tell your audience where you found that information, you are plagiarizing. Typically, the only information you do not need to cite is information that is general knowledge. General knowledge is information that is publicly available and widely known by a large segment of society. For example, you would not need to provide a citation within a speech for the name of Delaware's capital. Although many people do not know the capital of Delaware without looking it up, this information is publicly available and easily accessible, so assigning credit to one specific source is not useful or necessary.

The third plagiarism trap that speakers fall into is re-citing someone else's sources within a speech. To explain this problem, let's look at a brief segment from a research paper written by Wrench, DiMartino, Ramirez, Oviedo, and Tesfamariam:

The main character on the hit Fox television show *House*, Dr. Gregory House, has one basic mantra, "It's a basic truth of the human condition that everybody lies. The only variable is about what" (Shore & Barclay, 2005). This notion that "everybody lies" is so persistent in the series that t-shirts have been printed with the slogan. Surprisingly, research has shown that most people do lie during interpersonal interactions to some degree. In a study conducted by Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead (1975), the researchers had 130 participants record their own conversations with others. After recording these conversations, the participants then examined the truthfulness of the statements within the

interactions. Only 38.5% of the statements made during these interactions were labeled as “completely honest.”

In this example, we see that the authors of this paragraph cited information from two external sources: Shore and Barclay and Tummer, Edgley, and Olmstead. These two groups of authors are given credit for their ideas. The authors make it clear that they did not produce the television show *House* or conduct the study that found that only 38.5 percent of statements were completely honest. Instead, these authors cited information found in two other locations. This type of citation is appropriate.

However, if a speaker read the paragraph and said the following during a speech, it would be plagiarism: “According to Wrench DiMartino, Ramirez, Oviedo, and Tesfamariam, in a study of 130 participants, only 38.5 percent of the responses were completely honest.” In this case, the speaker is attributing the information cited to the authors of the paragraph, which is not accurate. If you want to cite the information within your speech, you need to read the original article by Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead and cite that information yourself.

There are two main reasons we examine and cite the original source. First, Wrench, DiMartino, Ramirez, Oviedo, and Tesfamariam may have mistyped the information. Suppose the study by Turner, Edgley, and Olstead actually found that 58.5 percent of the responses were completely honest. If you cited the revised number (38.5 percent) from the paragraph, you would be further spreading incorrect information.

The second reason we do not re-cite someone else’s sources within our speeches is because it’s intellectually dishonest. You owe your listeners an honest description of where the facts you are relating came from, not just the name of an author who cited those facts. It is more work to trace the original source of a fact or statistic, but by doing that extra work you can avoid this plagiarism trap.

## We Endorse Freedom of Expression, Diversity of Perspective, and Tolerance of Dissent to Achieve the Informed and Responsible Decision-Making Fundamental to a Civil Society

This ethical principle affirms that a civil society depends on freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent and that informed and responsible decisions can only be made if all members of society are free to express their thoughts and opinions. Further, it holds that diverse viewpoints, including those that disagree with accepted authority, are important for the functioning of a democratic society.

If everyone only listened to one source of information, then we would be easily manipulated and controlled. For this reason, we believe that individuals should be willing to listen to a range of speakers on a given subject. As listeners or consumers of communication, we should realize that this diversity of perspectives enables us to be more fully informed on a subject. Imagine voting in an election after listening only to the campaign speeches of one candidate. The perspective of that candidate would be so narrow that you would have no way to accurately understand and assess the issues at hand or the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing

candidates. Unfortunately, some voters do limit themselves to listening only to their candidate of choice and, as a result, base their voting decisions on incomplete—and often inaccurate—information.

Listening to diverse perspectives includes being willing to hear dissenting voices. Dissent is by nature uncomfortable, as it entails expressing opposition to authority or the majority position, often in very unflattering terms. Legal scholar Steven H. Shiffrin has argued in favor of some symbolic speech (e.g., flag burning) because we as a society value the ability of anyone to express their dissent against the will and ideas of the majority (Shiffrin, 1999). Ethical communicators will be receptive to dissent, no matter how strongly they may disagree with the speaker's message because they realize that a society that forbids dissent cannot function democratically. Ultimately, honoring **free speech** and seeking out a variety of perspectives is very important for all listeners.

## We Strive to Understand and Respect Other Communicators before Evaluating and Responding to Their Messages

This is another ethical characteristic that is specifically directed at receivers of a message. As listeners, we often let our perceptions of a speaker's nonverbal behavior—his or her appearance, posture, mannerisms, eye contact, and so on—determine our opinions about a message before the speaker has said a word. We may also find ourselves judging a speaker based on information we have heard about him or her from other people. Perhaps you have heard from other students that a particular teacher is a really boring lecturer or is really entertaining in class. Even though you do not have personal knowledge, you may prejudge the teacher and his or her message based on information you have been given from others. The NCA credo reminds us that to be ethical listeners, we need to avoid such judgments and instead make an effort to listen respectfully; only when we have understood a speaker's viewpoint are we ready to begin forming our opinions of the message.

Listeners should try to objectively analyze the content and arguments within a speech before deciding how to respond. Especially when we disagree with a speaker, we might find it difficult to listen to the content of the speech and, instead, work on creating a rebuttal the entire time the speaker is talking. When this happens, we do not strive to understand the speaker and do not respect the speaker.

Of course, this does not just affect the listener in the public speaking situation. As speakers, we are often called upon to evaluate and refute potential arguments against our positions. While we always want our speeches to be as persuasive as possible, we do ourselves and our audiences a disservice when we downplay, distort, or refuse to mention important arguments from the opposing side. Fairly researching and evaluating counterarguments is an important ethical obligation for the public speaker.

## We Promote Access to Communication Resources and Opportunities as Necessary to Fulfill Human Potential and Contribute to the Well-Being of Families, Communities, and Society

Human communication is a skill that can and should be taught. We strongly believe that you can become a better, more ethical speaker. One of the reasons the authors of this book teach courses in public speaking and wrote this college textbook on public speaking is that we, as communication professionals, have an ethical obligation to provide others, including students like you, with resources and opportunities to become better speakers.

## We Promote Communication Climates of Caring and Mutual Understanding That Respect the Unique Needs and Characteristics of Individual Communicators

Speakers need to take a two-pronged approach when addressing any audience: caring about the audience and understanding the audience. When you as a speaker truly care about your audience's needs and desires, you avoid setting up a manipulative climate. This is not to say that your audience will always perceive their own needs and desires in the same way you do, but if you make an honest effort to speak to your audience in a way that has their best interests at heart, you are more likely to create persuasive arguments that are not just manipulative appeals.

Second, it is important for a speaker to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding. To do this, you should first learn as much as possible about your audience, a process called audience analysis.

To create a climate of caring and mutual respect, it is important for us as speakers to be open with our audiences so that our intentions and perceptions are clear. Nothing alienates an audience faster than a speaker with a hidden agenda unrelated to the stated purpose of the speech. One of our coauthors once listened to a speaker give a two-hour talk, allegedly about workplace wellness, which actually turned out to be an infomercial for the speaker's weight-loss program. In this case, the speaker clearly had a hidden (or not-so-hidden) agenda, which made the audience feel disrespected.

## We Condemn Communication That Degrades Individuals and Humanity through Distortion, Intimidation, Coercion, and Violence and through the Expression of Intolerance and Hatred

This ethical principle is very important for all speakers. Hopefully, intimidation, coercion, and violence will not be part of your public speaking experiences, but some public speakers have been known to call for violence and incite mobs of people to commit atrocities. Thus distortion and expressions of intolerance and hatred are of special concern when it comes to public speaking.



**Distortion** occurs when someone purposefully twists information in a way that detracts from its original meaning. Unfortunately, some speakers take information and use it in a manner that is not in the spirit of the original information. One place we see distortion frequently is in the political context, where politicians cite a statistic or the results of a study and either completely alter the information or use it in a deceptive manner. [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org/), a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, and the [St. Petersburg Times's Politifact](https://www.politifact.com/stpetersburg/) are nonpartisan organizations devoted to analyzing political messages and demonstrating how information has been distorted.

Expressions of intolerance and hatred that are to be avoided include using **ageist**, **heterosexist**, **racist**, **sexist**, and any other form of speech that demeans or belittles a group of people. Hate speech from all sides of the political spectrum in our society is detrimental to ethical communication. As such, we as speakers should be acutely aware of how an audience may perceive words that could be considered bigoted. For example, suppose a school board official involved in budget negotiations used the word “shekels” to refer to money, which he believes the teachers’ union should be willing to give up (Associated Press, 2011). The remark would be likely to prompt accusations of anti-Semitism and to distract listeners from any constructive suggestions the official might have for resolving budget issues. Although the official might insist that he meant no offense, he damaged the ethical climate of the budget debate by using a word associated with bigotry.

At the same time, it is important for listeners to pay attention to expressions of intolerance or hatred. Extremist speakers sometimes attempt to disguise their true agendas by avoiding bigoted “buzzwords” and using mild-sounding terms instead. For example, a speaker advocating the overthrow of a government might use the term “regime change” instead of “revolution”; similarly, proponents of genocide in various parts of the world have used the term “ethnic cleansing” instead of “extermination.” By listening critically to the gist of a speaker’s message as well as the specific language he or she uses, we can see how that speaker views the world.

## We Are Committed to the Courageous Expression of Personal Convictions in Pursuit of Fairness and Justice

We believe that finding and bringing to light situations of inequality and injustice within our society is important. Public speaking has been used throughout history to point out inequality and injustice, from Patrick Henry arguing against the way the English government treated the American colonists and Sojourner Truth describing the evils of slavery to Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech and Army Lt. Dan Choi’s speeches arguing that the military’s “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy is unjust. Many social justice movements have started because young public speakers have decided to stand up for what they believe is fair and just.



## We Advocate Sharing Information, Opinions, and Feelings When Facing Significant Choices While Also Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality

This ethical principle involves balancing personal disclosure with discretion. It is perfectly normal for speakers to want to share their own personal opinions and feelings about a topic; however, it is also important to highlight information within a speech that represents your own thoughts and feelings. Your listeners have a right to know the difference between facts and personal opinions. Similarly, we have an obligation to respect others' privacy and confidentiality when speaking. If information is obtained from printed or publicly distributed material, it's perfectly appropriate to use that information without getting permission, as long as you cite it. However, when you have a great anecdote one of your friends told you in confidence, or access to information that is not available to the general public, it is best to seek permission before using the information in a speech.

This ethical obligation even has legal implications in many government and corporate contexts. For example, individuals who work for the Central Intelligence Agency are legally precluded from discussing their work in public without prior review by the agency. And companies such as Google also have policies requiring employees to seek permission before engaging in public speaking in which sensitive information might be leaked.

## We Accept Responsibility for the Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Our Own Communication and Expect the Same of Others

The last statement of NCA's ethical credo may be the most important one. We live in a society where a speaker's message can literally be heard around the world in a matter of minutes, thanks to our global communication networks. Extreme remarks made by politicians, media commentators, and celebrities, as well as ordinary people, can unexpectedly "go viral" with regrettable consequences. It is not unusual to see situations where a speaker talks hatefully about a specific group, but when one of the speaker's listeners violently attacks a member of the group, the speaker insists that he or she had no way of knowing that this could possibly have happened. Washing one's hands of responsibility is unacceptable: all speakers should accept responsibility for the short-term and long-term consequences of their speeches. Although it is certainly not always the speaker's fault if someone commits an act of violence, the speaker should take responsibility for her or his role in the situation. This process involves being truly reflective and willing to examine how one's speech could have tragic consequences. Furthermore, attempting to persuade a group of people to take any action means you should make sure that you understand the consequences of that action. Whether you are persuading people to vote for a political candidate or just encouraging them to lose weight, you should know what the short-term and long-term consequences of that decision could be. While our predictions of short-

term and long-term consequences may not always be right, we have an ethical duty to at least think through the possible consequences of our speeches and the actions we encourage.

## Practicing Ethical Public Speaking

Thus far in this section, we’ve introduced you to the basics of thinking through the ethics of public speaking. Knowing about ethics is essential, but even more important to being an ethical public speaker is putting that knowledge into practice by thinking through possible ethical pitfalls prior to standing up and speaking out. Table 5.1 “Public Speaking Ethics Checklist” is a checklist based on our discussion in this chapter to help you think through some of these issues.

Table 5.1 Public Speaking Ethics Checklist

Instructions: For each of the following ethical issues, check either “true” or “false.”

1. I have knowingly added information within my speech that is false.
2. I have attempted to persuade people by unnecessarily tapping into emotion rather than logic.
3. I have not clearly cited all the information within my speech.
4. I do not know who my sources of information are or what makes my sources credible.
5. I wrote my speech based on my own interests and really haven’t thought much about my audience.
6. I haven’t really thought much about my audience’s needs and desires.
7. I have altered some of the facts in my speech to help me be more persuasive.
8. Some of the language in my speech may be considered bigoted.
9. My goal is to manipulate my audience to my point of view.
10. I sometimes blend in my personal opinions when discussing actual facts during the speech.
11. I don’t bother to distinguish between the two during my speech.
12. I’ve used information in my speech from a friend or colleague that probably shouldn’t be repeated.
13. I’m using information in my speech that a source gave me even though it was technically “off the record.”
14. It’s just a speech. I really don’t care what someone does with the information when I’m done speaking.

15. I haven't really thought about the short- or long-term consequences of my speech. Scoring:  
For ethical purposes, all your answers should have been "false."

## 5.3 Free Speech

### What Is Free Speech?



Free speech has been a constitutional right since the founding of our nation, and according to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary of Law*, **free speech** entails “the right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations (as the power of the government to avoid a clear and present danger) esp. as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution” (Freedom of speech). Free speech is especially important to us as public speakers because expressing information and ideas is the purpose of public speaking. It is also important to audiences of public speeches because free speech allows us to hear and consider multiple points of view so that we can make more informed decisions.

### The First Amendment to the Constitution

Free speech was so important to the founders of the United States that it is included in the first of the ten amendments to the US Constitution that are known as the Bill of Rights. This is not surprising, considering that many American colonists had crossed the Atlantic to escape religious persecution and that England had imposed many restrictions on personal freedoms during the colonial era. The text of the First Amendment reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (National Archives and Records Administration, 2011).

The freedoms protected by the First Amendment may seem perfectly natural today, but they were controversial in 1791 when the Bill of Rights was enacted. Proponents argued that individuals needed protection from overreaching powers of government, while opponents believed these protections were unnecessary and that amending them to the Constitution could weaken the union.

Freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, of association, of assembly and petition are all guaranteed in amendments to the US Constitution. Free speech allows us to exercise our other First Amendment rights. Freedom of assembly means that people can gather to discuss and protest issues of importance to them. If free speech were not protected, citizens would not be able to exercise their right to protest about activities such as war or policies such as health care reform.

Free speech does not mean, however, that every US citizen has the legal right to say anything at any time. If your speech is likely to lead to violence or other illegal acts, it is not protected. One recent example is a 2007 Supreme Court decision in the *Morse et al. v. Frederick* case. In this case, a high school student held up a sign reading “Bong Hits 4 Jesus” across from the school during the 2002 Olympic Torch Relay. The principal suspended the teenager, and the teen sued the principal for violating his First Amendment rights. Ultimately, the court decided that the principal had the right to suspend the student because he was advocating illegal behavior (Supreme Court of the United States, 2007).

The meaning of “free speech” is constantly being debated by politicians, judges, and the public, even within the United States, where this right has been discussed for over two hundred years. As US citizens, it is important to be aware of both the protections afforded by free speech and its limits so that we can be both articulate speakers and critical listeners when issues such as antiwar protests at military funerals or speech advocating violence against members of specific groups come up within our communities.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

*online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=802#h5p-10>

## 5.4 Mass Communication and Ethics

Given the potential for mass communication messages to reach thousands to millions of people, the potential for positive or negative consequences of those messages exceed those of interpersonal, small group, or even public communication messages. Because of this, questions of ethics have to be closely considered when discussing mass communication and the media. In this section, we will discuss how media-ownership regulations, globalization, and representations of diversity tie in with mass communication ethics.

### Media Control and Ownership

Media interests and ownership have become more concentrated over the past few decades as a result of deregulation. Deregulation refers to the overturning or revising of policies that were in place to ensure that media outlets serve the interests of the public and include diverse viewpoints, programs, and ownership. Deregulation occurred as a result of the rapid technological changes in the 1980s and 1990s, including the growth of cable and satellite outlets. The argument for deregulation was to make the overall market for network, cable, satellite, and other media outlets more competitive.



Figure 5.1 Restrictions on the number of radio and/or television stations a single person could own have lessened over the years, allowing individuals to control multiple media outlets.

### **Timeline of Changes Made by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) (Austin, 2011)**

- 1954–84. National ownership is limited to seven stations and each station is required to be in a separate geographic market.
- 1984. The FCC expands ownership to twelve stations as long as the number of stations owned doesn't reach more than 25 percent of the national market.
- 1996. The Telecommunications Act eliminates a maximum on the number of stations that one person or entity can own, as long as they do not reach more than 35 percent of the national market.
- 2003. Cross-media ownership rules are relaxed, which allows for a person or entity to own both newspaper and broadcast outlets and radio and television outlets. The FCC increases the maximum audience one person or entity can reach to 45 percent of the national market, but Congress intervenes in 2004 and reduces that to 39 percent.

The pressure to lessen regulations came as media outlets struggled to keep up with increased competition and technological changes and saw mergers and consolidations as a way to save money and keep a competitive edge. Television was one of the first forms of electronic mass media to begin to merge. Companies that you're familiar with now but probably didn't know were once separate entities include Time-Warner Cable (formed from the 1989 merger of Time, Inc., and Warner Communications, Inc.). General Electric, a company we may



know for making refrigerators and stoves, bought the NBC television network in 1986. These are just two of the many megamergers that have occurred in the past few decades. The merger of these media companies was meant to provide a synergy that could lower costs and produce higher profits by, for example, merging Disney (with its expertise and market share of children's entertainment) and the broadcast network ABC (with its expertise in television and news).

As computers and the Internet began to enter households, media companies wanted to take advantage of the prospect of providing additional media services under one umbrella. **Media convergence** refers to the merging of technologies that were previously developed and used separately (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). One such convergence that affects many if not most of you reading this book is the creation of broadband Internet access through existing cable lines and the bundling of cable and high-speed Internet services. This marked the beginning of a rush, on the part of media conglomerates, to own the methods of distribution for media messages as a means of then controlling the devices and technology that can be used on them. A recent and well-known example of this was Apple's exclusive contract with AT&T. For the first few years that iPhones were on the market, AT&T was the only service provider that worked with the phones. To handle the data load needed to service all the new phones, AT&T had to rush and spend millions of dollars to upgrade its cellular network. These moves help preserve the media conglomerates' power, because smaller, independent, or competing companies cannot afford the time, resources, and money needed to build a competing or even functional distribution mechanism.

Consolidated media ownership has decreased localism in terms of local news and local reporters, radio DJs, and editors (Austin, 2011). Since business is handled from a central hub that might be hundreds or thousands of miles away from a market the media outlet serves, many of the media jobs that used to exist in a city or region have disappeared. While media consolidation has led to some structural and cultural changes in the United States, similar forces are at work in the process of globalization.

## Media and Globalization

**Globalization** refers to a complex of interconnecting structural and cultural forces that aid the spread of ideas and technologies and influence the social and economic organization of societies. Just as modernization in the form of industrialization and then later a turn toward an information-based society spread across the globe, so do technologies and the forms of media they create. In all these cases, the spread of ideas, technologies, and media is imbalanced, as we will discuss more later. This type of cultural imperialism is often criticized as being a part of globalization, and scholars acknowledge that cultural imperialism is largely achieved through media messages (Siapera, 2012).

**Media imperialism** refers to the domination of other countries through exported media and the values and ideologies they contain (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). Just as corporations have helped further globalization, media companies have expanded into multinational conglomerates in such a way that allows them to have power and influence that is difficult for individual nations to regulate or control. During the first seventy

or so years of electronic mass media, countries could more easily control messages that were sent through cables or other hard structures. For example, telegraph, telephone, and television lines could be cut, and even radio television stations that broadcast over the airwaves could be taken offline by cutting the power to the transmitter. As more information became digitized and sent via satellite, countries had much more difficulty limiting what could get in and out of their borders.

Media-fueled cultural imperialism is critiqued because of the concern that the imported cultural images and values will end up destroying or forever changing the cultural identity of the countries being “occupied” by foreign media. The flow of media is predictable and patterned. The cultural values of more-developed Western and Northern countries flow via media messages to the global East and South, mimicking the flow of power that has existed for centuries with the Western and Northern Hemispheres, primarily Europe and the United States, politically and economically dominating countries in the Southern and Eastern Hemispheres such as those in Asia, South America, and Africa. As with any form of imperialism, the poorest countries are the ones who are the most vulnerable and subjected to the most external control (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). The reason more-developed countries dominate the media in other countries stems from available resources and knowledge needed to produce and transmit media content. Developing countries lack the same level of infrastructure (such as fiber-optic cables and satellite systems), technical expertise, and technology needed to produce their own content, which makes it cheaper to purchase Western, predominantly US American, content to fuel the growing desire of people in these countries to have access to media. This creates a negative cycle in which poorer countries use what resources they do have to carry Western content, which prevents them from investing in additional organic and local content and creates a demand for more Western content. Critics have also focused on the quality of the content that is exported, which is only representative of a narrow range of Western identities and values. Content tends to be dramatized programs like *Baywatch*, which at one point was the most-watched television program in the world. Dramas are preferred because humor is more likely to be lost in translation, while viewers can often identify with stock plot lines in dramas, which make the shows easier to translate and attracts a larger audience. The downside to this is that these narrowly chosen shows that run over and over in a specific country contribute to a stereotypical view of what life in the United States is like.

Not all the discussion of and scholarship on globalization and the media is negative. More recently, much research has focused on the notion of cultural hybridity and the ways in which some cultures take in foreign, predominantly Western media messages and representations and integrate them into existing cultural beliefs and practices. For example, one scholar writes about a quartet in Africa that takes European chamber music and incorporates African rhythms and another group that takes American hip-hop music and gives it a more traditional African flair (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). Additionally, the emergence of social and personal media allows users in specific countries to generate their own content and adopt and utilize media platforms in their own ways. As we will learn later, social and personal media have been used to overthrow oppressive governments and to increase the flow of information in places where it was once restricted. So, in these cases, we can see that the ability of certain forms of communication to cross borders has led to positive change.

We can even examine the spread of personal media and social media as an example of globalization. Here,

rather than a specific message or set of cultural values being distributed around the world, a platform was made available and adopted in a more democratic, less imperialistic way. Social media, unlike more traditional modes of media, can bring people together in more self-determined ways. For example, people can connect over the Internet to a blogger with a shared interest and interact with one another via comments or other means.

## Media and Representation

Another area of concern for those who study mass media is the representation of diversity (or lack thereof) in media messages. The FCC has identified program, ownership, and viewpoint diversity as important elements of a balanced mass media that serves the public good (Austin, 2011). This view was enforced through the Fairness Doctrine that was established in 1949 and lasted until the early 1980s, when it began to be questioned by those in favor of media deregulation. The Fairness Doctrine was eventually overturned in 1987, but the FCC tried in 2003 to reinstate policies that encourage minority ownership of media outlets, which they hoped in turn would lead to more diverse programming. It remains to be seen whether or not minority-owned media outlets will produce or carry more diverse programming, but it is important to note that the deregulation over the past few decades has decreased in the number of owners of media outlets who come from minority groups.

Scholars have raised concerns about the number of characters from minority groups on television relative to the groups' percentage of the population. Perhaps even more concerning is the type of characters that actors from minority groups play and the types of shows on which they appear. Whether we want them to be or not, the people we see featured in media messages, especially those who appear frequently on television, in movies, in magazines, or in some combination of the three, serve as role models for many that view them. These people help set the tone for standards of behavior, beauty, and intelligence, among other things. **Social learning theory** claims that media portrayals influence our development of schemata or scripts, especially as children, about different groups of people (Signorielli, 2009). For example, a person who grows up in a relatively homogenous white, middle-class environment can develop schemata about African Americans and Latinx based on how they are depicted in media messages. Cultivation theory, which we discussed earlier, also supports the notion that media representations affect our perceptions and actions. Since media messages, overall, are patterned representations, they cultivate within users a common worldview from the seeds that are planted by a relatively narrow set of content. For example, people in television shows are disproportionately portrayed as middle-class professionals. In reality, about 67 percent of people working in the United States have blue-collar or service-industry jobs, but they only make up about 10 percent of the people on television (Griffin, 2009).



Figure 5.2 Even though the majority of workers in the United States classify as blue-collar or service workers, they only make up about 10 percent of the people on television.

African Americans, Latinx, and women are underrepresented in television, and people over the age of sixty-five are the most-excluded group (Griffin, 2009). Studies show that there is less diversity in mediated messages relative to the population as a whole and that the images and messages in the media contain certain themes that rely on stereotypes and further reduce the complexity of our society. Over time, these recurring images and messages affect what we think and how we view the world. In particular, research based on social learning and cultivation theories find that people who watch more television have views that reflect what they see in the programming they watch.

Looking specifically at television, representations of African Americans on prime-time shows (those that air between 7 and 11 p.m.) are actually proportional to their percentage of the population. Whites, however, are overrepresented, meaning there is a larger percentage of white people on prime-time shows than there is in our actual population. This disparity can be accounted for by pointing out that Latinx, Native, and Asian Americans, as well as African American females, are underrepresented if not invisible in much of the media (Signorielli, 2009). For example, a study of minority characters on prime-time television between 2001 and 2008 found that Latinxs make up 5 percent of the characters despite being 16 percent of the population.

As the number of minority-focused programs, especially sitcoms, has decreased in the past ten years, minority characters have diffused more into other shows. While this integration is positive in some ways, there are still many examples of shows where a minority character is the lone person of color or LGBTQ+. From the view of social learning and cultivation theory, this is problematic, since many people, especially children, may form their early perceptions of difference based on interactions with characters in media messages. So unless viewers intentionally seek out diverse programming, they will likely mostly see people with dominant identities represented in the media they consume (Signorielli, 2009).

Unfortunately, there has been a similar lack of diversity found among new media. In a first-of-its-kind study of gender representation in online news sources, the Global Media Monitoring Project found after analyzing news stories on seventy-six websites in sixteen countries that only 36 percent of the stories were reported by

women, and women were the focus of only 23 percent of all the stories written (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2012). Another look at popular, blog-style news sites such as *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Beast*, *Slate*, and *Salon* found that representations of minorities conformed to stereotypes. For example, African Americans were featured primarily in stories about athletics, Latinxs appeared in stories about immigration, and Native and Asian Americans were absent (Jackson, 2012).

Even when a major source of online information like *The Huffington Post* tries to include more diverse viewpoints, it does so under criticism. The website decided to add a section focused on information and news of interest to African Americans after adding twenty-six other sections ranging from information on travel to divorce. Although the editor of the section wanted to have a nuanced discussion about race, many of her ideas were discounted because they were not “buzzy enough,” meaning they might not attract enough readers. So instead of starting a dialogue about race, most of the stories featured on the first day were more “buzz worthy” and, ironically, written by white reporters (Jackson, 2012).

Some people who study and/or work in the media view media diversity as a means of expanding public dialogue, creating a more-informed citizenry, and enhancing our democracy through positive social change. Some online news sources have taken up such a call, but they fall short of the popularity or profitability of more mainstream news outlets. The online investigative news outlet *ProPublica* has received positive attention and awards for their coverage of a wide range of issues, including stories that focus on underrepresented communities. The advent of new and personal media makes it easier for individuals and independent rather than corporate-owned media outlets to take advantage of new technologies and platforms to produce quality media products on a budget. As consumers of media, we can also keep a critical eye open for issues of representation and seek out media that is more inclusive and diverse. This type of evaluative and deliberate thinking about the media is an important part of media literacy, which we will discuss next.

## Developing Media Literacy

**Media literacy** involves our ability to critique and analyze the potential impact of the media. The word *literacy* refers to our ability to read and comprehend written language, but just as we need literacy to be able to read, write, and function in our society, we also need to be able to read media messages. To be media literate, we must develop a particular skill set that is unfortunately not taught in a systematic way like reading and writing. The quest to make a more media-literate society is not new. It might be surprising to you to learn that the media-literacy movement began in the 1930s when a chapter of the American Association of University Women in Madison, Wisconsin, created a newspaper column and a radio program called “Broadcast on Broadcasts” that reviewed and evaluated current media messages and practices (Dunlop, & Kymnes, 2007). Despite the fact that this movement has been around for eighty years now, many people still don’t know about it.

Media literacy isn’t meant to censor or blame the media, nor does it advocate for us to limit or change our engagement with the media in any particular way. Instead, media literacy ties in with critical thinking and listening, which we have learned about throughout this book already. Media-literacy skills are important

because media outlets are “culture makers,” meaning they reflect much of current society but also reshape and influence sociocultural reality and real-life practices. Some may mistakenly believe that frequent exposure to media or that growing up in a media-saturated environment leads to media literacy. Knowing how to use technology to find and use media is different from knowing how to analyze it. Like other critical thinking skills, media literacy doesn’t just develop; it must be taught, learned, practiced, and reflected on.

Media-literacy skills teach us to analyze the media and to realize the following:

- All media messages are constructed (even “objective” news stories are filmed, edited, and introduced in ways that frame and influence their meaning).
- Media structures and policies affect message construction (which means we need to also learn about how media ownership and distribution function in our society—a growing concern that we discussed earlier in this section).
- Each medium has different characteristics and affects messages differently (e.g., a story presented on *The Daily Show* will likely be less complete and more dramatized than a story presented on a blog focused on that topic).
- Media messages are constructed for particular purposes (many messages are constructed to gain profit or power, some messages promote change, and some try to maintain the status quo).
- All media messages are embedded with values and beliefs (the myth of objectivity helps mask the underlying bias or misrepresentation in some messages).
- Media messages influence our beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors, including how we perceive and interact with others and how we participate in larger society.
- Media messages can prevent change (intentionally presenting manipulated or selectively chosen content to inhibit change).

We learn much through the media that we do not have direct experience with, and communication and media scholars theorize that we tend to believe media portrayals are accurate representations of life. However, the media represents race, gender, sexuality, ability, and other cultural identities in biased and stereotypical ways that often favor dominant identities (Allen, 2011). Since the media influences our beliefs, attitudes, and expectations about difference, it is important to be able to critically evaluate the mediated messages that we receive. The goal of media literacy is not to teach you what to think but to teach you how you can engage with, interpret, and evaluate media in a more informed manner. Media literacy is also reflective in that we are asked to be accountable for those choices we make in regards to media by reflecting on and being prepared to articulate how those choices fit in with our own belief and value systems.

Ask yourself these standard questions to engage with media critically. There are no “true” or “right/wrong” answers to many of the questions we ask during the critical thinking process. Engaging in media literacy is more about expanding our understanding and perspective rather than arriving at definitive answers. The following questions will help you hone your media-literacy skills (Allen, 2011):



1. Who created this message? What did they hope to accomplish? What are their primary belief systems?
2. What is my interpretation of this message? How and why might different people understand this message differently than me? What can I learn about myself based on my interpretation and how it may differ from others'?
3. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented or omitted in this message? What does this tell me about how other people live and believe? Does this message leave anything or anyone out?
4. Why was this message sent? Who sent it? Is it trying to tell me something? To sell me something?

After asking these questions, media-literate people should be able to use well-reasoned arguments and evidence (not just opinion) to support their evaluations. People with media-literacy skills also know that their evaluations may not be definitive. Although this may seem like a place of uncertainty, media-literate people actually have more control over how they interact with media messages, which allows them to use media to their advantage, whether that is to become better informed or to just enjoy their media experience.

## References

- Allen, B. J., *Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2011), 29, 34.
- American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author, p. 349.
- Associated Press. (2011, May 5). Conn. shekel shellacking. *New York Post*.
- Austin, C., "Overwhelmed by Big Consolidation: Bringing Back Regulation to Increase Diversity in Programming That Serves Minority Audiences," *Federal Communications Law Journal* 63, no. 3 (2011): 746–48.
- Dunlop, J., and Angel Kymnes, "Analysis of Media Literacy Curriculum: The Center for Media Literacy's Media Kit," *Smile* 7, no. 3 (2007), 3.
- Freedom of speech. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster's dictionary of law*. Retrieved from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/freedom%20of%20speech>
- Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010, "Who Makes the News?" accessed November 11, 2012, [http://whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/restricted/highlights/highlights\\_en.pdf](http://whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/restricted/highlights/highlights_en.pdf).
- Griffin, E., *A First Look at Communication Theory*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 351.
- Jackson, J., "New Media—but Familiar Lack of Diversity," *Extra!*, June 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=4551>.
- McCroskey, J. C., Wrench, J. S., & Richmond, V. P. (2003). *Principles of public speaking*. Indianapolis, IN: The College Network.
- National Archives and Records Administration. (2011). *Bill of rights transcription*. Retrieved from [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)

Rayner, P., Peter Wall, and Stephen Kruger, *Media Studies: The Essential Resource* (London: Routledge, 2004), 249.

Shiffrin, S. H. (1999). *Dissent, injustice and the meanings of America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Siapera, E., *Understanding New Media* (London: Sage, 2012), 23–26.

Signorielli, N., “Minorities Representation in Prime Time: 2000–2008,” *Communication Research Reports* 26, no. 4 (2009): 324.

Supreme Court of the United States. (2007). *Syllabus: Morse et al. v. Frederick*. No. 06–278. Argued March 19, 2007–Decided June 25, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/06pdf/06-278.pdf>

Tilley, E. (2005). The ethics pyramid: Making ethics unavoidable in the public relations process. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 20, 305–320



# CHAPTER 6: RESEARCHING YOUR SPEECH

## Learning Objectives

- Learn that research is not only useful, but fun.
- Describe how to establish research needs before beginning research.
- Identify appropriate scholarly and popular sources.
- Differentiate between primary and secondary research.
- Understand how to incorporate sources within a speech and how to use sources ethically.
- Differentiate between direct quotations and paraphrases of information within a speech.
- Explain twelve strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

## Key Terms

- **APA style**
- **CRAAP Method**
- **Databases**
- **Direct Quotation**
- **“Drive-by” Quoting**
- **Encyclopedias**
- **General-Interest Periodicals**
- **Headings**
- **Interlibrary Loan**
- **Journals**

- **Keywords**
- **MLA style**
- **Paraphrase**
- **Peer-reviewed Sources**
- **Popular Sources**
- **Primary Research**
- **Representative Sample**
- **Research**
- **Research Log**
- **Scholarly Sources**
- **Secondary Research**
- **Special-Interest Periodicals**
- **Subheadings**
- **Summary**
- **Topic Sentence**
- **World Wide Web**

## 6.1 Beginning the Research Process



### Ask a Librarian

If you hear the word “research” and get a little queasy inside, you’re hardly alone. Many people dread the idea of having to research something, whether for a speech or a paper. Now is the time to talk to a librarian at a public or an academic library. Librarians are experts at locating reliable sources of information on any topic, and they can help you use tools to locate sources quickly. Libraries have access to materials that you cannot find by just Googling something on the **world wide web**.

For any project that requires research, visiting with a librarian should be your first step because good research takes time. Too, research is not a one-and-done process. Expect to do preliminary research about your topic, along with later research after you discover what you don’t know.

You can also consult a librarian if you don’t have a clear idea of your topic. If you have a copy of your assignment, the librarian can help you brainstorm some topics that might work so that you can begin your preliminary research.

If you are feeling uncertain about your topic or ability to research it, schedule a one-on-one consultation with a reference librarian. During a consultation, the librarian can give you more time and attention than you would normally receive at the reference desk.

Finally, while librarians can help you find reliable information about your topic, you should not expect them to do your research for you. They will show you the types of sources that are available and assist you in using the library’s **databases** and catalog to locate items in the building as well as electronic sources, and even explain

which sources are more authoritative than others, but you will have to gather the sources for yourself and read them to determine what you will use in your project.

## Create a Research Log

Nothing is more disheartening than when you find yourself at 1:00 a.m. asking, “Haven’t I already read this?” To avoid this heartbreaking scenario, make a **research log** to keep track of what you’ve located and read thus far. Keeping a research log can be as simple as writing what you have located and read so far into a notebook. You can also make a digital log using your laptop or even your phone if you have Word processing software on it.

Pro tip: to make sure that you can access digital information even if your laptop or phone gets stolen or crashes, upload it to a cloud where you can access the information on any device. Anyone with a Gmail account has access to Google Drive, where you can upload and store multiple files for free.

## Research Log Best Practices

Put the full bibliographic citation of the source into your log so that you have all of the necessary information to retrieve the source if you didn’t download it or find the hard copy of whatever you checked out of the library.

Once you have read the source, or skimmed it, write a brief **summary** of the source, focusing on anything important to your research project.

## 6.2 What Is Research?



**Research** is a method that writers and speakers use to gain knowledge about a topic. (Moxley, 2022).

There are two types of research: primary and secondary. **Primary research** is any research that you conduct yourself such as surveys, interviews, observations, and ethnographies. **Secondary research** is research that has already been compiled and formatted by someone else.

### Primary Research

#### Surveys

Surveys are collections of facts, figures, or opinions gathered from participants and used to indicate how everyone within a target group may respond. For example, if you were running for public office, you might want to campaign on issues that are important to your potential constituents. To learn more about their concerns, you could create a survey and distribute it to all voters in the area and use the feedback to determine the focus of your campaign. Or if you were a member of student government and wanted to give the university some feedback about the problems that students face when trying to park on campus, you might conduct a survey of the student body to generate detailed information about the type and severity of these problems.

But before you create a survey, you should ask yourself four basic questions (Wrench et al., 2008). First, “Do you know what you want to ask?” Surveys, by their very nature, are concrete—once you’ve handed it to one person, you need to hand out the same form to every person to be able to compare results. If you’re not sure what questions need to be asked, then a survey is not appropriate. Second, “Do you really need to collect data?” Often you can find information in textbooks, scholarly articles, magazines, and other places. If the information already exists, then why are you duplicating the information? Third, “Do your participants know the information you want to find out?” One of the biggest mistakes novice survey researchers make is

to ask questions that their participants can't or won't answer. Asking a young child for her or his parents' gross income doesn't make sense, but then neither does asking an adult how many times they've been to see a physician in the past ten years. Fourth, "Will your participants tell you?" If the information could be potentially damaging, people are more likely to either lie on a survey or leave the question blank.

If you decide a survey is the best way to gather this information, you will have to determine how you will conduct that survey. The most expensive method of conducting a survey is to send it through the mail (even if you don't include a postage-paid envelope to make it easier for recipients to return their responses). Putting your survey online using platforms such as SurveyMonkey is more affordable. However, both methods of surveying have the same drawback—getting people to actually fill out the survey. Conducting your survey face-to-face generally results in a higher number of completed surveys, although this method is more time consuming than surveying via the mail or online.

Finally, if you are attempting to gather data about a large group of people, you might wish to sample just a small percentage of them in order to save time. For example, maybe you want to find out how people in your community feel about a new swimming pool. The whole community may contain one thousand families, but it would be impractical to try to survey all those families, so you decide to survey two hundred families instead. In this case, you will also have to determine whether or not your **sample is representative** of the whole. The number may be large enough (as opposed to surveying, say, twenty families), but if the two hundred families you survey only represent the rich part of town, then your sample (the two hundred families) is not generalizable to the entire population (one thousand families).

## Interviews

An interview is a conversation where the interviewer asks a series of questions to one or more respondents to learn facts, figures, or opinions. As with a survey, an interviewer generally has a list of prepared questions to ask. However, unlike a survey, an interview allows for follow-up questions that can aid in understanding why a respondent gave a certain answer. Sometimes interviews are conducted on a one-on-one basis, but other times interviews are conducted with a larger group, which is commonly referred to as a focus group.

One-on-one interviews enable an interviewer to receive information about a given topic with little or no interference from others. Focus groups are good for eliciting information, but they are also good for seeing how groups of people interact and perceive topics. Often information that is elicited in a one-on-one interview is different from the information gained from a group of people interacting.

If you're preparing for a speech on implementing project management skills for student organizations, you may want to interview a handful of student organization leaders for their input. You may also want to get a group of students who have led successful projects for their student organizations and see what they did right. You could also get a group of students who have had bad project outcomes and try to understand what went wrong. Ultimately, you could use all this information not only to help you understand student organizations' project management needs, but to provide support for the recommendations you make during your speech.

## Secondary Research

Secondary research is reported by someone not involved in conducting the actual research. Most of what we consider “research” falls into the category of secondary research. If you’ve ever written a paper for one of your classes and had to cite sources, then you’ve conducted secondary research. Or if you read an academic article about an experiment that a group of researchers conducted and then tell your audience about that study, you are delivering information secondhand to your audience. You as the speaker did not conduct the study, so you are reporting what someone else has written.

### Ethical Use of Secondary Sources

One place where secondary research can get people into trouble is when they attempt to use someone else’s secondary research. For example, in a book titled *Unleashing the Power of PR: A Contrarian’s Guide to Marketing and Communication*, Mark Weiner cites research conducted by the investment firm Veronis Suhler Stevenson Partners (Weiner, 2006). If you read Weiner’s book and wanted to make a claim based on Veronis Suhler Stevenson Partners’ research, you might be tempted to just leave out Weiner’s book and instead cite the Veronis Suhler Stevenson Partners’ research instead. While this may be easier, it’s not exactly ethical. Mark Weiner spent time conducting research and locating primary research; when you steal one of his sources, it’s like you’re stealing part of the work he’s done. Your secondary research should still be your research, and if you haven’t laid eyes on the original study, then you shouldn’t give your audience the impression that you have. An exception to this rule is if you are citing a translation of something originally written in a foreign language—and in that case, you still need to mention that you’re using a translation and not the original.

Also, be aware that published sources sometimes make mistakes when citing information, so you could mischaracterize Veronis Suhler Stevenson Partners’ research because you are depending on Weiner’s interpretation of it. Think of it like the old game of “Telephone,” in which you tell one person a phrase, that person turns to the next person and repeats the phrase, and by the time thirty people have completed the process, the final phrase doesn’t remotely resemble the original. When people pass information along without verifying it themselves, there is always an increased likelihood of error.

## 6.3 Developing a Research Strategy



In the previous section we discussed what research was and the difference between primary and secondary research. In this section, we are going to explore how to develop a research strategy. Think of a research strategy as your personal map. The end destination is the actual speech, and along the way, there are various steps you need to complete to reach your destination: the speech. From the day you receive your speech assignment, the more clearly you map out the steps you need to take leading up to the date when you will give the speech, the easier your speech development process will be. In the rest of this section, we are going to discuss time management, determining your research needs, finding your sources, and evaluating your sources.

### Allotting Time

First and foremost, when starting a new project, no matter how big or small, it is important to seriously consider how much time that project is going to take. In most public speaking courses, you may have two or three weeks between speeches in a semester course or one to two weeks in a quarter course. But from the moment your instructor gives you the assigned speech, the proverbial clock is ticking, and with each passing day, you are losing precious time in your speech preparation process. As a college student, you probably have many things vying for your time in life: school, family, jobs, friends, etc. That's why it's important to really



think through how much time it's going to take you to complete your preparation in terms of both research and speech preparation as well as begin your assignment the day you receive it.

## Research Time

Researching your speech will take approximately a third of your preparation time whether you are conducting primary research or relying on secondary sources. To complicate matters, research is never just a one-and-done process. As you develop your speech, you will realize that you want to address a question or issue that didn't occur to you during your first round of research, or that you're missing a key piece of information to support one of your points. Therefore, always allow extra time in your schedule for targeted research. Also take into account the time necessary to meet with a research librarian (which you should definitely do). Set up an appointment with a research librarian well ahead of the time that you think you will have your questions organized or be ready to discuss your topic. Remember that librarians have schedules as well, and you are less likely to get an appointment if you wait until the last minute to put in your request.

## Determining Your Needs

Once you have a general idea of your assignment and topic, you can start to ask yourself a series of simple questions:

- What do I know about my topic?
- Do I have any clear gaps in my knowledge of my topic?
- Do I need to conduct primary research for my speech?
- What type of secondary research do I need?
- Do I need research related to facts, theories, or applications?

The clearer you are about the type of research you need at the onset of the research process, the easier it will be to locate specific information.

## Start with Background Information

It's not unusual for students to try to jump right into the meat of a topic, only to find out that there is a lot of technical language they just don't understand. For this reason, you may want to start your research with popular sources written for the general public. Generally, these lower-level sources are great for background information on a topic and are helpful when trying to learn the basic vocabulary of a subject area. You will learn more about popular sources in the "Finding Reliable Sources of Information" segment.

## Finding Reliable Sources of Information

Once you have a general idea about the basic needs you have for your research, it's time to start tracking down your secondary sources. Thankfully, we live in a world that is swimming with information. Back in the decades when the authors of this textbook first started researching, we all had to go to a library and search through a physical card catalog to find books. If you wanted to research a topic in magazine or journal articles, you had to look up key terms in a giant book, printed annually, known as an index of periodicals. Researchers could literally spend hours in the library and find just one or two sources that were applicable to their topic.

Today information is quite literally at our fingertips. In fact, we have the opposite problem from a couple of decades ago—we have too much information at our fingertips. As a result, we now must be more skeptical about our sources of information.

In this section we'll discuss how to find reliable information in both popular and scholarly (or peer-reviewed) sources.

### Popular Information Sources

**Popular (or non-academic) information sources** are written so that they can be understood by the general public. Most popular sources are written at a sixth- to eighth-grade reading level, so that they can be read by someone without a high school diploma. However, the information contained in these sources is often quite limited because it must be conveyed in such simple terms for its target audience.

### Books

A book is a full-length manuscript consisting of chapters. Books can be written by single or multiple authors, as well as be edited collections of essays by different authors. They are available as either hard or digital copy, and some libraries have both types in their collections.

If you use your library's databases to find a book, you have access to the books of other libraries as well via interlibrary loan. An **interlibrary loan** is a process where librarians are able to search other libraries to locate the book a researcher is trying to find. If another library has that book, then the library asks to borrow it for a short period of time. Depending on how easy a book is to find, your library could receive it in a couple of days or a couple of weeks. Keep in mind that interlibrary loans take time, so do not expect to get a book at the last minute. The more lead time you provide a librarian to find a book you are looking for, the greater the likelihood that the book will be sent through the mail to your library on time.

Furthermore, in today's world, we have one of the greatest online card catalogs ever created—and it wasn't created for libraries at all! Retail bookseller sites like Amazon.com can be a great source for finding books that may be applicable to your topic, and the best part is, you don't actually need to purchase the book because your library may actually own a copy of a book or be able to request it for you via interlibrary loan. If you find

a book that you think may be appropriate, plug that book's title into your school's electronic library catalog. If your library owns the book, you can go to the library and pick it up today.

Finally, some books are partially or entirely available for free via the world wide web as digitized content via on-line libraries. Some online libraries we recommend are Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org>), Google Books (<http://books.google.com>), Read Print (<http://www.readprint.com>), Open Library (<http://openlibrary.org>), and Get Free e-Books (<http://www.getfreebooks.com>). This is a short list of just a handful of the libraries that are now offering free e-content.

## General-Interest Periodicals

**General-interest periodicals** are magazines and newsletters published regularly. Some popular magazines in this category include *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and *Smithsonian*. These magazines are considered “general interest” because most people in the United States could pick up a copy of these magazines and find them interesting and topical.

## Special-Interest Periodicals

**Special-interest periodicals** are magazines and newsletters that are published for a narrower audience. Some more widely known special-interest periodicals are *Sports Illustrated*, *Bloomberg's Business Week*, *GQ*, *Vogue*, *Popular Science*, *National Geographic*, *The Economist*, and *Scientific American*. But for every major magazine, there are a great many other lesser-known magazines, like *American Coin Op Magazine*, *Varmint Hunter*, *Fangoria*, *Shark Diver Magazine*, *Pet Product News International*, and *Water Garden News*, to name just a few.

## Newspapers, Blogs, and Newsgathering Agencies

Newspapers and blogs are other major sources of popular information. A few blogs (e.g., *The Huffington Post*, *Talkingpoints Memo*, *The Daily Beast*, *Salon*) function similarly to traditional newspapers. Furthermore, in the past few years we've lost many traditional newspapers around the United States; cities that used to have four or five daily papers may now only have one or two.

Major newspapers in the United States include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Houston Chronicle*, and *USA Today*, and major international English-language newspapers include *The Guardian* [London], *The Independent* [London], and *The Irish Times*. Most colleges and universities subscribe to a number of these newspapers in paper form or have access to them electronically. Furthermore, LexisNexis, a database many colleges and universities subscribe to, has access to full-text newspaper articles from these newspapers and many more around the world.

In addition to traditional newspapers, blogs are becoming a mainstay of information in today's society. In fact, since the dawn of the twenty-first century, many major news stories have been broken by professional

bloggers rather than traditional newspaper reporters (Ochman, 2007). Although anyone can create a blog, there are many reputable blog sites that are run by professional journalists. As such, blogs can be a great source of information. However, as with all information on the Internet, you often have to wade through a lot of junk to find useful, accurate information.

Finally, news-gathering organizations can also be reliable sources of popular information. News-gathering organizations may or may not be associated with a publication or network. For example, AP (Associated Press) and Reuters are wire services that sell content to newspapers and television stations worldwide from their network of reporters. Other reliable newsgathering sources include BBC News (United Kingdom), CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) News, PBS (Public Broadcasting System—United States), and Al Jazeera World News (analysis from the Middle East and worldwide).

## Encyclopedias

**Encyclopedias** provide short, very general information about a topic and are available in both print and electronic formats, and their content can range from eclectic and general (e.g., *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Wikipedia*) to the very specific (e.g., *Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture*, *The Encyclopedia of the Zombie: The Walking Dead in Popular Culture* and *Myth, Listen to Punk Rock! Exploring a Musical Genre*). It is important to keep in mind that general encyclopedias are designed to give only brief, fairly superficial summaries of a topic area. Thus, they may be useful for finding out what something is if it is referenced in another source, but they are generally not a useful source for your actual speech. In fact, many instructors do not allow students to use encyclopedias as sources for their speeches for this very reason. More specialized encyclopedias, however, often provide more detailed summaries of topics and include references.

One of the most popular online encyclopedic sources is *Wikipedia*. Like other encyclopedias, it can be useful for finding out basic information (e.g., what baseball teams did Catfish Hunter play for?) but will not give you the depth of information you need for a speech. Also keep in mind that *Wikipedia*, unlike the general and specialized encyclopedias available through your library, can be edited by anyone and therefore often contains content errors and biased information. If you are a fan of *The Colbert Report*, you probably know that host Stephen Colbert has, on several occasions, asked viewers to change *Wikipedia* content to reflect his views of the world. This is just one example of why one should always be careful of information on the web, but this advice is even more important when considering group-edited sites such as *Wikipedia*.

## Websites

Websites are the last major source of nonacademic information. Unfortunately, you can spend hours and hours searching for information and never quite find what you're looking for if you don't devise an Internet search strategy. Try Googling your topic or key terms and see what the search engine suggests. Sometimes Google can suggest a more specific focus for your search. Next, if you find a web page with what looks like useful information, learn about the site. Go to its "about" section (and be suspicious of websites without an "about"

section), or even try doing a separate Google search about the website and/or its author to learn more. Finally, don't be misled by domain name endings. Just because a site ends in a .org doesn't mean that the site was made by a legitimate organization because anyone can purchase these domain name endings. Sites ending in .gov or .edu, on the other hand, are reliable, since only U.S.-based government sector agencies and organizations (including state and local governments) and educational institutions are eligible to purchase them.

## Scholarly (or Peer-Reviewed) Sources

Scholarly or **peer-reviewed sources** are the gold standard of reliable information, so many professors will require that you use some of these types of sources in your assignments. **Scholarly sources** are written by experts in their field, usually professors in a specific discipline. Scholarly sources contain the original research of these experts, which has been vetted by their peers, other experts in their field, who ensure that the research is based on the most recent and reliable scholarship in that discipline. Scholarly or peer-reviewed sources are usually found in academic **journals** and books published by university presses as well as some other publishers.

Below are some types of scholarly sources. To search for scholarly sources in your library's catalog or databases, set a limiter that will confine your results to peer-reviewed sources, including academic journals.

### Scholarly Books

Scholarly books are primarily written by academics for other academics who use this information to conduct their own research. Scholarly books are works of non-fiction that are published by university presses (Louisiana State University Press, Harvard University Press, University Press of Mississippi, for example) as well as a handful of other major publishers who specialize in scholarly books.

Some of these non-university presses specializing in academic books include:

SAGE Press

Routledge

Jossey-Bass

Pfeiffer

The American Psychological Association

The National Communication Association

Palgrave MacMillan

Scarecrow Press

McFarland

Polity Press

Alfred A. Knopf

Wiley Blackwell

Basic Books

Clarendon Press

John Wiley and Sons

Harper and Row

Pergamon Press

Random House

Springer

However, these books can be useful for non-academics as well because they contain original research and are thoroughly reviewed by other experts in the field prior to publication. To find information of interest in a scholarly book, try reading its table of contents to determine if a specific chapter focuses on your topic, or looking through the index in back for keywords related to your topic.

## Scholarly Articles

Shorter scholarly work is published as articles in academic journals. Because every academic subfield has its own journals, you should never have a problem finding the best and most recent research on a topic.

## Dissertations and Theses

Dissertations and theses are manuscripts written by PhD and master's degree candidates. These manuscripts are also peer-reviewed sources because they must be approved by a panel of soon-to-be peers in the author's field in order for them to graduate.

# Evaluating Resources

Once you've found resources relevant to your topic, use the **CRAAP method** to evaluate them ("CRAAP Method"). CRAAP stands for "currency," "relevance," "authority," "accuracy," and "purpose," or the five ways that you should evaluate each source to determine if it represents the best information available at the time. The CRAAP method was developed at Meriam Library at California State University.

## Currency

When was the information created? Has the material been updated or revised? How old is too old? The answers to these questions depend on how quickly information changes in the field.

Consider the importance of currency for the following sources:

- An article on cancer treatments written in 1970
- A book about coronaviruses written in 1990

- An article about gender socialization written in 2000
- A history of the United States written in 1960.

Would this information still be good today, or might so many things have changed that the information needs to be updated?

## Relevance

Is the information related to your research, and does it support your assignment? Did you look at only one source? Who is this written for?

How relevant would the following sources be for your paper?

- An article from a popular magazine or small local newspaper
- The first 5 results in a Google search
- The first 5 results in Discovery or one of the library's other databases

## Authority

Who or what created and published the information? What credentials, affiliations, or experiences does the author have that are relevant to the topic? Can you easily find information about the author? If the information came from a website, does the domain ending give us any clues about its authority?

Pro tip: website domains can help you evaluate the objectivity and quality of the information you're looking at. Only U. S. governmental agencies or educational institutions are able to purchase domain names ending in .gov or .edu. Other website domains like .com, .org, and .net can be purchased by anyone. Don't assume that a .org is more trustworthy than a .com.

Are the following authoritative sources?

- a tweet about a new variant of Covid by the CDC (Center for Disease Control)
- a peer-reviewed article on the efficacy of Covid vaccinations written by a team of scientists
- a guest article written by a politician about the efficacy of Covid vaccinations

## Accuracy

Is this information factual? Has it been peer-reviewed? Is the information supported by evidence? Does the author credit their sources? Are there grammatical or spelling errors? Does the information seem to be wildly different from information you have read from other sources that you know are credible?

What might these elements say about whether or not a source is accurate:

- numerous citations found throughout
- misuse of “they’re”
- emotional language and tone
- information that can’t be verified anywhere else

## Purpose

Why was this information created? Was the information created to inform, teach, sell, entertain, or persuade you? Is the purpose made clear?

Remember: information can have political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal bias. Is it fact, opinion, or propaganda?

What do you think the purpose of the following could be?

- an article written by Apple about the picture quality of the newest iPhone
- an article published by the NRA on gun control
- a study funded by Coca-Cola on the connection between sugar and depression

## Reading Scholarly Sources

Because scholarly sources are written for experts in the author’s particular field, they use technical jargon to communicate precisely. Therefore, these sources can be more challenging to read than popular sources. Too, much research is conducted by quantitative researchers who rely on statistics to examine phenomena. As a result, reading scholarly sources takes more time and can be frustrating if you don’t have the basic knowledge to understand a complex technical field.

However, with a little patience, you too can read scholarly work if you follow the steps below.

## Learn to Skim

If you sit down and try to completely read every article or book you find, it will take you a very long time to get through all the information. Instead, first skim the source.

Read the introduction (and abstract if you are using an article from an academic journal). Introductions and abstracts will give you a good idea of the source’s primary findings. If the first few paragraphs or the abstract don’t sound like they’re applicable to your topic, then the source is probably of no use to you. Be sure to make an entry in your research log about this discovery to prevent you from having to skim this source all over again.

If your source is a book, also look at the chapter **headings** in the table of contents. Chapter titles are more descriptive than fanciful, so they will give you a good idea about what is included in each. Reading the chapter



titles could lead you directly to the part of the book that contains the information most relevant to your project.

Next, skim through the subheadings in the article or book chapter. **Subheadings** break down the articles and chapters by major ideas. Subheadings are usually in bold or italic type. The subheadings can lead you directly to the part of the article or book chapter most relevant to your research. If you read the headings and subheadings and nothing jumps out as relevant, that's another indication that there may not be anything useful in that source.

If a subheading seems relevant to your topic, read the first sentence of every paragraph in that segment. The first sentence of each paragraph is the **topic sentence**, which is basically a paragraph's thesis statement: well-written topic sentences tell the reader what the entire paragraph is about. Skimming the topic sentences can give you a better overview of the segment's contents as well as bring you an exact place in the segment where you will find the information that you are looking for.

Also look for tables, charts, graphs, and figures, elements of some articles and books that put data into a format that allows the reader to understand how the information compares to other datasets.

Write down any words or phrases that you do not understand and Google them later. This is how you build your vocabulary so that you will have less trouble reading subsequent scholarly sources on the topic.

Lastly, take good notes while you're skimming. Whenever you find relevant information in a source, note the location and type of that information in your research log so that you can return to the source later.

## Read Bibliographies/Reference Pages

After you've finished reading scholarly (and even some non-scholarly sources), look at the bibliography or reference page at the end to see who that author cited. Often the sources cited by others can lead you to even better sources than the ones you found initially.

## Ask for Help

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Reference librarians are there to help you locate resources.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=880#h5p-12>

## 6.4 Citing Sources



Most public speaking teachers will require you to turn in either a bibliography or a reference page with your speeches. In this section, we're going to explore how to properly cite your sources for a Modern Language Association (MLA) list of works cited or an American Psychological Association (APA) reference list. We're also going to discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it.

### Why Citing Is Important

Citing enables readers to see where you found information used within a speech, article, or book. Citing your sources is one way that you demonstrate your credibility and integrity to your audience. When you cite your sources, you are showing your audience that your ideas are based on the most up-to-date ideas and best practices within your subject area as well as differentiating between your own insights and the intellectual property of others. Failing to cite your information properly, or at all, is considered plagiarism, which is representing someone's words or ideas as your own. Because plagiarism is a type of academic dishonesty, educational institutions have strict prohibitions against it.

### APA versus MLA Source Citations

While there are numerous citation styles to choose from, the two most common style choices for public speaking are APA (American Psychological Association) and MLA (Modern Language Association). Scholars in the social sciences (e.g., psychology, human communication, business) tend to use **APA style**, while scholars

in the humanities (e.g., English, philosophy, rhetoric) are more likely to use **MLA style**. The two styles are quite different from each other, so learning them does take time. Your instructor will tell you which citation style to use for citing your sources.

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab has a useful chart that explains the differences between APA and MLA Citation Style for different types of sources: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/using\\_research/documents/20191212CitationChart.pdf](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/documents/20191212CitationChart.pdf).

## Citing Sources in a Speech

In this section, we'll discuss how to incorporate and cite outside sources in a speech. Citing sources within a speech is a three-step process: setting up the citation, incorporating the cited information, and explaining the citation. All three parts of this process are necessary to signal to your audience that you are going to support your claim with ideas or words that are not your own as well as explain how those ideas relate to your claim. Putting source material into your speech without framing it is "**drive-by quoting**," a practice that disorients your audience by not giving them everything they need to understand how the source is relevant to your own claims.

### Setting up the Citation

First, you want to set up your audience for the citation. The setup is one or two sentences that put your source into context and signal to the audience that you are about to transition from your own ideas to someone else's.

For example:

Workplace bullying is becoming an increasing problem in the United States, and employers are reluctant to take steps to address this problem.

This statement introduces the basic topic and provides a context for the outside material you will use to support this observation.

### Incorporating the Cited Information

The set up is followed by the cited information, which you can directly quote, paraphrase, or summarize. Directly quoting a source is to take a passage from it verbatim and enclose it in quotation marks to indicate that these words are not your own. Paraphrasing and summarizing are ways of restating the source's ideas in your own words. A **paraphrase** is approximately the same length as the original passage, while a summary is a shorter version of the original passage. Because paraphrases and summaries are written in your own words, you do not enclose them in quotations.

Important! While paraphrases and summaries of sources are written in your own words, you must still cite the original author because you are using someone else's ideas.

**Direct Quotation:** Workplace bullying is becoming an increasing problem in the United States, and employers are reluctant to take steps to address this problem. In their 2009 report “Bullying: Getting Away with It,” the Workplace Bullying Institute found that “doing nothing to the bully (ensuring impunity) was the most common employer tactic (54%).”

**Paraphrase:** Workplace bullying is becoming an increasing problem in the United States, and employers are reluctant to take steps to address this problem. According to a 2009 study by the Workplace Bullying Institute entitled “Bullying: Getting Away with It,” 54 percent of employers took no action against bullies after workers reported a problem.

In both of these cases, the source information is first introduced by citing the author—in this case, the Workplace Bullying Institute. We then provided the title of the study. You could also provide the name of the article, book, podcast, movie, or other source.

Let’s look at another example of direct quotations and paraphrases, this time using a person, rather than an institution, as the author.

**Direct Quotation:** In her book *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*, Mary George, senior reference librarian at Princeton University’s library, defines insight as something that “occurs at an unpredictable point in the research process and leads to the formulation of a thesis statement and argument. Also called an ‘Aha’ moment or focus.”

**Paraphrase:** In her book *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*, Mary George, senior reference librarian at Princeton University’s library, tells us that insight is likely to come unexpectedly during the research process; it will be an “aha!” moment when we suddenly have a clear vision of the point we want to make.

Notice that the same basic pattern for citing sources was followed in both cases.

## Explaining the Citation

One of the biggest mistakes of novice public speakers (and research writers) is incorporating cited material without explaining how it supports their claim, or “hit and run” quoting. The cited material does not speak for itself. It’s your job as writer and speaker to explain how the quotation or paraphrase supports your claim. Don’t force your audience to draw their own conclusions: help them make the connections you want them to make.

In the examples below, the material that explains the significance of the paraphrase or quote is in **bold type**.

**Bullying Example Direct Quote:** Workplace bullying is becoming an increasing problem in the United States, and employers are reluctant to take steps to address this problem. In their 2009 report “Bullying: Getting Away with It,” the Workplace Bullying Institute found that “doing nothing to the bully (ensuring impunity) was the most common employer tactic (54%).” **Clearly, organizations need to be held accountable for investigating bullying allegations. If organizations will not voluntarily improve their handling of**

**this problem, the legal system may be required to step in and enforce sanctions for bullying, much as it has done with sexual harassment.**

*Bullying Example Paraphrase:* Workplace bullying is becoming an increasing problem in the United States, and employers are reluctant to take steps to address this problem. According to a 2009 study by the Workplace Bullying Institute entitled “Bullying: Getting Away with It,” 54 percent of employers took no action against bullies after workers reported a problem. **Clearly, organizations need to be held accountable for investigating bullying allegations. If organizations will not voluntarily improve their handling of this problem, the legal system may be required to step in and enforce sanctions for bullying, much as it has done with sexual harassment.**

*Aha! Example Direct Quote:* In her book *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*, Mary George, senior reference librarian at Princeton University’s library, defines insight as something that “occurs at an unpredictable point in the research process and leads to the formulation of a thesis statement and argument. Also called an ‘Aha’ moment or focus.” **As many of us know, reaching that “aha!” moment does not always come quickly, but there are definitely some strategies one can take to help speed up this process.**

*Aha! Example Paraphrase:* In her book *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*, Mary George, senior reference librarian at Princeton University’s library, tells us that insight is likely to come unexpectedly during the research process; it will be an “aha!” moment when we suddenly have a clear vision of the point we want to make. **As many of us know, reaching that “aha!” moment does not always come quickly, but there are definitely some strategies one can take to help speed up this process.**

Notice how in both of our explanations we took the source’s information and then added to the information to direct it for our specific purpose. In the bullying example, we then propose that businesses should either adopt workplace bullying guidelines or face legal intervention. In the “aha!” example, we turn the quotation into a section on helping people find their thesis or topic. In both cases, we were able to use the information to support our claims.

## Using Sources Ethically

The last section of this chapter is about using sources in an ethical manner. Whether you are using primary or secondary research, there are five basic ethical issues you need to consider.

### Strategies to Avoid Plagiarism

1. First, and foremost, if the idea isn’t yours, you need to cite where the information came from during your speech. Having the citation listed on a bibliography or reference page is only half of the correct citation. You must provide correct citations for all your sources within the speech as well.
2. Do your own work and use your own words. One of the goals of a public speaking class is to develop

skills that you'll use in the world outside academia. When you are in the workplace and the "real world," you'll be expected to think for yourself, so you might as well start learning this skill now.

3. Allow yourself enough time to research the assignment so that you will have enough time to cite your sources. One of the most commonly cited excuses students give for plagiarism is that they didn't have enough time to do the research. In this chapter, we've stressed the necessity of giving yourself plenty of time. The more complete your research strategy is from the very beginning, the more successful your research endeavors will be in the long run. Remember, not having adequate time to prepare is no excuse for plagiarism.
4. Keep track of your sources by taking careful notes while you do your research. A common mistake that people can make is that they forget where information came from when they start creating the speech itself. Chances are you're going to look at dozens of sources when preparing your speech, and it is very easy to suddenly find yourself believing that a piece of information is "common knowledge" and not citing that information within a speech. This problem can be avoided by taking careful notes as you conduct your research, either with a pen and notebook or a Word document or spreadsheet. Write down the source of the information along with any key ideas or direct quotes that you might want to use. When you keep track of your sources, you're less likely to inadvertently lose sources and not cite them correctly.
5. Make sure to clearly differentiate your voice in the speech from the voice of specific authors of the sources you quote. The easiest way to do this is to set up a direct quotation or a paraphrase that includes the author and title of the source. Remember, audience members cannot see where the quotation marks are located within your speech text, so you need to clearly articulate with words and vocal tone when you are using someone else's ideas within your speech.
6. Learn how to cite sources correctly both in the body of your paper and in your List of Works Cited (Reference Page). Most public speaking teachers will require that you turn in either a bibliography or reference page on the day you deliver a speech. Many students make the mistake of thinking that the bibliography or reference page is all they need to cite information, and then they don't cite any of the material within the speech itself. A bibliography or reference page enables a reader or listener to find those sources after the fact, but you must also correctly cite those sources within the speech itself; otherwise, you are plagiarizing.
7. Quote accurately and sparingly. Paraphrase and summarize whenever possible. A public speech should be based on factual information and references, but it shouldn't be a string of direct quotations stitched together. Experts recommend that no more than 10 percent of a paper or speech be direct quotations (Menager-Beeley & Paulos, 2009). When selecting direct quotations, always ask yourself if the material could be paraphrased in a manner that would make it clearer for your audience. If the author wrote a sentence in a way that is just perfect, and you don't want to tamper with it, then by all means directly quote the sentence. But if you're just quoting because it's easier than putting the ideas into your own words, this is not a legitimate reason for including direct quotations.

8. Paraphrase carefully. Modifying an author's words in this way is not simply a matter of replacing some of the words with synonyms. Instead, as Howard and Taggart explain in *Research Matters*, “paraphrasing force[s] you to understand your sources and to capture their meaning accurately in original words and sentences” (Howard & Taggart, 2010). Incorrect paraphrasing is one of the most common forms of inadvertent plagiarism by students. First and foremost, paraphrasing is putting the author's argument, intent, or ideas into your own words.
9. Do not patchwrite (patchspeak). Menager-Beeley and Paulos define patchwriting as “mixing several references together and arranging paraphrases and quotations to constitute much of the paper. In essence, the student has assembled others' work with a bit of embroidery here and there but with little original thinking or expression” (Menager-Beeley & Paulos, 2009). Just as students can patchwrite, they can also engage in patchspeaking. In patchspeaking, students rely completely on taking quotations and paraphrases and weaving them together in a manner that is devoid of the student's original thinking.
10. Summarize, don't auto-summarize. Some students have learned that most word-processing programs have an auto-summary function. The auto-summary function will take a ten-page document and summarize the information into a short paragraph. When someone uses the auto-summary function, the words that remain in the summary are still those of the original author, so this is not an ethical form of paraphrasing. Also, auto summaries generated by word processing programs aren't always accurate summaries. Writing an accurate summary is a complex task best performed by a human brain.
11. Do not represent someone else's work as your own by reworking another student's speech or buying or downloading one from a speech mill. Presenting someone else's work as your own is also plagiarism as well as academic fraud. Penalties for academic fraud can be as severe as suspension or expulsion from your institution.

## Don't Mislead Your Audience

If you know a source is clearly biased, and you don't spell this out for your audience, then you are purposefully trying to mislead or manipulate your audience. Instead, if the information may be biased, tell your audience that the information may be biased and allow your audience to decide whether to accept or disregard the information.

## Give Author Credentials

You should always provide the author's credentials. In a world where anyone can say anything and have it published on the Internet or even publish it in a book, we have to be skeptical of the information we see and hear. For this reason, it's very important to provide your audience with background about the credentials of the authors you cite.



## Use Primary Research Ethically

Lastly, if you are using primary research within your speech, you need to use it ethically as well. For example, if you tell your survey participants that the research is anonymous or confidential, then you need to make sure that you maintain their anonymity or confidentiality when you present those results. Furthermore, you also need to be respectful if someone says something is “off the record” during an interview. We must always maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants during primary research, unless we have their express permission to reveal their names or other identifying information.

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. See also American Psychological Association. (2010). *Concise rules of APA Style: The official pocket style guide from the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- “CRAAP Method.” LSU Libraries. 16 February 2022. <https://guides.lib.lsu.edu/ENG1001/CRAAP>.
- George, M. W. (2008). *The elements of library research: What every student needs to know*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 183.
- Howard, R. M., & Taggart, A. R. (2010). *Research matters*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, p. 131.
- Menager-Beeley, R., & Paulos, L. (2009). *Understanding plagiarism: A student guide to writing your own work*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, pp. 5–8.
- Modern Language Association. (2009). *MLA handbook for writers of research papers* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Modern Language Association.
- Moxley, Joseph M. “Research.” *Writing Commons*. <https://writingcommons.org/section/research/>. Retrieved 22 February 2022.
- Ochman, B. L. (2007, June 29). The top 10 news stories broken by bloggers. *TechNewsWorld*. [Web log post]. Retrieved July 14, 2011, from <http://www.mpdailyfix.com/technewsworld-the-top-10-news-stories-broken-by-bloggers>.
- Project Management Institute. (2004). *A guide to the project management body of knowledge: PMBOK® guide* (3rd ed.). Newton Square, PA: Author, p. 19.
- Weiner, M. (2006). *Unleashing the power of PR: A contrarian’s guide to marketing and communication*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass and the International Association of Business Communicators.
- Workplace Bullying Institute. (2009). *Bullying: Getting away with it WBI Labor Day Study—September, 2009*. Retrieved July 14, 2011, from <http://www.workplacebullying.org/res/WBI2009-B-Survey.html>.
- Wood, J. T. (2002). A critical response to John Gray’s Mars and Venus portrayals of men and women. *Southern Communication Journal*, 67, 201–210.



Wrench, J. S., Thomas-Maddox, C., Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (2008). *Quantitative methods for communication researchers: A hands on approach*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.



# CHAPTER 7: SUPPORTING IDEAS AND BUILDING ARGUMENTS

## Learning Objectives

- Define the term “support” and describe three reasons we use support in speeches.
- Explain four criteria used to evaluate support options.
- Describe how speakers can use statistics to support their speeches.
- Differentiate among the four types of definitions and among the four types of examples.
- Explain how narratives can be used to support informative, persuasive, and entertaining speeches.
- Differentiate between the two forms of testimony and between the two types of analogies that can be used for support.
- Explain how to distinguish between useful and unreliable forms of support.
- Describe the five ways support is used within a speech.
- Describe the purpose of a reverse outline.
- Explain why it is important to use support for every claim made within a speech.
- Evaluate the three-step process for using support within a speech.

## Key Terms

- **Analysis**
- **Argument**
- **Best Example**
- **Bias**

- **CRAAP Method**
- **Conclusion**
- **Direct Quotation**
- **Entertaining Narratives**
- **Execution**
- **Expertise**
- **Expert Testimony**
- **Eyewitness Testimony**
- **Fact**
- **Figurative Analogies**
- **Informative Narratives**
- **Lexical Definition**
- **Literal Analogies**
- **Narratives**
- **Negative Example**
- **Nonexample**
- **Numerical Support**
- **Paraphrase**
- **Persuasive Definitions**
- **Persuasive Narratives**
- **Pictographic Support**
- **Positive Example**
- **Premise**
- **Reverse Outline**
- **Setup**
- **Statistics**
- **Stipulative Definition**
- **Summary of Support**
- **Support**
- **Support-Manipulation**
- **Theoretical Definitions**
- **Vividness**

## 7.1 Crafting Supporting Ideas



Every day, all around the country, people make claims without offering any information to support them or based on statistics or factoids presented out of context. Students on your campus might claim that local policies are biased against students but may not explain why. Politicians may make claims in their speeches about “family values” without defining what those values are or throw out statistics without giving credit to where they found those numbers. Indeed, the nonpartisan websites FactCheck.org and Politifact.com are dedicated to investigating and dispelling the claims that politicians make in their speeches, and Snopes.com investigates many of these claims as well.

In this chapter, we will learn why support is essential to effective presentations, as well as how to incorporate support to build stronger arguments within a speech.

## 7.2 Using Research as Support



In public speaking, the word “**support**” refers to a range of strategies used to develop the central idea and specific purpose by providing corroborating evidence. Whether you are speaking to inform, persuade, or entertain, using support helps you create a more substantive and polished speech. We sometimes use the words “support” or “evidence” interchangeably because both are designed to help ground a speech’s specific purpose. However, “evidence” tends to be associated specifically with persuasive speeches, so we opt to use the more general term “support” for most of this chapter. In this section, we are going to explore why speakers use support.

### Why We Use Support

Speakers use support to help provide a foundation for their message. You can think of support as the legs on a table. Without the legs, the table becomes a slab of wood or glass lying on the ground; as such, it cannot fully serve the purpose of a table. In the same way, without support, a speech is nothing more than fluff. Audience members may ignore the speech’s message, dismissing it as just so much hot air. In addition to being the foundation that a speech stands on, support also helps us clarify content, increase speaker credibility, and make the speech more vivid.

## To Clarify Content

Speakers often choose a piece of support because a previous writer or speaker has phrased something in a way that evokes a clear mental picture of the point they want to make. For example, suppose you're preparing a speech about hazing in college fraternities. You may read your school's code of student conduct to find out how your campus defines hazing. You could use this definition to make sure your audience understands what hazing is and what types of behaviors your campus identifies as hazing.

## To Add Credibility

Another important reason to use support is because it adds to your credibility as a speaker. The less an audience perceives you as an expert on a given topic, the more important it is to use a range of support from authoritative sources. By doing so, you let your audience know that you've done your homework on the topic.

Inadequate support or support from questionable sources diminishes your credibility as a speaker, as does distorting the intent of a source to try to force it to support a point. For example, the famous 1798 publication by Thomas Malthus, "An Essay on the Principle of Population," has been used as support for various arguments far beyond what Malthus could have intended. Malthus's thesis was that as the human population increases at a greater rate than food production, societies will go to war over scarce food resources (Malthus, 1798). Some modern writers have suggested that, according to the Malthusian line of thinking, almost anything that leads to a food shortage could lead to nuclear war. For example, better health care leads to longer life spans, which leads to an increased need for food, leading to food shortages, which using this flawed line of reasoning, would lead to nuclear war. Clearly, this argument makes some giant leaps of logic that would be hard for an audience to accept.

For this reason, it is important to evaluate your support to ensure that it will not detract from your credibility as a speaker. Use the CRAAP method (currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose) found in Chapter 8 of this book to evaluate the quality of your sources.

## To Add Vividness

In addition to clarifying content and enhancing credibility, support helps make a speech more vivid. **Vividness** refers to a speaker's ability to present information in a striking, exciting manner. The goal of vividness is to make your speech more memorable. For example, in a speech about the importance of wearing seat belts when in a motor vehicle, a student offered the following illustration about their efficacy in preventing serious injury or death: the impact from hitting a windshield at just twenty miles per hour without a seat belt would be equivalent to falling out of the window of their second-floor classroom and landing face-first on the pavement below. Because the students hearing the speech were in that second-floor classroom several times each

week, they could easily visualize the speaker's analogy. Support helps make your speech more interesting and memorable to audience members.



---

## 7.3 Exploring Types of Support

Now that we've explained why support is important, let's examine the various types of support that speakers often use within a speech: facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimony, and analogies.

### Facts and Statistics

A **fact** is a truth that is arrived at through the scientific process. Speakers often support a point or specific purpose by citing facts that their audience may not know. A typical way to introduce a fact orally is “Did you know that...?”

Many of the facts that speakers cite are based on statistics. **Statistics** is the mathematical subfield that gathers, analyzes, and makes inferences about collected data. Data can come in a wide range of forms—the number of people who buy a certain magazine, the average number of telephone calls made in a month, the incidence of a certain disease. Though few people realize it, much of our daily lives are governed by statistics. Everything from seat-belt laws, to the food we eat, to the amount of money public schools receive, to the medications you are prescribed are based on the collection and interpretation of numerical data.

It is important to realize that a public speaking textbook cannot begin to cover statistics in depth. If you plan to do statistical research yourself or gain an understanding of the intricacies of such research, we strongly recommend taking a basic class in statistics or quantitative research methods. These courses will better prepare you to understand the various statistics you will encounter.

However, even without a background in statistics, finding useful statistical information related to your topic is quite easy. Table 7.1 “Statistics-Oriented Websites” provides a list of some websites where you can find a range of statistical information that may be useful for your speeches.

**TABLE 7.1 STATISTICS-ORIENTED WEBSITES**

<b>Website</b>	<b>URL</b>	<b>Type of Information</b>
Bureau of Labor Statistics	<a href="http://www.bls.gov/bls/other.htm">http://www.bls.gov/bls/other.htm</a>	The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides links to a range of websites for labor issues related to a vast range of countries.
Bureau of Justice Statistics	<a href="http://bjs.gov">http://bjs.gov</a>	The Bureau of Justice Statistics provides information on crime statistics in the United States.
US Census Bureau	<a href="http://www.census.gov">http://www.census.gov</a>	The US Census Bureau provides a wide range of information about people living in the United States.
National Center for Health Statistics	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/">https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/</a>	National Center for Health Statistics is a program conducted by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It provides information on a range of health issues in the United States.
Sense about Science Stats Check	<a href="https://senseaboutscienceusa.org/">https://senseaboutscienceusa.org/</a>	Sense about Science Stats Check is a nonprofit organization that helps people understand quantitative data. It also provides a range of data on its website.
Roper Center for Public Opinion	<a href="http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/">http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/</a>	Roper Center for Public Opinion provides data related to a range of issues in the United States.
Nielsen	<a href="http://www.nielsen.com">http://www.nielsen.com</a>	Nielsen provides data on consumer use of various media forms.
Gallup	<a href="http://www.gallup.com">http://www.gallup.com</a>	Gallup provides public opinion data on a range of social and political issues in the United States and around the world.
Adherents	<a href="http://www.adherents.com">http://www.adherents.com</a>	Adherents provides both domestic and international data related to religious affiliation.
Pew Research Center	<a href="http://people-press.org">http://people-press.org</a>	The Pew Research Center provides public opinion data on a range of social and political issues in the United States and around the world.

Statistics are probably the most used—and misused—form of support in any type of speaking. People like numbers. People are impressed by numbers. However, most people do not know how to correctly interpret numbers. Unfortunately, there are many speakers who do not know how to interpret them either or who intentionally manipulate them to mislead their listeners. As the saying popularized by Mark Twain goes, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics” (Twain, 1924).

To avoid misusing statistics when you speak in public, do three things. First, be honest with yourself and your audience. If you are distorting a statistic or leaving out other statistics that contradict your point, you are not living up to the level of honesty your audience is entitled to expect. Second, run a few basic calculations to see if a statistic is believable. Sometimes a source may contain a mistake—for example, a decimal point may

be in the wrong place or a verbal expression like “increased by 50 percent” may conflict with data showing an increase of 100 percent. Third, evaluate sources (even those in Table 7.1 “Statistics-Oriented Websites,” which are generally reputable) using the **CRAAP Method**.

## Definitions

Imagine that you gave a speech about the use of the presidential veto, and your audience did not know the meaning of the word “veto.” In order for your speech to be effective, you would need to define what a veto is and what it does. Making sure everyone is “on the same page” is a fundamental task of any communication. As speakers, we often need to clearly define what we are talking about to make sure that our audience understands our meaning. The goal of a definition is to help speakers communicate a word or idea in a manner that their audiences will understand. For the purposes of public speaking, there are four different types of definitions that may be used as support: lexical, persuasive, stipulative, and theoretical.

Definitions are important to provide clarity for your audience. Effective speakers strike a balance between using definitions where they are needed to increase audience understanding and leaving out definitions of terms that the audience is likely to know. For example, you may need to define what a “claw hammer” is when speaking to a group of Cub Scouts learning about basic tools, but you would appear foolish—or even condescending—if you defined it in a speech to a group of carpenters who use claw hammers every day. On the other hand, just assuming that others know the terms you are using can lead to ineffective communication as well. Medical doctors are often criticized for using technical terms while talking to their patients without taking time to define those terms. Patients may then walk away not really understanding what their health situation is or what needs to be done about it.

### Lexical Definitions

A **lexical definition** is one that specifically states how a word is used within a specific language, or in other words, a word’s dictionary definition. For example, if you go to Dictionary.com and type in the word “speech,” here is the lexical definition you will receive:

Speech  
noun

1. the faculty or power of speaking; oral communication; ability to express one’s thoughts and emotions by speech sounds and gesture:

**Losing her speech made her feel isolated from humanity**

2. the act of speaking:

**He expresses himself better in speech than in writing.**

3. something that is spoken; an utterance, remark, or declaration:

**We waited for some speech that would indicate her true feelings.**

4. a form of communication in spoken language, made by a speaker before an audience for a given purpose:

**a fiery speech.**

5. single utterance of an actor in the course of a play, motion picture, etc.

6. the form of utterance characteristic of a particular people or region; a language or dialect. (“Speech”)

Lexical definitions are useful when a word may be unfamiliar to an audience and you want to ensure that they have a basic understanding of the word. However, our ability to understand lexical definitions often hinges on our knowledge of other words that are used in the definition, so it is usually a good idea to follow a lexical definition with a clear explanation of what it means in your own words.

## Persuasive Definitions

**Persuasive definitions** are designed to motivate an audience to think in a specific manner about the word or term. Political figures are often very good at defining terms in a way that is persuasive. Frank Luntz, a linguist and political strategist, is widely regarded as one of the most effective creators of persuasive definitions (Luntz, 2007). Luntz has the ability to take terms that people don’t like and repackage them into persuasive definitions that give the original term a much more positive feel. Here are some of Luntz’s more famous persuasive definitions:

Oil drilling → energy exploration

Estate tax → death tax

School vouchers → opportunity scholarships

Eavesdropping → electronic intercepts

Global warming → climate change

Luntz has essentially defined the terms in a new way that has a clear political bent and that may make the term more acceptable or distasteful to some audiences, especially those who do not question the lexical meaning of the new term. For example, “oil drilling” may have negative connotations among citizens who are concerned about the environmental impact of drilling, whereas “energy exploration” may have much more positive connotations among the same group. Or “estate tax” might sound like something that only affects wealthy people who have estates, but “death tax” makes this levy sound intrusive because it indicates that people are being taxed for dying.

## Stipulative Definitions

A **stipulative definition** is assigned to a word or term by the person who invents it. In 1969, Laurence Peter and Raymond Hull wrote a book called *The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong*. In this book, they defined the “Peter Principle” as “In a Hierarchy Every Employee Tends to Rise to His [sic] Level of

Incompetence” (Peter & Hull, 1969). Because Peter and Hull coined the term “Peter Principle,” it was up to them to define the term as they saw fit. You cannot argue with this definition; it simply is the definition that was stipulated by the authors of the book.

## Theoretical Definitions

**Theoretical definitions** are used to describe all parts related to a particular type of idea or object. Admittedly, these definitions are frequently ambiguous and difficult to fully comprehend. For example, if you attempted to define the word “peace” in a manner that could be used to describe all aspects of peace, then you would be using a theoretical definition. These definitions are considered theoretical because the definitions attempt to create an all-encompassing theory of the word itself.

## Examples

Another often-used type of support is examples. An example is a specific situation, problem, or story designed to help illustrate a principle, method, or phenomenon. Examples are useful because they can help make an abstract idea more concrete for an audience by providing a specific case. Let’s examine four common types of examples used as support: positive, negative, nonexamples, and best examples.

### Positive Examples

A **positive example** is used to clarify or clearly illustrate a principle, method, or phenomenon. A speaker discussing crisis management could talk about how a local politician handled herself when a local newspaper reported that her husband was having an affair or give an example of a professional baseball player who immediately came clean about his steroid use. These examples would provide a positive model for how a corporation in the first instance, and an individual in the second instance, should behave in crisis management. The purpose of a positive example is to show a desirable solution, decision, or course of action.

### Negative Examples

**Negative examples**, by contrast, are used to illustrate what not to do. On the same theme of crisis management, a speaker could discuss the lack of communication from Union Carbide during the 1984 tragedy in Bhopal, India, or the many problems with how the US government responded to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The purpose of a negative example is to show an undesirable solution, decision, or course of action.

## Nonexamples

A **nonexample** is used to explain what something is not. On the subject of crisis management, you might mention a press release for a new Adobe Acrobat software upgrade as an example of corporate communication that is not crisis management. The press release nonexample helps the audience differentiate between crisis management and other forms of corporate communication.

## Best Examples

The final type of example is called the **best example** because it is held up as the “best” way someone should behave within a specific context. On the crisis management theme, a speaker could show a clip of a CEO speaking effectively during a press conference to model appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviors when dealing with a crisis. While positive examples show appropriate ways to behave, best examples illustrate the best way to behave in a specific context.

## What to Consider When Using Examples

Although examples can be very effective at helping an audience to understand abstract or unfamiliar concepts, they do have one major drawback: some audience members may dismiss them as unusual cases that do not represent what happens most of the time. For example, some opponents of wearing seat belts claim that not wearing your seat belt can save you from becoming trapped in your car if it catches on fire. Even if a speaker has a specific example of an accident where this was true, many audience members would see this example as a rare case and thus not view it as strong support.

Simply finding an example to use, then, is not enough. An effective speaker needs to consider how the audience will respond to the example and how the example fits with what else the audience knows, as discussed under the heading of accuracy earlier in this chapter.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1323#h5p-13>

## Narratives

A fourth form of support are **narratives**, or stories that help an audience understand the speaker’s message.

Narratives are like examples except narratives are generally longer and take on the form of a story with a clear arc (beginning, middle, and end). Clella Jaffe explains that narratives are a fundamental part of public speaking that can be used for support in all three general purposes of speaking: informative, persuasive, and entertaining (Jaffe, 2010). Also, people like stories. In fact, narratives are so important that communication scholar Walter Fisher believes humans are innately storytelling animals, so appealing to people through stories is a great way to support one's speech (Fisher, 1987).

However, you have an ethical responsibility as a speaker to clearly identify whether the narrative you are sharing is real or hypothetical. In 1981, *Washington Post* reporter Janet Cooke was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for her story of an eight-year-old heroin addict (Cooke, 1980). After acknowledging that her story was a fake, she lost her job and the prize was rescinded (Green, 1981). Also, if you are sharing a real story, clarify whether or not it is yours: an account of an event where you were actually present, or someone else's that you heard second hand. In 2009, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal gave a nationally televised speech where he recounted a story of his interaction with a local sheriff who was getting help for Hurricane Katrina victims. Later, it was discovered that Jindal hadn't actually been present when the sheriff was getting help for Katrina victims; he had only heard the sheriff tell the story after it happened (Finch, 2009). Jindal had misrepresented someone else's narrative as his own.

## Informative Narratives

**Informative narratives** provide information or explanations about a speaker's topic (Jaffe, 2010). Informative narratives can help audiences understand nature and natural phenomena, for example. Often the most complicated science and mathematical issues in our world can be understood through the use of story. While many people may not know all the mathematics behind gravity, most of us have grown up with the story of how Sir Isaac Newton developed the theory of gravity after he was sitting under a tree and hit on the head by a falling apple. Even if the story is not precisely accurate, it serves as a way to help people grasp the basic concept of gravity.

## Persuasive Narratives

**Persuasive narratives** are stories used to persuade people to accept or reject a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior. Religious texts are filled with persuasive narratives designed to teach followers various attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Parables or fables and fairy tales are designed to teach people basic lessons about life. For example, Aesop's fable "The Farmer and the Snake" warns people that just because they help someone in need doesn't mean the other person will respond in kind ("The Farmer and the Snake").

## Entertaining Narratives

**Entertaining narratives** are stories designed purely to delight an audience and transport them from their daily concerns. Some professional speakers make a very good career by telling their own stories of success or how they overcame life's adversities. Comedians such as Jeff Foxworthy tell stories that are ostensibly about their own lives in a manner designed to make the audience laugh. While entertaining narratives may be a lot of fun, people should use them sparingly as support for a more serious topic or for a traditional informative or persuasive speech.

## Testimony

Another form of support you may employ during a speech is testimony. When we use the word “testimony” in this text, we are specifically referring to expert opinion or direct accounts of witnesses to provide support for your speech. Notice that within this definition, we refer to both expert and eyewitness testimony.

### Expert Testimony

**Expert testimony** expresses the attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors recommended by someone who is an acknowledged expert on a topic. For example, imagine that you're going to give a speech on why physical education should be mandatory for all grades K–12 in public schools. During the course of your research, you come across The Surgeon General's Vision for a Fit and Healthy Nation (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/obesityvision/obesityvision2010.pdf>). You might decide to cite information from within the report written by US Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin about her strategies for combating the problem of childhood obesity within the United States. If so, you are using the words from Dr. Benjamin, as a noted expert on the subject, to support your speech's basic premise. Her expertise is being used to give credibility to your claims.

### Eyewitness Testimony

**Eyewitness testimony**, on the other hand, is given by someone who was present at an event. Imagine that you are giving a speech on the effects of the 2010 “Deepwater Horizon” disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Perhaps one of your friends happened to be on a flight that passed over the Gulf of Mexico and the pilot pointed out where the platform was. You could tell your listeners about your friend's testimony of what she saw as she was flying over the spill.

However, understand the limitations of eyewitness testimony as supporting evidence. Eyewitness testimony is someone's firsthand account of the event, which may not always be reliable. Always evaluate the credibility of your witness and the recency of the testimony. Consider how you received the testimony. Did you ask the



person for the testimony, or did he or she give you the information without being asked? Also, does the witness have anything to gain from his or her testimony that might make the account biased? Finally, consider how much time has passed between the event and when the eyewitness recalls what happened. Testimony given soon after the event provides immediate impressions based on the witness's subjective experience. For example, someone on the ground in Manhattan during 9/11 who saw the first plane fly into one of the World Trade Center's towers might report that a terrible accident had just taken place. Testimony given long after the event, on the other hand, might lack clear, immediate impressions and be shaped by the witness having put the event into a broader historical context. So that same witness to the first plane hitting the World Trade Center, twenty years later, might have forgotten some of the details of her experience, but would now realize that she was watching 9/11 unfold in front of her.

Overall, the more detail you can give about the witness and when the witness made his or her observation, the more useful that witness testimony will be when attempting to create a solid argument. However, never rely completely on eyewitness testimony because this form of support is not always reliable and may still be perceived as biased by a segment of your audience. Defense attorneys and prosecutors, for example, are beginning to realize that eyewitness testimony as a method of identifying suspects is faulty given the number of people behind bars in recent years who have been exonerated by DNA evidence.

## Analogies

An analogy is a figure of speech that compares two ideas or objects, showing how they are similar in some way. Analogies, for public speaking purposes, can also be based in logic. The logical notion of analogies starts with the idea that two ideas or objects are similar, and because of this similarity, the two ideas or objects must be similar in other ways as well. There are two different types of analogies that speakers can employ: figurative and literal.

### Figurative Analogies

**Figurative analogies** compare two ideas or objects from two different classes. For the purposes of understanding analogies, a “class” refers to a group that has common attributes, characteristics, qualities, or traits. For example, you can compare a new airplane to an eagle. In this case, airplanes and eagles clearly are not the same type of objects. While both may have the ability to fly, airplanes are made by humans and eagles exist in nature.

Figurative analogies are innately problematic because people often hear them and immediately dismiss them as far-fetched. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, some people compared having to abide by city and state masking requirements as like living in Nazi Germany. In fact, having to abide by state and city masking requirements is not like living through the Holocaust.

While figurative analogies may be very vivid and help a listener create a mental picture, they do not really

help a listener determine the validity of the information being presented. Furthermore, speakers often overly rely on figurative analogies when they really don't have any other solid evidence. Overall, while figurative analogies may be useful, we recommend solidifying them with other, more tangible support.

## Literal Analogies

**Literal analogies**, on the other hand, compare two objects or ideas that clearly belong to the same class. The goal of the literal analogy is to demonstrate that the two objects or ideas are similar; therefore, they should have further similarities that support your argument. For example, maybe you're giving a speech on a new fast-food brand that you think will be a great investment. You could easily compare that new fast-food brand to preexisting brands like McDonald's, Subway, or Taco Bell. If you can show that the new start-up brand functions similarly to other brands, you can use that logic to suggest that the new brand will also have the same kind of success as the existing brands.

When using literal analogies, make sure that the ideas are closely related and that the audience can see a reasonable connection between the two ideas or objects being compared. If your audience sees your new fast-food brand as very different from McDonald's or Subway, then they will not accept your analogy. You are basically asking your audience to confirm the logic of your comparison, so if they don't see the comparison as valid, it won't help to support your message.

## 7.4 Using Support and Creating Arguments

Supporting one's ideas with a range of facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimony, and analogies can make the difference between a boring speech your audience will soon forget and one that has a lasting effect on their lives.

Although the research process is designed to help you find effective support, you still need to think through how you will use the support you have accumulated. In this section, we will examine how to use support effectively in one's speech, first by examining the types of support one needs in a speech and then by seeing how support can be used to enhance one's argument.

### Understanding Arguments

You may associate the word “argument” with a situation where two people are having a loud conflict. But in the context of speech, an **argument** consists of a thesis based on supporting premises and conclusions. An arguable thesis is not a statement of fact, although it should be supported by facts as well as reliable interpretations of facts.

A **fact** is a statement that can have either a yes or no answer, while an arguable proposition can have a range of responses that include yes and no.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1326#h5p-14>

Arguments are based on claims, evidence, and warrants. A **claim** is a statement that is supported with evidence, while a **warrant** is the inference that can be drawn from the claim and evidence. Unlike the claim and evidence, the warrant is usually inferred rather than stated: the speaker depends on the audience to use the claim and evidence to draw a **conclusion** (the warrant).

**Claim:** Life without a car in Baton Rouge is difficult and dangerous.

**Evidence:** Baton Rouge lacks pedestrian-friendly infrastructure such as sidewalks in all neighborhoods and crosswalks for crossing busy streets.

**Warrant:** It's difficult and even dangerous to walk in Baton Rouge.

**Claim:** Life without a car in Baton Rouge is difficult and dangerous.

**Evidence:** The bus system is unreliable, and many bus stops aren't even covered.

**Warrant:** Because public transportation is unreliable and inconvenient, most people need to have a car to live in Baton Rouge (Purdy and Buzbee.)

In this example, the claim and evidence support the warrants “walking in Baton Rouge is difficult and even dangerous” and “people need a car to live in the city because public transportation is unreliable and inconvenient.”

However, some claims lack enough evidence for the audience to reach the implied warrant. Examine the following to determine whether or not the writer has provided enough evidence to support the warrant below each:

1. LSU should receive free tickets to all LSU home football games because we would have no football team without the university.

Warrant: Being enrolled at LSU is enough reason for students to receive this expensive commodity.

2. Baton Rouge is a dangerous place to live. According to FBI statistics, Baton Rouge had the 6th highest murder rate in the United States in 2019.

Warrant: The FBI statistics on murder rates are sufficient for determining whether or not a place is dangerous. Or FBI statistics from 2019 about the murder rate in Baton Rouge are accurate predictors of how safe someone is in this city in the present day.

3. This year the United States will likely be hit by several powerful hurricanes. A team of scientists led by Dr. Phil Klotzbach at Colorado State University says that there is about a 65% chance of above-average tropical storm activity.

Warrant: A team of scientists led by Dr. Phil Klotzbach at Colorado State University can make accurate predictions about tropical storm activity in a given year.

#1: Given the value of LSU football tickets, is the Athletic Department's dependence on the university to exist enough reason that all LSU students should receive tickets to home games? True, without the university, the Tigers would have to become an NFL franchise, and you can't have a university without students, but is this sufficient justification to give every student what amounts to over \$1,000 in free tickets every semester, or do we need more reasons for support?

#2: What is meant by “dangerous place to live”? Is one set of FBI statistics sufficient to make such a sweeping judgment about how safe Baton Rouge is? Do we need other types of statistics and facts?

#3: What are Dr. Phil Klotzbach's credentials? What does someone in Colorado know about hurricanes? How do we know that Dr. Klotzbach and his team of scientists have the expertise to make such predictions?

Creating strong arguments is a fundamental part of public speaking. Remember that your argument is only as strong as your weakest claim.

Examining your claims in this way will help determine what level of support you need for each.

## Sifting Through Your Support

When researching a topic, you're going to find a range of different types of supporting evidence. You may find examples of all six types of support: facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimony, and analogies. Sooner or later, you are going to have to make some decisions as to which pieces of support you will use and which you won't. While there is no one way to select your support, here are some helpful suggestions.

### Use a Variety of Support Types

One of the most important parts of using support is variety. Nothing will kill a speech faster than if you use the same type of support repeatedly. Also, you will need to find the “Goldilocks zone” for how much support you will need. Use as much as you need to make your point without going overboard, or the amount that’s “just right.” You might decide to begin with a couple of definitions and rely on a gripping piece of eyewitness testimony as your other major support. Or you might use a combination of facts, examples, and narratives. In another case, statistics and examples might be most effective. Audience members are likely to have different preferences for support; some may like statistics while others really find narratives compelling. By using a variety of forms of support, you are likely to appeal to a broader range of audience members and thus effectively adapt to your audience. Even if your audience members prefer a specific form of support, providing multiple types of support is important to keep them interested. To use an analogy, even people who love ice cream would get tired of it if they ate only ice cream every day for a week, so variety is important.

### Choose Appropriate Forms of Support

Depending on the type of speech you are giving, your speech's context, and your audience, different types of evidence may or may not be appropriate. While speeches using precise lexical definitions may be useful for the courtroom, they may not be useful in an after-dinner speech to entertain. At the same time, entertaining narratives may be great for a speech whose general purpose is to entertain but may decrease a speaker's credibility when attempting to persuade an audience about a serious topic.

### Check for Relevance

Another consideration about potential support is whether it is relevant. Each piece of evidence you select needs to support the specific purpose of your speech. You may find the coolest quotation, but if that quotation doesn't really help your core argument in your speech, you need to leave it out. If you use irrelevant support sources, your audience will quickly catch on and you will lose credibility.

Also, consider your audience when selecting supporting materials. If you are giving a speech to an audience of fifty-year-olds, you may be able to begin with “Think back to where you were on 9/11,” but this would be

meaningless with an audience of twenty-year-olds. Similarly, references to music download sites or the latest popular band may not be effective with audiences who are not interested in music.

## Don't Go Overboard

In addition to being relevant, supporting materials need to help you support your speech's specific purpose without interfering with your speech. You may find three different sources that support your speech's purpose in the same way. If that happens, you shouldn't include all three forms of support. Instead, pick the form of support that would be most relatable to your audience and your topic. Remember, the goal is to support your speech, not to have the support become your speech.

## Don't Manipulate Your Support

Don't manipulate your support to make it say what you want it to say in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. This practice is unethical as well as disrespectful to your audience. Below are some guidelines to make sure that you are not manipulating your sources:

- Don't overlook significant factors or individuals related to your topic.

- Don't jump to conclusions that are not justified based on the supporting evidence you have.

- Do not use evidence to support faulty logic.

- Do not use out-of-date evidence that is no longer valid.

- Do not use evidence out of its original context.

- Do not knowingly use evidence from a source that is clearly biased.

Also, remember to clearly cite all your supporting evidence within your speech.

## Using Support within Your Speech

In the previous sections of this chapter, we've talked about the various types of support you can use (facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimonies, and analogies). In this section, we'll go over how to incorporate evidence into your speech, as well as how to think through the support you need for a speech and also how to actually use support while speaking.

## Forms of Speech Support

Let's begin by examining the forms that support can take in a speech: direct quotations, paraphrases, summaries, numerical data, and visual aids.

## Direct Quotations

A speaker directly quotes material by using the exact wording of another speaker or writer within the speech. While **direct quotations** are a useful form of support, use them sparingly within your speech, and incorporate them so that they flow seamlessly to and from your own authorial voice. Overuse of direct quotations in a speech can be confusing to the audience because the speaker so frequently transitions from her words to the exact words of someone else.

Use a direct quotation if

- the original author's words are witty, engaging, distinct, or particularly vivid,
- you want to highlight a specific expert and his or her expertise within your speech,
- you are going to specifically analyze the exact wording of something.

Directly quote as little as possible of your source. Lengthy quotations can try the patience of audience members, and the connection between your support and your argument can get lost.

## Paraphrases

**Paraphrases** reword a passage from the source in the speaker's words. However, your rewording must be thorough. A paraphrase is more than just dropping a few words from the direct quotation or rearranging them. To write an effective paraphrase, you must understand the source's ideas so well that you can explain them in your own words without looking back at the original.

Paraphrase when

- you can say it more concisely than the original speaker or author,
- the exact wording is overly complex for your audience to understand,
- you want to adapt an example, analogy, or narrative by another author to make its relevance to your own argument more evident.

Also, paraphrase information that is not likely to be questioned by your audience. If you think your audience may question your support, then relying on a direct quotation may be more effective.

## Summaries

Whereas a paraphrase rephrases an original passage in your own words, a **summary** condenses a longer text in your own words. Effective summaries are usually just a few sentences, much shorter than the original. Summaries are helpful when you want to provide your audience with the overall idea of the original author's entire work.

Summarize when

- you need another author's entire idea to understand the argument within your speech,
- when explaining possible counterarguments to the one posed within your speech,

or when you need to cite a number of different sources effectively and efficiently to support a specific argument.

## Numerical Data

Use numerical data to cite statistics, but make sure that your audience can accurately interpret the numbers in the same way you are doing. When incorporating numerical data into your speech, clearly state the numbers used and where they came from and explain what the numbers mean and how you think they should be interpreted. If the numbers are overly complicated or if you use a variety of numbers within a speech, consider making a graph or pie chart or other visual aid to enhance your audience's understanding of the **numerical support**.

## Visual Aids

Visual aids are any drawn or visual representation of an object or process. For example, if you're giving a speech on how to swing a golf club, you could bring in a golf club and demonstrate exactly how to use it. Alternately, you could show a diagram illustrating the steps for an effective golf swing or play a short YouTube video that demonstrates how to swing a golf club.

Use visual aids when

- a visual reference is shorter and easier for your audience to understand than explaining an object or process, or

- you really want to emphasize the importance of the support.

Audiences recall information more readily when they both see and hear it.

Your visual aids should be easy to understand, and using them should take less time than using words alone. Make sure everyone in your audience can easily see your visual aids, not just those in front. If listeners cannot see the visual aid, then it will not help them understand how it is supposed to help your speech's specific purpose.

## Is Your Support Adequate?

Now that we've examined the ways to use support in your speech, how do you know if you have enough support?

## Make a Reverse Outline

A **reverse outline** is a tool you can use to determine the adequacy of your speech's support by starting with your conclusion and logically working backward through your speech to determine if the support you



provided is appropriate and comprehensive. Make an outline of your speech, beginning with the conclusion, then working your way backward to show how you get to the conclusion. By forcing yourself to think about logic in reverse, you're more likely to find missteps along the way. This technique is not only helpful for analyzing the overall flow of your speech, but it can also let you see if different sections of your speech lack individual support.

## Support Your Claims

Make sure that every claim in your speech can be supported. For example, if you state, "The majority of Americans want immigration reform," you need to make sure that you have a source that actually demonstrates this claim, such as the results of a recent national poll on this topic conducted by a reputable and unbiased polling organization. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, too often people make claims within a speech that they have no support for whatsoever. When you go through your speech, you need to make sure that every claim has adequate and appropriate supporting evidence.

## Incorporating Support into Your Oral Presentation

After you have selected and evaluated your forms of support, incorporate it using this three-step process: setup, execution, and analysis.

### Setup

The first step in using support within a speech is the **setup**, a sentence or phrase that explains to your audience the origin of your information. Depending on the source of your support, all the following information presented in the order listed below could be useful: the author's name and credentials, the name of the source, its publication date, and the container where the source can be found. Note that if you found the information on a website, it is not sufficient to merely give your audience the URL.

1. The author's name and expertise on the subject matter (if appropriate). Some sources are written by authors who are not experts, so you really don't need to explain their expertise. In other cases, your audience will already know why the source is an expert, so you will not need to explain the author's credentials. For example, if you are giving a speech on current politics in the United States, you probably do not need to explain the expertise of Joe Biden or Kamala Harris. However, if your audience is not immediately familiar with the author and you don't provide information on his or her expertise, they will question the validity of your support.
2. The source's title.
3. The date of the source. Provide as much information on the date as is provided on the copyright

information page of the source.

4. If your source comes from a larger work, indicate the name of the container. For example, a single article (name of source) may come from a magazine, newspaper, book, or website (containers). Containers are larger works that hold smaller things.

## Examples:

According to Melanie Smithfield in an article titled “Do It Right, or Do It Now,” published in the June 18, 2009, issue of Time Magazine . . .

According to Roland Smith, a legendary civil rights activist and former chair of the Civil Rights Defense League, in his 2001 book The Path of Peace . . .

Both examples provided the information that was necessary to understand where the source comes from and why it is credible. The more information you can provide the audiences about your support, the more information they have to evaluate the strength of your arguments.

## Execution

The **execution** of support involves reading a quotation, paraphrasing a speaker or author’s words, summarizing a speaker or author’s ideas, providing data, or using other visual aids. Effective execution should seamlessly flow into the context of your speech. While you want your evidence to make an impact, you also don’t want it to seem overly disjointed. One mistake that some novice public speakers make is that when they start providing evidence, their whole performance changes and the use of evidence looks and sounds awkward. Make sure you practice the execution of your evidence when you rehearse your speech.

## Analysis

The final stage of using support effectively is the one that many speakers forget: **analysis** of the support. Too often speakers use support without ever explaining to an audience how it should be interpreted. While you don’t want to tell your audience what to think, you do want to show them how you are interpreting the evidence to support your claim.

Below are three ways to ensure the audience will make the connection between your support and your argument:

- Summarize the support in your own words (unless you started with a summary).

- Specifically tell your audience how the support relates to the argument.

- Draw a sensible conclusion based on your support. We cannot leave an audience hanging, so drawing a conclusion helps complete the support package.

## References

- Aesop. "Farmer and the Snake, The." *Fables of Aesop*. 17 November 2013. <https://fablesdfaesop.com/the-farmer-and-the-snake.html>
- Cooke, J. (1980, September 28). "Jimmy's world." *The Washington Post*, p. A1.
- Finch, S. (2009, Feb 27). "Bobby Jindal's fishy Katrina story." *Daily Kos*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2009/02/27/702671/-Bobby-Jindals-Fishy-Katrina-Story>.
- Fisher, W. R. (1987). *Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value, and action*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Green, B. (1981, April 19). "The confession: At the end, there were the questions, then the tears." *The Washington Post*, p. A14.
- Jaffe, C. (2010). *Public speaking: Concepts and skills for a diverse society* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage.
- Luntz, F. (2007). *Words that work: It's not what you say, it's what people hear*. New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Malthus, T. R. (1798). "An essay on the principle of population as it affects the future improvement of society, with remarks on the speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and other writers." London, England: J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Churchyard.
- Peter, L. J., & Hull, R. (1969). *The Peter principle: Why things always go wrong*. New York, NY: William Morrow & Company, p. 15.
- Purdee, Dominic, and John Buzbee. "College Life without a Vehicle Becomes Difficult in Car-centric Baton Rouge." *The Reveille*. 6 March 2022.
- ScienceBlogs LLC (n.d.). Who (or what) is Orac? [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://scienceblogs.com/insolence/>; see also <http://scienceblogs.com/insolence/medicine/autism>.
- "Speech." (2022) *Dictionary.com*. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/speech>
- Twain, M. (1924). *Autobiography* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Harper & Bros., p. 538.



# CHAPTER 8: ORGANIZING AND OUTLINING

## Learning Objectives

- Select a topic appropriate to the audience and occasion.
- Formulate a specific purpose statement that identifies precisely what you will do in your speech.
- Craft a thesis statement (central idea) that clearly and succinctly summarizes the argument you will make in your speech.
- Identify and arrange the main points of your speech according to one of many organizational styles discussed in this chapter.
- Connect the points of your speech to one another.
- Create a preparation and speaking outline for your speech.

## Key Terms

- **Causal Pattern**
- **Chronological Pattern**
- **Coordination**
- **Division**
- **Main Points**
- **Parallelism**
- **Preparation Outline**
- **Preview Statement**

- **Purpose Statement**
- **Sign Post**
- **Spatial Pattern**
- **Speaking Outline**
- **Specific Purpose Statement**
- **Subordination**
- **Thesis**
- **Topical Pattern**
- **Transitional Statements**

## 8.1 Why Are Organizing and Outlining Important?



### Introduction to Organizing and Outlining

Giving a speech or presentation can be a daunting task for anyone, especially inexperienced public speakers or students in introductory speech courses. Speaking to an audience can also be a rewarding experience for speakers who are willing to put in the extra effort needed to craft rhetorical masterpieces. Indeed, speeches and presentations must be crafted. Such a design requires that speakers do a great deal of preparatory work, like selecting a specific topic and deciding on a particular purpose for their speech.

Once the topic and purpose have been decided on, a thesis statement, or central idea, can be prepared. After these things are established, speakers must select the main points of their speech, which should be organized in a way that illuminates the speaker's perspective, or approach to their speech. In a nutshell, effective public speeches are focused on particular topics and contain main points that are relevant to both the topic and the audience. For all of these components to come together convincingly, organizing and outlining must be done prior to giving a speech.

This chapter addresses a variety of strategies needed to craft the body of speeches. The chapter begins at the initial stages of speechwriting— selecting an important and relevant topic for your audience. The more difficult task of formulating a purpose statement is discussed next. A purpose statement drives the

organization of the speech since different purposes (e.g., informative or persuasive) necessitate different types of evidence and presentation styles. Next, the chapter offers a variety of organizational strategies for the body of your speech. Not every strategy will be appropriate for every speech, so the strengths and weaknesses of the organizational styles are also addressed. The chapter then discusses ways to connect your main points and to draw links between your main points and the purpose you have chosen. In the final section of this chapter, one of the most important steps in speechwriting, outlining your speech, is discussed. The chapter provides the correct format for outlines as well as information on how to write a preparation outline and a speaking outline.



## 8.2 The Topic, General Purpose, Specific Purpose, and Thesis

Before any work can be done on crafting the body of your speech or presentation, you must first do some prep work—selecting a topic, formulating a general purpose, a specific purpose statement, and crafting a central idea, or thesis statement. In doing so, you lay the foundation for your speech by making important decisions about what you will speak about and for what purpose you will speak. These decisions will influence and guide the entire speechwriting process, so it is wise to think carefully and critically during these beginning stages.

### Understanding the General Purpose

Before any work on a speech can be done, the speaker needs to understand the general purpose of the speech. The general purpose is what the speaker hopes to accomplish and will help guide in the selection of a topic. The instructor generally provides the general purpose for a speech, which falls into one of three categories. A general purpose to inform would mean that the speaker is teaching the audience about a topic, increasing their understanding and awareness, or providing new information about a topic the audience might already know. Informative speeches are designed to present the facts, but not give the speaker's opinion or any call to action. A general purpose to persuade would mean that the speaker is choosing the side of a topic and advocating for their side or belief. The speaker is asking the audience to believe in their stance, or to take an action in support of their topic. A general purpose to entertain often entails short speeches of ceremony, where the speaker is connecting the audience to the celebration. You can see how these general purposes are very different. An informative speech is just facts, the speaker would not be able to provide an opinion or direction on what to do with the information, whereas a persuasive speech includes the speaker's opinions and direction on what to do with the information. Before a speaker chooses a topic, they must first understand the general purpose.

### Selecting a Topic

Generally, speakers focus on one or more interrelated topics—relatively broad concepts, ideas, or problems that are relevant for particular audiences. The most common way that speakers discover topics is by simply observing what is happening around them—at their school, in their local government, or around the world. Opportunities abound for those interested in engaging speech as a tool for change. Perhaps the simplest way to find a topic is to ask yourself a few questions, including:

- What important events are occurring locally, nationally, and internationally?
- What do I care about most?
- Is there someone or something I can advocate for?
- What makes me angry/happy?
- What beliefs/attitudes do I want to share?
- Is there some information the audience needs to know?

Students speak about what is interesting to them and their audiences. What topics do you think are relevant today? There are other questions you might ask yourself, too, but these should lead you to at least a few topical choices. The most important work that these questions do is to locate topics within your pre-existing sphere of knowledge and interest. Topics should be ideas that interest the speaker or are part of their daily lives. In order for a topic to be effective, the speaker needs to have some credibility or connection to the topic; it would be unfair to ask the audience to donate to a cause that the speaker has never donated to. There must be a connection to the topic for the speaker to be seen as credible. David Zarefsky (2010) also identifies brainstorming as a way to develop speech topics, a strategy that can be helpful if the questions listed above did not yield an appropriate or interesting topic. Brainstorming involves looking at your daily activities to determine what you could share with an audience. Perhaps if you work out regularly or eat healthy, you could explain that to an audience, or demonstrate how to dribble a basketball. If you regularly play video games, you may advocate for us to take up video games or explain the history of video games. Anything that you find interesting or important might turn into a topic. Starting with a topic you are already interested in will make writing and presenting your speech a more enjoyable and meaningful experience. It means that your entire speechwriting process will focus on something you find important and that you can present this information to people who stand to benefit from your speech. At this point, it is also important to consider the audience before choosing a topic. While we might really enjoy a lot of different things that could be topics, if the audience has no connection to that topic, then it wouldn't be meaningful for the speaker or audience. Since we always have a diverse audience, we want to make sure that everyone in the audience can gain some new information from the speech. Sometimes, a topic might be too complicated to cover in the amount of time we have to present, or involve too much information then that topic might not work for the assignment, and finally if the audience can not gain anything from a topic then it won't work. Ultimately, when we choose a topic we want to pick something that we are familiar with and enjoy, we have credibility and that the audience could gain something from. Once you have answered these questions and narrowed your responses, you are still not done selecting your topic. For instance, you might have decided that you really care about breeds of dogs. This is a very broad topic and could easily lead to a dozen different speeches. To resolve this problem, speakers must also consider the audience to whom they will speak, the scope of their presentation, and the outcome they wish to achieve.

## Formulating the Purpose Statements

By honing in on a very specific topic, you begin the work of formulating your purpose statement. In short, a **purpose statement** clearly states what it is you would like to achieve.

Purpose statements are especially helpful for guiding you as you prepare your speech. When deciding which main points, facts, and examples to include, you should simply ask yourself whether they are relevant not only to the topic you have selected, but also whether they support the goal you outlined

in your purpose statement. The general purpose statement of a speech may be to inform, to persuade, to celebrate, or to entertain. Thus, it is common to frame a **specific purpose statement** around one of these goals. According to O’Hair, Stewart, and Rubenstein, a specific purpose statement “expresses both the topic and the general speech purpose in action form and in terms of the specific objectives you hope to achieve” (2004). The specific purpose is a single sentence that states what the audience will gain from this speech, or what will happen at the end of the speech. The specific purpose is a combination of the general purpose and the topic and helps the speaker to focus in on what can be achieved in a short speech.

To go back to the topic of a dog breed, the general purpose might be to inform, a specific purpose might be: To inform the audience about how corgis became household pets. If the general purpose is to persuade the specific purpose might be: to persuade the audience that dog breeds deemed “dangerous” should not be excluded from living in the cities. In short, the general purpose statement lays out the broader goal of the speech while the specific purpose statement describes precisely what the speech is intended to do. The specific purpose should

focus on the audience and be measurable, if I were to ask the audience before I began the speech how many people know how corgis became household pets, they could raise their hand, and if I ask at the end of my speech how many people know how corgis became household pets, I should see a lot more hands. The specific purpose is the “so what” of the speech, it helps the speaker focus on the audience and take a bigger idea of a topic and narrow it down to what can be accomplished in a short amount of time.

The general purpose is a broad goal of the speech: To Inform, To Persuade, or To Entertain.

The specific purpose expresses the general purpose and topic in terms of a specific objective you hope to achieve



*An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it*

online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=971#h5p-15>

## Writing the Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is a single sentence that captures the main idea of the speech

The specific purpose statement is a tool that you will use as you write your speech, but it is unlikely that it will appear verbatim in your speech. Instead, you will want to convert the specific purpose statement into a central idea, or **thesis** statement that you will share with your audience. Just like in a written paper, where the thesis comes in the first part of the paper, in a speech, the thesis comes within the first few

sentences of the speech. The thesis must be stated and tells the audience what to expect in this speech. A thesis statement may encapsulate the main idea of a speech in just a sentence or two and be designed to give audiences a quick preview of what the entire speech will be about. The thesis statement should be a single, declarative statement followed by a separate preview statement. If you are a Harry Potter enthusiast, you may write a thesis statement (central idea) the following way using the above approach: *J.K. Rowling is a renowned author of the Harry Potter series with a Cinderella-like story of a rise to fame.*

## Writing the Preview Statement

A Preview Statement clearly states the main points of the speech

A preview statement (or series of statements) is a guide to your speech. This is the part of the speech that literally tells the audience exactly what main points you will cover. If you were to get on any freeway, there would be a green sign on the side of the road that tells you what cities are coming up—this is what your preview statement does; it tells the audience what points will be covered in the speech. Best of all, you would know what to look for! So, if we take our J.K Rowling example,

the thesis and preview would look like this: *J.K. Rowling is a renowned author of the Harry Potter series with a Cinderella-like rags-to-riches story. First, I will tell you about J.K. Rowling's humble beginnings. Then, I will*

*describe her personal struggles as a single mom. Finally, I will explain how she overcame adversity and became one of the richest women in the United Kingdom.*

## Writing the Body of Your Speech

Once you have finished the important work of deciding what your speech will be about, as well as formulating the purpose statement and crafting the thesis, you should turn your attention to writing the body of your speech. The body of your speech consists of 3–4 main points that support your thesis and help the audience to achieve the specific purpose. Creating main points helps to chunk the information you are sharing with your audience into an easy-to-understand organization. Choosing your main points will help you focus in on what information you want to share with the audience in order to prove your thesis. Since we can't tell the audience everything about our topic, we need to choose our main points to make sure we can share the most important information with our audience. All of your main points are contained in the body, and normally this section is prepared well before you ever write the introduction or conclusion. The body of your speech will consume the largest amount of time to present, and it is the opportunity for you to elaborate on your supporting evidence, such as facts, statistics, examples, and opinions that support your thesis statement and do the work you have outlined in the specific purpose statement. Combining these various elements into a cohesive and compelling speech, however, is not without its difficulties, the first of which is deciding which elements to include and how they ought to be organized to best suit your purpose.

## 8.3 Organizational Patterns of Arrangement for Informative Speeches



After deciding which main points and subpoints you must include, you can get to work writing up the speech. Before you do so, however, it is helpful to consider how you will organize the ideas. There are many ways you can organize speeches, and these approaches will be different depending on whether you are preparing an informative or persuasive speech. These are referred to as organizational patterns for arranging your main points in a speech. The **chronological** (or temporal), **topical**, **spatial**, or **causal patterns** may be better suited to informative speeches, whereas the Problem-Solution, Monroe's Motivated Sequence (Monroe, 1949), Claim-to-Proof (Mudd & Sillar, 1962), or Refutation pattern would work best for persuasive speeches. Sample organizational patterns and outlines for persuasive speeches can be found in Chapter 17.

### Chronological Pattern

Chronological Pattern puts the main points in time order

In a chronological speech, main points are delivered according to when they happened and could be traced on a calendar or clock. Some professors use the term *temporal* to reflect any speech pattern dealing with taking the audience through time. Arranging main points in chronological order can be helpful when describing historical events to an audience as well as when the order of events is necessary to understand

what you wish to convey. Informative speeches about a series of events most commonly engage the

chronological style, as do many process speeches (e.g., how to bake a cake or build an airplane). Another time when the chronological style makes sense is when you tell the story of someone's life or career. For instance, a speech about Oprah Winfrey might be arranged chronologically. In this case, the main points are arranged by following Winfrey's life from birth to the present time. Life events (e.g., early life, her early career, her life after ending the Oprah Winfrey Show) are connected according to when they happened and highlight the progression of Winfrey's career. Organizing the speech in this way illustrates the interconnectedness of life events. Below you will find a way in which you can organize your main points chronologically:

**Topic:** Oprah Winfrey (Chronological Pattern)

**Thesis:** Oprah's career can be understood by three key, interconnected life stages.

**Preview:** First, let's look at Oprah's early life. Then, we will look at her early career, followed by her years during *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

- I. Oprah's childhood was spent in rural Mississippi, where she endured sexual abuse from family members.
- II. Oprah's early career was characterized by stints on local radio and television networks in Nashville and Chicago.
- III. Oprah's tenure as host of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* began in 1986 and lasted until 2011, a period of time marked by much success.

## Topical Pattern

When the main points of your speech center on ideas that are more distinct from one another, a topical organization pattern may be used. In a topical speech, main points are developed according to the different aspects, subtopics or topics within an overall topic. Although they are all part of the overall topic, the order in which they are presented really doesn't matter. For example, you are currently attending college. Within your college, there are various student services that are important for you to use while you are here. You may use the library, the learning center (TLC), the Student Development Office, the ASG Computer Lab, and financial aid. To organize this speech topically, it doesn't matter which area you speak about first, but here is how you could organize it.

Topical Organizational pattern uses main points that support the thesis, but where order of presentation is not important

**Topic:** Student Services at College of the Canyons

**Thesis and Preview:** College of the Canyons has three important student services, which include Learning Support Services, Student Support Services, and Financial Support Services.

- I. Learning support services are available and include the library, the learning center, and the ASG Computer Lab. All are helpful to students looking for schoolwork assistance.

- II. The student support services available include the Student Development Office, which assists with student-related needs.
- III. Financial support services are also on campus at the Financial Aid Office, offering multiple ways to pay for education.

## Spatial Pattern

Spatial Organizational Pattern describes spaces; the main points would be spaces to support the thesis.

Another way to organize the points of a speech is through a spatial speech, which arranges main points according to their physical and geographic relationships. The spatial style is an especially useful organization pattern when the main point's importance is derived from its location or directional focus. Things can be described from top to bottom, inside to outside, left to right, north to south, and so on. Importantly, speakers using a spatial style should offer commentary about the placement of the main points as they move through the speech,

alerting audience members to the location changes. For instance, a speech about the University of Georgia might be arranged spatially; in this example, the spatial organization frames the discussion in terms of the campus layout. The spatial style is fitting since the differences in architecture and uses of space are related to particular geographic areas, making location a central organizing factor. As such, the spatial style highlights these location differences.

**Topic:** University of Georgia (Spatial Pattern)

**Thesis:** The University of Georgia is arranged into three distinct sections, which are characterized by architectural and disciplinary differences.

- I. In North Campus, one will find the University's oldest building, a sprawling treelined quad, and the famous Arches, all of which are nestled against Athens' downtown district
- II. In West Campus, dozens of dormitories provide housing for the University's large undergraduate population, and students can regularly be found lounging outside or at one of the dining halls.
- III. In East Campus, students delight in newly constructed, modern buildings and enjoy the benefits of the University's health center, recreational facilities, and science research buildings.



## Causal Pattern

A causal speech informs audience members about causes and effects that have already happened with respect to some condition, event, and so on. One approach can be to share what caused something to happen, and what the effects were. Or the reverse approach can be taken, where a speaker can begin by sharing the effects of something that occurred, and then share what caused it. For example, in 1994, there was a 6.7 magnitude earthquake that occurred in the San Fernando Valley in Northridge, California. Let's look at how we can arrange this speech first by using a cause-effect pattern:

Causal Organizational Pattern: the main points are the cause and effect of the event; in an informative speech, this is best used for processes.

**Topic:** Northridge Earthquake

**Thesis:** The Northridge earthquake was a devastating event that was caused by an unknown fault and resulted in the loss of life and billions of dollars of damage.

- I. The Northridge earthquake was caused by a fault that was previously unknown and located nine miles beneath Northridge.
- II. The Northridge earthquake resulted in the loss of 60-70 lives
- II. Over 40 billion dollars of damage in Northridge and surrounding communities occurred in property and infrastructure.

Depending on your topic, you may decide it is more impactful to start with the effects, and work back to the causes (effect-cause pattern). Let's take the same example and flip it around:

**Thesis:** The Northridge earthquake was a devastating event that resulted in loss of life and billions of dollars in damage and was caused by an unknown fault below Northridge.

- I. The Northridge earthquake resulted in the loss of 60-70 lives.
- II. Over 40 billion dollars of damage in Northridge and surrounding communities occurred in property and infrastructure.
- III. The Northridge earthquake was caused by a fault that was previously unknown and located nine miles beneath Northridge.

Why might you decide to use an effect-cause approach rather than a cause-effect approach? In this particular example, the effects of the earthquake were truly horrible. If you heard all of that information first, you would be much more curious to hear about what caused such devastation. Sometimes natural disasters are not that exciting, even when they are horrible. Why? Unless they affect us directly, we may not have the same attachment to the topic. This is one example where an effect-cause approach may be very impactful.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=974#h5p-17>

## 8.4 Outlining Your Speech



Most speakers and audience members would agree that an organized speech is both easier to present as well as easier for the audience to understand. Public speaking teachers especially believe in the power of organizing your speech, which is why they encourage (and often require) that you create an outline for your speech. Outlines, or textual arrangements of all the various elements of a speech, are a very common way of organizing a speech before it is delivered. Most extemporaneous speakers keep their outlines with them during the speech to ensure that they do not leave out any important elements and to keep them on track.

Writing an outline is also important to the speechwriting process, since doing so forces the speakers to think about the main ideas, known as main points, and subpoints, the examples they wish to include, and the ways in which these elements correspond to one another. In short, the outline functions both as an organization tool and as a reference for delivering a speech.

### Outline Types

There are two types of outlines: the preparation outline and the speaking outline.

#### Preparation Outline

The first outline you will write is called the **preparation outline**. Also called a skeletal, working, practice, or rough outline, the preparation outline is used to work through the various components of your speech in an organized format. Stephen E. Lucas (2004) put it simply: “The preparation outline is just what its name implies—an outline that helps you prepare the speech.” When writing the preparation outline, you should

focus on finalizing the specific purpose and thesis statement, logically ordering your main points, deciding where supporting material should be included, and refining the overall organizational pattern of your speech. As you write the preparation outline, you may find it necessary to rearrange your points or to add or subtract supporting material. You may also realize that some of your main points are sufficiently supported while others are lacking. The final draft of your preparation outline should include full sentences. In most cases, however, the preparation outline is reserved for planning purposes only and is translated into a speaking outline before you deliver the speech. Keep in mind though, even a full sentence outline is not an essay.

## Speaking Outline

A **speaking outline** is the outline you will prepare for use when delivering the speech. The speaking outline is much more succinct than the preparation outline and includes brief phrases or words that remind the speakers of the points they need to make, plus supporting material and signposts (Beebe & Beebe, 2003). The words or phrases used on the speaking outline should briefly encapsulate all the information needed to prompt the speaker to accurately deliver the speech. Although some cases call for reading a speech verbatim from the full-sentence outline, in most cases speakers will simply refer to their speaking outline for quick reminders and to ensure that they do not omit any important information. Because it uses just words or short phrases, and not full sentences, the speaking outline can easily be transferred to index cards that can be referenced during a speech. However, check with your instructor regarding what you will be allowed to use for your speech.

## Components of Outlines

The main components of the outlines are the main points, subordination and coordination, parallelism, division, and the connection of main points.

### Main Points

**Main points** are the main ideas in the speech and support the thesis. In other words, the main points are what your audience should remember from your talk, and they are phrased as single, declarative sentences. These are never phrased as a question, nor can they be a quote or form of citation. Any supporting material you have will be put in your outline as a subpoint. Since this is a public speaking class, your instructor will decide how long your speeches will be, but in general, you can assume that no speech will be longer than 10 minutes in length. Given that alone, we can make one assumption. All speeches will fall between 2 to 5 main points based simply on length; however, 3 main points is the ideal for a speech of this length. If you are working on an outline and you have ten main points, something is wrong, and you need to revisit your ideas to see how you need to reorganize your points.

All main points are preceded by Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.). Subpoints are preceded by capital letters

(A, B, C, etc.), then Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.), lowercase letters (a, b, c, etc.). You can subordinate further than this. Speak with your instructor regarding his or her specific instructions. Each level of subordination is also differentiated from its predecessor by indenting a few spaces. Indenting makes it easy to find your main points, subpoints, and the supporting points and examples below them.

Let's work on understanding how to take main points and break them into smaller ideas by subordinating them further and further as we go by using the following outline example:

**Topic:** Dogs

**Specific Purpose:** To inform my audience about characteristics of dogs

**Thesis:** There are many types of dogs that individuals can select from before deciding which would make the best family pet.

**Preview:** First, I will describe the characteristics of large breed dogs, and then I will discuss characteristics of small breed dogs.

- I. First, let's look at the characteristics of large breed dogs
    - A. Some large breed dogs need daily activity.
    - B. Some large breed dogs are dog friendly.
    - C. Some large breed dogs drool.
      - 1. If you are particularly neat, you may not want one of these.
        - a. Bloodhounds drool the most.
          - 1) After eating is one of the times drooling is bad.
          - 2) The drooling is horrible after they drink, so beware!
        - b. English bloodhounds drool a lot as well.
      - 2. If you live in an apartment, these breeds could pose a problem.
- II. Next, let's look at the characteristics of small breed dogs.
  - A. Some small breed dogs need daily activity.
  - B. Some small breed dogs are dog friendly.
  - C. Some small breed dogs are friendly to strangers.
    - 1. Welsh Terriers love strangers.
      - a. They will jump on people.
      - b. They will wag their tails and nuzzle.
    - 2. Beagles love strangers.
    - 3. Cockapoos also love strangers.

## Subordination and Coordination

You should have noticed that as ideas were broken down, or subordinated, there was a hierarchy to the order. To check your outline for coherence, think of the outline as a staircase. All of the points that are beneath and on a diagonal to the points above them are subordinate points. Using the above example, points A, B, and C

dealt with characteristics of large breed dogs, and those points are all subordinate to main point I. Similarly, points 1 and 2 under point C both dealt with drool, so those are subordinate. This is the **subordination** of points. If we had discussed food under point C, you would know that something didn't make sense. You will also see that there is **coordination** of points. As part of the hierarchy, coordination simply means that all of the numbers or letters should represent the same idea. In this example, A, B, and C were all characteristics, so those are all coordinated to each other. Had C been "German Shepherd," then the outline would have been incorrect because that is a type of dog, not a characteristic.

## Parallelism

Another important rule in outlining is known as **parallelism**. This means that when possible, you begin your sentences in a similar way, using a similar grammatical structure. For example, in the previous example on dogs, some of the sentences began "some large breed dogs." This type of structure adds clarity to your speaking. Students often worry that parallelism will sound boring. It's actually the opposite! It adds clarity. Remember that a speech is verbal and once the information is stated, it is gone. The key to creating a memorable speech is ensuring the audience can follow the speech and has something to remember at the end of the speech.

## Division

The principle of **division** is an important part of outlining. When you have a main point, you will be explaining it. You should have enough meaningful information that you can divide it into two subpoints A and B. If subpoint A has enough information that you can explain it, then it, too, should be able to be divided into two subpoints. So, division means this: If you have an A, then you need a B; if you have a 1, then you need a 2, and so on. What if you cannot divide the point? In a case like that you would simply incorporate the information in the point above.

## Connecting Your Main Points

Transition statements are connectives that help move the audience through the speech. Each speech is a collection of main points; it is important that

One way to connect points is to include **transitional statements**. Transitional statements are phrases or sentences that lead from one distinct-but-connected idea to another. They are used to alert the audience to the fact that you are getting ready to discuss something else. Transitions are the bridges that move the audience through the speech; it is important that the speech is organized and the audience is clear on what point or subpoint we are presenting. When moving from one point to another, your transition may just be a word

or short phrase, known as a signpost. For instance, you might say “next,” “also,” or “moreover.” You can also enumerate your speech points and signal transitions by starting each point with “First,” “Second,” “Third,” et cetera. You might also incorporate non-verbal transitions, such as brief pauses or a movement across the stage. Pausing to look at your audience, stepping out from behind a podium, or even raising or lowering the rate of your voice can signal to audience members that you are transitioning.

the audience knows what main point they are getting information about

Another way to incorporate transitions into your speech is by offering internal summaries and internal previews within your speech. Summaries provide a recap of what has already been said, making it more likely that audiences will remember the points that they hear again. For example, an internal summary may sound like this:

*So far, we have seen that the pencil has a long and interesting history. We also looked at the many uses the pencil has that you may not have known about previously.*

Like the name implies, internal previews lay out what will occur next in your speech. They are longer than transitional words or **signposts**.

*Next, let us explore what types of pencils there are to pick from that will be best for your specific project.*

Additionally, summaries can be combined with internal previews to alert audience members that the next point builds on those that they have already heard.

*Now that I have told you about the history of the pencil, as well as its many uses, let's look at what types of pencils you can pick from that might be best for your project.*

It is important to understand that if you use an internal summary and internal preview between main points, you need to state a clear main point following the internal preview. Here's an example integrating all the points on the pencil:

I. First, let me tell you about the history of the pencil.

*So far we have seen that the pencil has a long and interesting history. Now, we can look at how the pencil can be used (internal summary, signpost, and internal preview).*

II. The pencil has many different uses, ranging from writing to many types of drawing.

*Now that I have told you about the history of the pencil, as well as its many uses, let's look at what types of pencils you can pick from that might be best for your project (Signpost, internal summary, and preview).*

III. There are over fifteen different types of pencils to choose from ranging in hardness and color.

## In Conclusion

Had Meg, the student mentioned in the opening anecdote, taken some time to work through the organizational process, it is likely her speech would have gone much more smoothly when she finished her

introduction. It is very common for beginning speakers to spend a great deal of their time preparing catchy introductions, fancy PowerPoint presentations, and nice conclusions, which are all very important. However, the body of any speech is where the speaker must make effective arguments, provide helpful information, entertain, and present all the important information in the speech, so it makes sense that speakers should devote a proportionate amount of time to these areas as well. By following this chapter, as well as studying the other chapters in this text, you should be prepared to craft interesting, compelling, and organized speeches.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1003#oembed-1>*



# CHAPTER 9: DELIVERY

## Learning Objectives

- List the different methods of speech delivery.
- Identify key elements in preparing to deliver a speech.
- Describe the benefits of delivery-related behaviors.
- Utilize specific techniques to enhance speech delivery.

## Key Terms

- **Extemporaneous Speaking**
- **Impromptu Speaking**
- **Lectern**
- **Manuscript Speaking**
- **Memorized Speaking**
- **Monotone**
- **Pitch**
- **Rate**
- **Tone**
- **Vocal Cue**
- **Vocalized Pauses**
- **Volume**



## 9.1 The Importance of Delivery



Some surveys indicate that many people claim to fear public speaking more than death, but this finding is somewhat misleading. No one is afraid of writing their speech or conducting the research. Instead, people generally only fear the delivery aspect of the speech, which, compared to the amount of time you will put into writing the speech (days, hopefully), will be the shortest part of the speech-giving process. The irony, of course, is that delivery, being the thing people fear the most, is simultaneously the aspect of public speaking that will require the least amount of time.

Consider this scenario about two students, Bobby and Chris. Bobby spends weeks doing research and crafting a beautifully designed speech that, on the day she gets in front of the class, she messes up a little because of nerves. While she may view it as a complete failure, her audience will have gotten a lot of good information and most likely written off her mistakes due to nerves, since they would be nervous in the same situation!

Chris, on the other hand, does almost no preparation for his speech, but, being charming and comfortable in front of a crowd, smiles a lot while providing virtually nothing of substance. The audience takeaway from Chris's speech is "I have no idea what he was talking about" and other feelings ranging from "He's good in front of an audience" to "I don't trust him." So the moral here is that a well-prepared speech that is delivered poorly is still a well-prepared speech, whereas a poorly written speech delivered superbly is still a poorly written speech.

Despite this irony, we realize that delivery is what you are probably most concerned about when it comes to giving speeches, so this chapter is designed to help you achieve the best delivery possible and eliminate some of the nervousness you might be feeling. To do that, we should first dismiss the myth that public speaking is just reading and talking at the same time. You already know how to read, and you already know how to talk, which is why you're taking a class called "public speaking" and not one called "public talking" or "public reading."

Speaking in public has more formality than talking. During a speech, you should present yourself professionally. This doesn't necessarily mean you must wear a suit or "dress up" unless your instructor asks you to. However, it does mean making yourself presentable by being well-groomed and wearing clean, appropriate clothes. It also means being prepared to use language correctly and appropriately for the audience and the topic, to make eye contact with your audience, and to look like you know your topic very well.

While speaking has more formality than talking, it has less formality than reading. Speaking allows for flexibility, meaningful pauses, eye contact, small changes in word order, and vocal emphasis. Reading is a more or less exact replication of words on paper without the use of any nonverbal interpretation. Speaking, as you will realize if you think about excellent speakers you have seen and heard, provides a more animated message.

## 9.2 Methods of Speech Delivery



What follows are four methods of delivery that can help you balance between too much and too little formality when giving a speech. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, but you will most likely want to focus on the extemporaneous approach, since that is probably what your instructor will want from you.

### Impromptu Speaking

**Impromptu speaking** is the presentation of a short message without advance preparation. You have probably done impromptu speaking many times in informal, conversational settings. Self-introductions in group settings are examples of impromptu speaking: “Hi, my name is Steve, and I’m a volunteer with the Homes for the Brave program.” Another example of impromptu speaking occurs when you answer a question such as “What did you think of the movie?” Your response has not been preplanned, and you are constructing your arguments and points as you speak. Even worse, you might find yourself going into a meeting and your boss says, “I want you to talk about the last stage of the project. . .” and you have no warning.

The advantage of this kind of speaking is that it’s spontaneous and responsive in an animated group context. The disadvantage is that the speaker is given little or no time to contemplate the central theme of his or her message. As a result, the message may be disorganized and difficult for listeners to follow.

Here is a step-by-step guide that may be useful if you are called upon to give an impromptu speech in public:

1. Take a moment to collect your thoughts and plan the main point or points you want to make.
2. Thank the person for inviting you to speak. Do not make comments about being unprepared, called upon at the last moment, on the spot, or uneasy. No one wants to hear that, and it will embarrass others

and yourself.

3. Deliver your message, making your main point as briefly as you can while still covering it adequately and at a pace your listeners can follow.
4. Stay on track. Answer the question or prompt as given; resist the temptation to go elsewhere.
5. If you can, use a structure, using numbers if possible: “Two main reasons . . .” or “Three parts of our plan. . .” or “Two side effects of this drug. . .” Past, present, and future or East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast are common structures.
6. Thank the person again for the opportunity to speak.
7. Stop talking (it is easy to “ramble on” when you don’t have something prepared). If in front of an audience, don’t keep talking as you move back to your seat.

Impromptu speeches are generally most successful when they are brief and focus on a single point.

## Manuscript Speaking

**Manuscript speaking** is the word-for-word iteration of a written message. In a manuscript speech, the speaker maintains his or her attention on the printed page except when using visual aids. The advantage to reading from a manuscript is the exact repetition of original words. In some circumstances this can be extremely important. For example, reading a statement about your organization’s legal responsibilities to customers may require that the original words be exact. In reading one word at a time, in order, the only errors would typically be mispronunciation of a word or stumbling over complex sentence structure. A manuscript speech may also be appropriate at a more formal affair (like a funeral), when your speech must be said exactly as written in order to convey the proper emotion or decorum the situation deserves.

However, there are costs involved in manuscript speaking. First, it’s typically an uninteresting way to present. Unless the speaker has rehearsed the reading as a complete performance animated with vocal expression and gestures (well-known authors often do this for book readings), the presentation tends to be dull. Keeping one’s eyes glued to the script prevents eye contact with the audience. For this kind of “straight” manuscript speech to hold audience attention, the audience must be already interested in the message and speaker before the delivery begins.

It is worth noting that professional speakers, actors, news reporters, and politicians often read from an autocue device, such as a TelePrompter, especially when appearing on television, where eye contact with the camera is crucial. With practice, a speaker can achieve a conversational tone and give the impression of speaking extemporaneously and maintaining eye contact while using an autocue device. However, success in this medium depends on two factors: (1) the speaker is already an accomplished public speaker who has learned to use a conversational tone while delivering a prepared script, and (2) the speech is written in a style that sounds conversational and in spoken rather than written, edited English, for example, with shorter sentences and clearer transitions.

For the purposes of your public speaking class, you will likely not be allowed to read your speech. Instead, you will be assigned to give an extemporaneous presentation.

## Extemporaneous Speaking

**Extemporaneous speaking** is the presentation of a carefully planned and rehearsed speech, spoken in a conversational manner using brief notes. By using notes rather than a full manuscript, the extemporaneous speaker can establish and maintain eye contact with the audience and assess how well they are understanding the speech as it progresses. And since you will be graded (to some degree) on establishing and maintaining eye contact with your audience, extemporaneous speaking can be extremely beneficial in that regard. Without all the words on the page to read, you have little choice but to look up and make eye contact with your audience. In some cases, your instructor will require you to prepare strong preparation and speaking (notes) outlines as a foundation for your speech; this topic is addressed in Chapter 6.

Speaking extemporaneously has some advantages. It promotes the likelihood that you, the speaker, will be perceived as knowledgeable and credible since you know the speech well enough that you don't need to read it. In addition, your audience is likely to pay better attention to the message because it is engaging both verbally and nonverbally. It also allows flexibility; you are working from the strong foundation of an outline, but if you need to delete, add, or rephrase something at the last minute or to adapt to your audience, you can do so. The outline also helps you be aware of main ideas vs. subordinate ones.

Adequate preparation cannot be achieved the day before you're scheduled to speak, so be aware that if you want to present a credibly delivered speech, you will need to practice many times. Because extemporaneous speaking is the style used in the great majority of public speaking situations, most of the information in the subsequent sections of this chapter is targeted toward this kind of speaking.

## Memorized Speaking

**Memorized speaking** is the rote recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory. Actors, of course, recite from memory whenever they perform from a script. When it comes to speeches, memorization can be useful when the message needs to be exact and the speaker doesn't want to be confined by notes.

The advantage to memorization is that it enables the speaker to maintain eye contact with the audience throughout the speech. Being free of notes means that you can move freely around the stage and use your hands to make gestures. If your speech uses visual aids, this freedom is even more of an advantage.

However, there are some real and potential costs. First, unless you also plan and memorize every **vocal cue** (the subtle but meaningful variations in speech delivery, which can include the use of pitch, tone, volume, and pace), gesture, and facial expression, your presentation will be flat and uninteresting, and even the most

fascinating topic will suffer. You might end up speaking in a monotone or a sing-song repetitive delivery pattern. You might also present your speech in a rapid “machine-gun” style that fails to emphasize the most important points.

Second, if you lose your place and start trying to ad lib, the contrast in your style of delivery will alert your audience that something is wrong. If you go completely blank during the presentation, it will be extremely difficult to find your place and keep going. Obviously, memorizing a typical classroom speech takes a great deal of time and effort, and if you aren’t used to memorizing, it is very difficult to pull off. Realistically, you probably will not have the time necessary to give a completely memorized speech. However, if you practice adequately, you will approach the feeling of memorization while still being extemporaneous.

As we said earlier, for the purposes of this class you will use extemporaneous speaking. Many professional speakers who are paid to make speeches use this approach because, while they may largely know what they want to say, they usually make changes and adjustments based on the audience or event. This approach also incorporates most of the benefits of memorized speaking (knowing what you want to say; being very thoroughly rehearsed) and manuscript speaking (having some words in front of you to refer to) without the inherent pitfalls those approaches bring with them.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=616#h5p-4>



## 9.3 Preparing for Your Delivery



In the 1970s, before he was an author, playwright, and film actor, Steve Martin was an up-and-coming stand-up comedian whose popularity soared as a result of his early appearances on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and *Saturday Night Live*. As Martin notes in his autobiography, *Born Standing Up* (2008), as the audiences for his act got bigger and bigger, he needed to adapt his delivery to accommodate:

Some promoters got on board and booked me into a theater in Dallas. Before the show I asked one of them, “How many people are out there?” “Two thousand,” he said. Two thousand? How could there be two thousand? That night I did my usual bit of taking people outside, but it was starting to get dangerous and difficult. First, people were standing in the streets, where they could be hit by a car. Second, only a small number of the audience could hear or see me (could Charlton Heston really have been audible when he was addressing a thousand extras?). Third, it didn’t seem as funny or direct with so many people; I reluctantly dropped it from my repertoire (p. 168).

Martin’s audiences would grow to be around 50,000 at the height of his popularity as a stand-up comedian, again requiring him to make adjustments to his delivery (he began wearing his iconic all-white suit so that people in the nosebleed seats at his shows could still see his frenetic movements from afar). Most of us will never speak to so many people at once, but even though you don’t expect an audience of such size, you should still be prepared to adapt to the setting in which you will speak.

Your audiences, circumstances, and physical contexts for public speaking will vary. At some point in your life, you may run for public office or rise to a leadership role in a business or volunteer organization. Or you

may be responsible for informing coworkers about a new policy, regulation, or opportunity. You may be asked to deliver remarks in the context of a worship service, wedding, or funeral. You may be asked to introduce a keynote speaker or simply to make an important announcement in some context. Sometimes you will speak in a familiar environment, while at other times you may be faced with an unfamiliar location and have very little time to get used to speaking with a microphone. Being prepared to deal with different speaking situations will help reduce anxiety you may have about giving a speech, so let's look at factors you need to keep in mind as you prepare for your speech in this class, as well as future speeches you may need to give.

## Using Lecterns

A **lectern** is a small raised surface, usually with a slanted top, where a speaker can place notes during a speech. While a lectern adds a measure of formality to the speaking situation, it also allows speakers the freedom to do two things: to come out from behind the lectern to establish more immediate contact with the audience and to use both hands for gestures. Sometimes this piece of furniture is mistakenly called a podium, which is a raised platform or stage.

However, for inexperienced speakers who feel anxious, it is all too tempting to grip the edges of the lectern with both hands for security. You might even wish you could hide behind it. Be aware of these temptations so you can manage them effectively and present yourself to your audience in a manner they will perceive as confident. One way to achieve this is by limiting your use of the lectern to a place to rest your notes only. Try stepping to the side or front of the lectern when speaking with free hands, only occasionally standing at the lectern to consult your notes. This will enhance your eye contact as well as free up your hands for gesturing.

## Speaking in a Small or Large Physical Space

If you are accustomed to being in a classroom of a certain size, you will need to make adjustments when speaking in a smaller or larger space than what you are used to. A large auditorium can be intimidating, especially for speakers who feel shy and “exposed” when facing an audience. However, the maxim that “proper preparation prevents poor performance” is just as true here as anywhere. If you have prepared and practiced well, you can approach a large-venue speaking engagement with confidence.

In terms of practical adjustments, be aware that your voice is likely to echo, especially if far fewer people are in the space than it can hold, so you will want to speak more slowly as well as more loudly than usual and make use of pauses to mark the ends of phrases and sentences. Similarly, your facial expressions and gestures should be larger so that they are visible from farther away. If you are using visual aids, they need to be large enough to be visible from the back of the auditorium. Of course, if the speaker can get the audience to move to the front, that is the best situation, but it tends not to happen.

Limited space is not as disconcerting for most speakers as enormous space, and it has the advantage of

minimizing the tendency to pace back and forth while you speak. A small space also calls for more careful management of note cards and visual aids, as your audience will be able to see up close what you are doing with your hands. Do your best to minimize fumbling, including setting up in advance or arriving early to decide how to organize your materials in the physical space. Of course, if you have any control over the location of the presentation, you should choose one that fits the size of your audience.

## Speaking Outdoors

Outdoor settings can be charming, but they are prone to distractions. If you're giving a speech in a setting that is picturesquely beautiful or prone to noise such as from cars, it may be difficult to maintain the audience's attention. If you know this ahead of time, you might plan your speech to focus more on mood than information and perhaps to make reference to the lovely view.

More typically, outdoor speech venues can pose challenges with weather, sun glare, and uninvited guests, such as insects and pigeons. If the venue is located near a busy highway, it might be difficult to make yourself heard over the ambient noise. You might lack the usual accommodations, such as a lectern or table. Whatever the situation, you will need to use your best efforts to project your voice clearly without sounding like you're yelling or straining your voice. In the best outdoor situation, you will have access to a microphone.

## Using a Microphone

Most people today are familiar with microphones that are built into video recorders, phones, and other electronic devices, but they may be new at using a microphone to deliver a speech. One overall principle to remember is that a microphone only amplifies, it does not clarify. If you are not enunciating clearly, the microphone will merely enable your audience to hear amplified mumbling.

Microphones come in a wide range of styles and sizes. Generally, the easiest microphone to use is the clip-on style worn on the front of your shirt or blouse (These are commonly referred to as a Lavalier mic, which is a brand name). If you look closely at many television personalities and news anchors, you will notice these tiny microphones clipped to their clothing. They require very little adaptation. You simply have to avoid looking down—at your notes, for instance—because your voice will be amplified when you do so. If you have to use a hand-held microphone, making gestures and using notes becomes very difficult.

Lectern and handheld microphones require more adaptation. If they're too close to your mouth, they can screech. If they're too far away, they might not pick up your voice. Some microphones are directional, meaning that they are only effective when you speak directly into them. If there is any opportunity to do so, ask for tips about how to use a particular microphone. Also practice with it for a few minutes while you have someone listen from a middle row in the audience and signal whether you can be heard well. The best plan, of course, would be to have access to the microphone for practice ahead of the speaking date.

Often a microphone is provided when it isn't necessary. If the room is small or the audience is close to you, do not feel obligated to use the microphone. Sometimes an amplified voice can feel less natural and less compelling than a direct voice. However, if you forgo the microphone, make sure to speak loudly enough for all audience members to hear you—not just those in front.

## Audience Size

A small audience is an opportunity for a more intimate, minimally formal tone. If your audience has only eight to twelve people, you can generate greater audience contact. Make use of all the preparation you have done. You do not have to revamp your speech just because the audience is small. When the presentation is over, there will most likely be opportunities to answer questions and have individual contact with your listeners.

One problem with a small audience is that some people will feel it is their right, or they have permission, to interrupt you or raise their hands to ask questions in the middle of your speech. This makes for a difficult situation, because the question may be irrelevant to your topic or cause you to go on a side track if answered. The best you can do is say you'll try to deal with that question at the end of the speech if you have time and hope they take the hint. Better, good rules should be established at the beginning that state there is limited time but discussion may be possible at the end.

Your classroom audience may be as many as twenty to thirty students. The format for an audience of this size is still formal but conversational. Depending on how your instructor structures the class, you may or may not be asked to leave time after your speech for questions and answers. Some audiences are much larger. If you have an audience that fills an auditorium, or if you have an auditorium with only a few people in it, you still have a clearly formal task, and you should be guided as much as possible by your preparation.

## 9.4 Practicing Your Delivery



There is no foolproof recipe for good delivery. Each of us is unique, and we each embody different experiences and interests. This means each person has an approach, or a style, that is effective for her or him. This further means that anxiety can accompany even the most carefully researched and interesting message. But there are some techniques you can use to minimize that anxious feeling and put yourself in the best possible position to succeed on speech day. If you've ever watched your favorite college football team practice, you may have noticed that sometimes obnoxiously loud crowd noise is blaring over the speaker system in the stadium. The coaches know that the crowd, whether home or away, will be raucous and noisy on game day. So to prepare, they practice in as realistic an environment as possible. You need to prepare for your speech in a similar way. What follows are some general tips you should keep in mind, but they all essentially derive from one very straight-forward premise: Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in class.

### Practice Your Speech Out Loud

We sometimes think that the purpose of practicing a speech is to learn the words and be prepared for what we will need to say. Certainly that is part of it, but practice also lets you know where potential problems lie. For example, if you only read your speech in your head, or whisper the words quietly, you're not really practicing what you will be doing in front of the class. Since you will be speaking with a normal volume for your assignment, you need to practice that way, even at home. Not only will this help you learn the speech, but it will help identify any places where you tend to mispronounce or stumble over words. Also, sentences on paper do not always translate well to the spoken medium. Practicing out loud allows you to actually hear

where your sentences and phrases are awkward, unnatural, or too long, and allows you to correct them before getting up in front of the audience.

## Practice Your Speech Standing Up

In all the time that the authors of this book have been teaching speech, not once have either of us come into a classroom and seen a bed behind the lectern for students to speak from. This is to say that when you practice at home, lying on your bed reading your speech really only prepares you for one thing: lying on a bed reading a speech. Since you will be standing in front of your class, you need to practice that way. As we mention in more detail below, the default position for delivering a speech is with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent. Practicing this way will help develop muscle memory and will make it feel more natural when you are doing it for real. We also suggest you wear the same shoes you will be wearing on the day of your speech.

## Practice Your Speech with a Lectern

One of the biggest challenges with practicing a speech as you're going to give it is usually the fact that most of us don't own a lectern. This is problematic, since you don't want to practice giving your speech while holding your notes in front of you because that is what will feel comfortable when you give your speech for real. So the solution is to practice your speech while standing behind something that approximates the lectern you will have in your classroom. Sometimes this may be a kitchen counter or maybe even a dresser you pull away from the wall. One particularly creative idea that has been used in the past is to pull out an ironing board and stand behind that. The point is that you want to get experience standing behind something and resting your speech on it.

Of course, if you really want to practice with an actual lectern, it might be worth the time to see if your classroom is empty later in the day or find out if another classroom has the same type of lectern in it. Practicing with the "real thing" is always ideal. Additionally, one should be equally prepared for the event in which a lectern is missing or unavailable in the room in which the speech will be given. Flexible speakers are able to communicate their priorities with or without a lectern.

## Practice Your Speech with an Audience

Obviously, on the day you give your speech, you will have an audience of your fellow students and your professor watching you. The best way to prepare for the feeling of having someone watch you while giving a speech is to have someone watch you while you practice giving a speech. We don't mean a collection of stuffed animals arranged on your bed or locking your pets in the room with you, but actual human beings. Ask your parents, siblings, friends, or significant other to listen to you while running through what you will say. Not

only will you get practice in front of an audience, but they may be able to tell you about any parts that were unclear or problems you might encounter when you give it for a grade.

Not to overcomplicate the issue, but remember that when you speak to your class, you will have an entire room full of people watching. Therefore, if you only have one person watching you practice, be sure to simulate an entire audience by looking around the room and not focusing on just that one person. When you give your speech for real, you will want to make eye contact with the people on the left side of the room as well as the right; with the people in the front as well as in the back. You also want the eye contact to be around five seconds long, not just a glance; the idea is that you are talking to individuals, not just a glob of people. During practice, it may help to pick out some strategically placed objects around the room to occasionally focus on just to get into the habit of looking around more often.

## Practice Your Speech for Time

You will undoubtedly be given a time limit for each of your speeches, and points will probably be deducted from your grade if you go over or under that time. Therefore, you want to make sure you are well within time. As a general rule, if your speech window is 5-7 minutes, your ideal speech time is going to be 6 minutes; this gives you an extra 60 seconds at the beginning in case you talk very fast and race through it, and 60 seconds on the back end in case you get lost or want to add something at the last minute. If you practice at home and your 5-7 minute speech lasts 5:06, you are probably going to be in trouble on speech day. Most likely your nerves will cause you to speak slightly faster and put you under the 5:00 mark. If your times are vastly different, you may have to practice four or more times.

When practicing your speech at home for time, it is a good idea to time yourself at least three times. This way you can see if you are generally coming in around the same time and feel pretty good that it is an accurate reflection of how long you will speak. Conversely, if during your three rehearsals your times are 5:45, 5:12, and 6:37, then that is a clear indicator that you need to be more consistent in what you are saying and doing.

Although we are using examples of practicing for classroom speeches, the principle is even more important for non-classroom speeches. One of the authors had to give a very important presentation about the college to an accreditation board. She practiced about 15 times, to make sure the time was right, that her transitions made sense, that she was fluid, and that the presentational slides and her speech matched. Each time something improved.

## Practice Your Speech by Recording Yourself

There is nothing that gets us to change what we're doing or correct a problem more quickly than seeing ourselves doing something we don't like on video. Your instructor may record your speech in class and have you critique it afterwards, but it may be more helpful to do that in advance of giving your speech. By

watching yourself, you will notice all the small things you do that might prove to be distracting and affect your grade during the actual speech. Many times students aren't aware that they have low energy or a monotone/monorate voice, or that they bounce, sway, pull at their clothes, play with hair or jewelry, or make other unusual and distracting movements. At least, they don't know this until they see themselves doing it. Since we are generally our own harshest critics, you will be quick to notice any flaws in your speech and correct them.

It is important enough that it deserves reiterating:

Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in class.

Following these steps will not only prepare you better for delivering the speech, but they may also help reduce anxiety, since you will feel more familiar with the situation you find yourself in when faced with a speaking engagement. Additionally, the more you speak publicly, whether for practice or in front of a live audience, the more fluid you will become for later speeches.









## 9.5 What to Do When Delivering Your Speech

The interplay between the verbal and nonverbal components of your speech can either bring the message vividly to life or confuse or bore the audience. Therefore, it is best that you neither over dramatize your speech delivery behaviors nor downplay them. This is a balance achieved through rehearsal, trial and error, and experience. One way to think of this is in terms of the Goldilocks paradigm: you don't want to overdo the delivery because you might distract your audience by looking hyper or overly animated. Conversely, someone whose delivery is too understated (meaning they don't move their hands or feet at all) looks unnatural and uncomfortable, which can also distract. Just like Goldilocks, you want a delivery that is "just right." This middle ground between too much and too little is a much more natural approach to public speaking delivery. This natural approach will be covered in more detail in the following sections, where we discuss specific aspects of your delivery and what you need to think about while actually giving your speech.

### Hands

Almost everyone who gives a speech in public gets scared or nervous to some extent. Even professionals who do this for a living feel that way, but they have learned how to combat those nerves through experience and practice. When we get scared or nervous, our bodies emit adrenaline into our systems so we can deal with whatever problem is causing us to feel that way. Unfortunately, you will need to be standing relatively still for the next several minutes, so that burst of adrenaline is going to try to work its way out of your body and manifest itself somehow. One of the main ways is through your hands.

It may sound funny, but we have seen more than one student unknowingly incorporate "jazz hands" (shaking your hands at your sides with fingers opened wide) at various points in their speech. While certainly an extreme example, this and behaviors like it can easily become distracting. At the other end of the scale, people who don't know what to do with their hands or use them "too little" sometimes hold their arms stiffly at their sides, behind their backs, or in their pockets, all of which can also look unnatural and distracting.

The key to knowing what to do with your hands is to use them naturally as you would in normal conversation. If you were standing around talking to your friends and wanted to list three reasons why you should all take a road trip this weekend, you would probably hold up your fingers as you counted off the reasons ("First, we hardly ever get this opportunity. Second, we can..."). Try to pay attention to what you do with your hands in regular conversations and incorporate that into your delivery.

However, with all that said, if you have nothing else to do with your hands, such as meaningful gestures, the default position for them is to be resting gently on the sides of the lectern. You don't want to grip the lectern

tightly, but resting them on the edges keeps them in position to move your notes on if you need to or use them to gesture. As stated above, you want to practice this way beforehand so you are used to speaking this way when you come to class.

## Feet

Just like your hands, a lot of nervous energy is going to try to work its way out of your body through your feet. On the “too much” end, this is most common when people start “dancing” behind the lectern. Another variation is twisting feet around each other or the lower leg. On the other end are those who put their feet together, lock their knees, and never move from that position. Both of these options look unnatural, and therefore will prove to be distracting to your audience. Locking your knees can also lead to loss of oxygen in your brain—not a good state to be in, because it can cause you to faint.

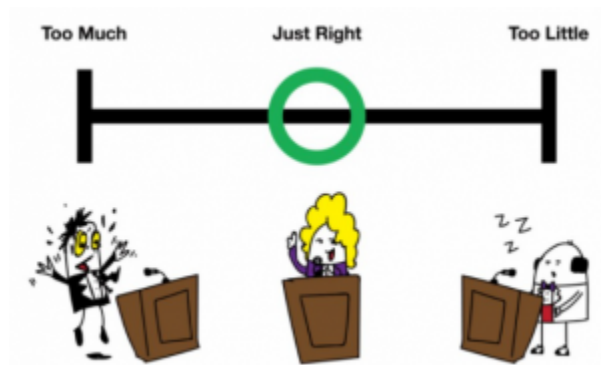
The default position for your feet, then, is to have them shoulder-width apart with your knees slightly bent. Again, you want to look and feel natural, so it is fine to adjust your weight or move out from behind the lectern, but constant motion (or perpetual stillness) will not lead to good overall delivery.

These two sections on hands and feet mention “energy.” Public speakers need to look energetic—not hyperactive, but engaged and upbeat about communicating their message. Slumping, low and unvarying pitch and rate, and lack of gestures telegraph “I don’t care” to an audience.

## Objects

There is a very simple rule when it comes to what you should bring with you to the lectern when you give your speech: Only bring to the lectern what you absolutely need to give the speech. Anything else you have with you will only serve as a distraction for both you and the audience. For the purposes of this class, the only objects you should need to give your speech are whatever materials you are speaking from, and possibly a visual aid if you are using one. Beyond that, don’t bring pens, laptops, phones, lucky charms, or notebooks with you to the lectern. These extra items can ultimately become a distraction themselves when they fall off the lectern or get in your way. Some students like to bring their electronic tablet, laptop computer, or cell phone with them, but there are some obvious disadvantages to these items, especially if you don’t turn the ringer on your cell phone off. Cell phones are not usually large enough to serve as presentation notes; we’ve seen students squint and hold the phone up to their faces.





Not only do you need to be aware of what you bring with you, but you should also be aware of what you have on your person as well. Sometimes, in the course of dressing for a speech, we can overlook simple issues that can cause problems while speaking. Some of these can include:

- Jewelry that ‘jingles’ when you move, such as heavy bracelets;
- Uncomfortable shoes or shoes that you are not used to;
- Anything with fringe, zippers, or things hanging off it. They might become irresistible to play with while speaking;
- For those with longer hair, remember that you will be looking down at your notes and then looking back up. Don’t be forced to “fix” your hair or tuck it behind your ear every time you look up. Use a hairband, clip, or some other method to keep your hair totally out of your face so that the audience can see your eyes and you won’t have to adjust your hair constantly. It can be very distracting to an audience to watch a speaker pull hair from his face after every sentence.

## The Lectern and Posture

We have already discussed the lectern, but it is worth mentioning again briefly here. The lectern is a tool for you to use that should ultimately make your speech easier to give, and you need to use it that way. On the “too much” end, some people want to trick their audience into thinking they are not nervous by leaning on the podium in a relaxed manner, sometimes going so far as to actually begin tipping the podium forward. Your lectern is **NOT** part of your skeletal system, to prop you up, so don’t do this. On the “too little” end are those who are afraid to touch it, worried that they will use it incorrectly or somehow knock it over (you won’t!).

As always, you want the “Goldilocks” middle ground. As stated above, rest your notes and hands on it, but don’t lean on the lectern or “hug” it. Practicing with a lectern (or something similar to a lectern) will eliminate most of your fears about using it.

The lectern use is related to posture. Most of us let gravity pull us down. One of the muscle memory tricks of public speaking is to roll your shoulders back. Along with making your shoulder muscles feel better, doing so with feet apart and knees bent, rolling your shoulders back will lead to a more credible physical

presence—you'll look taller and more energetic. You'll also feel better, and you'll have larger lung capacity for breathing to support your tone and volume.

## Eye Contact

As we've said consistently throughout this book, your audience is the single biggest factor that influences every aspect of your speech. And since eye contact is how you establish and maintain a rapport with your audience during your speech, it is an extremely important element of your delivery. Your professor may or may not indicate a standard for how much eye contact you need during the speech, such as 50%, but he or she will absolutely want to see you making an effort to engage your audience through looking directly at them.

What is important to note here is that you want to establish genuine eye contact with your audience, and not “fake” eye contact. There have been a lot of techniques generated for “faking” eye contact, and none of them look natural. For example, these are not good ideas:

- Three points on the back wall – You may have heard that instead of making eye contact, you can just pick three points on the back wall and look at those. What ends up happening, though, is you look like you are staring off into space and your audience will spend the majority of your speech trying to figure out what you are looking at. To avoid this, look around the entire room, including the front, back, left, and right sides of the space.
- The swimming method – This happens when someone is reading his or her speech and looks up quickly and briefly to try to make it seem like they are making eye contact, not unlike a swimmer who pops his head out of the water for a breath before going back under. Eye contact is more than just physically moving your head; it is about looking at your audience and establishing a connection. In general, your eye contact should last at least five seconds at a time and should be with individuals throughout the room.
- The stare down – Since you will, to some degree, be graded on your eye contact, some students think (either consciously or not) that the best way to ensure they get credit for establishing eye contact is to always and exclusively look directly at their professor. While we certainly appreciate the attention, we want to see that you are establishing eye contact with your entire audience, not just one person. Also, this behavior is uncomfortable for the instructor.

## Vocal Considerations

### Volume

**Volume** refers to the relative softness or loudness of your voice. Like most of the other issues we've discussed

in this section, the proper volume for a given speaking engagement usually falls on a scale like the one above. If you speak too softly (“too little” volume), your audience will struggle to hear and understand you and may give up trying to listen. If you speak with “too much” volume, your audience may feel that you are yelling at them, or at least feel uncomfortable with you shouting. The volume you use should fit the size of the audience and the room.

Fortunately, for the purposes of this class, your normal speaking voice will probably work just fine, since you are in a relatively small space with around twenty people. However, if you know that you are naturally a soft-spoken person, you will need to work on breathing to get more air into your lungs, and on projecting your voice to the people in the last row, not just those in the front. Of course, if you are naturally a very loud talker, you may want to make other adjustments when giving your speech. Obviously this will all change if you are asked to speak in a larger venue or given a microphone to use.

Public speaking relies on the voice for interest, credibility, audibility, and clarity. The British Prime Minister of the 19th century was quoted saying, “There is no greater index of character so sure as the voice.” While that seems exaggerated today, a public speaker at any level cannot ignore the energy, loudness, and clarity in their voice. There are four steps to voice production: *breathing* (*produced by the lungs, which are largely responsible for the vocal characteristic of volume*); *phonation* (the production of the sound in the vocal folds, which close and vibrate to produce sound for speaking as the air is exhaled over them; phonation creates pitch); *resonation* (*a type of amplification of the sound in the larynx, oral cavity, and nasal cavity, which creates the characteristic of quality*); and *articulation*, which produces the sounds of language others can understand and is responsible for rate and for being understood.

Your instructor may give you more directions on maximizing the power of your voice to achieve more variety and power. We have all listened to a low-energy, monotone, monorate speaker and know how hard it is, so you should pay attention to your recording, perhaps by closing your eyes and just listening, to see if your voice is flat and lifeless.

## Pitch

**Pitch** is the relative highness or lowness of your voice, and like everything, you can have too much or too little (with regard to variation of it). Too much pitch variation occurs when people “sing” their speeches, and their voices oscillate between very high pitched and very low pitched. While uncommon, this is sometimes attributed to nerves. More common is too little variation in pitch, which is known as being **monotone**.

Delivering a speech in a monotone manner is usually caused by reading too much; generally the speaker’s focus is on saying the words correctly (because they have not practiced). They forget to speak normally to show their interest in the topic, as we would in everyday conversation. For most people, pitch isn’t a major issue, but if you think it might be for you, ask the people in your practice audience what they think. Generally, if we are interested in and passionate about communicating our thoughts, we are not likely to be monotone. We are



rarely monotone when talking to friends and family about matters of importance to us, so pick topics you care about.

## Rate

How quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech is the **rate**. Too little rate (i.e., speaking too slowly) will make it sound like you may not fully know your speech or what you are talking about, and will ultimately cost you some credibility with your audience. It may also result in the audience being bored and losing focus on what you are saying. Rate is one reason you should try to record yourself, even if just audio on your phone, beforehand and be mindful of time when you practice. Your voice's rate will affect the time it takes to give the speech.

By contrast, too much rate (i.e., speaking too fast) can be overly taxing on an audience's ability to keep up with and digest what you are saying. It sometimes helps to imagine that your speech is a jog or run that you and your friends (the audience) are taking together. You (as the speaker) are setting the pace based on how quickly you speak. If you start sprinting, it may be too difficult for your audience to keep up and they may give up halfway through. If you know you speak quickly, especially when nervous, be sure to practice slowing down and writing yourself delivery cues in your notes to maintain a more comfortable rate. As always, recording and timing your speech during practice helps.

You especially will want to maintain a good, deliberate rate at the beginning of your speech because your audience will be getting used to your voice. We have all called a business where the person answering the phone mumbles the name of the business in a rushed way. We aren't sure if we called the right number. Since the introduction is designed to get the audience's attention and interest in your speech, you will want to focus on clear delivery there. Regulating rate is another reason why video-recording yourself can be so helpful because we often do not realize how fast we speak.

## Pauses

The common misconception for public speaking students is that pausing during your speech is bad, but that isn't necessarily true. You pause in normal conversations, so you shouldn't be afraid of pausing while speaking. This is especially true if you are making a particularly important point or want a statement to have a more powerful impact: you will want to give the audience a moment to digest what you have said.

For example, consider the following statement: "Because of issues like pollution and overpopulation, in 50 years the earth's natural resources will be so depleted that it will become difficult for most people to obtain enough food to survive." Following a statement like this, you want to give your audience just a brief moment to fully consider what you are saying. Hopefully they will think something along the lines of *What if I'm still alive then?* or *What will my children do?* and become more interested in hearing what you have to say.

Of course, there is such a thing as pausing too much, both in terms of frequency and length. Someone

who pauses too often (after each sentence) may come off seeming like they don't know their speech very well. Someone who pauses too long (more than a few seconds), runs the risk of the audience feeling uncomfortable or, even worse, becoming distracted or letting their attention wander. We are capable of processing words more quickly than anyone can speak clearly, which is one of the reasons listening is difficult. Pauses should be controlled to maintain the attention of the audience.

## Vocalized pauses

At various points during your speech, you may find yourself in need of a brief moment to collect your thoughts or prepare for the next section of your speech. At those moments, you will be pausing, but we don't always like to let people know that we're pausing. So what many of us do in an attempt to "trick" the audience is fill in those pauses with sounds so that it appears that we haven't actually paused. These are known as **vocalized pauses**, or sometimes "fillers." Another term for them is "nonfluencies."

Everyone uses vocalized pauses to some degree, but not everyone's are problematic. This obviously becomes an issue when the vocalized pauses become distracting due to their overuse. We have little doubt that you can remember a time when you were speaking to someone who said the word "like" after every three words and you became focused on it. One of your authors remembers attending a wedding and (inadvertently) began counting the number of times the best man said "like" during his toast (22 was the final count). The most common vocalized pause is "uh," but then there are others. Can you think of any?

The bad news here is that there is no quick fix for getting rid of your vocalized pauses. They are so ingrained into all of our speech patterns that getting rid of them is a challenge. However, there is a two-step process you can employ to begin eliminating them. First, you need to identify what your particular vocalized pause is. Do you say "um," "well," or "now" before each sentence? Do you finish each thought with, "you know?" Do you use "like" before every adjective (as in "He was, like, so unhappy")?

After figuring out what your vocalized pause is, the second step is to carefully and meticulously try to catch yourself when you say it. If you hear yourself saying "uh," remind yourself, *I need to try to not say that*. Catching yourself and being aware of how often you use vocalized pauses will help you begin the process of reducing your dependence on them and hopefully get rid of them completely.

One of the authors uses a game in her class that she adopted from a couple of disc jockeys she used to hear. It is called the "uh game." The callers had to name six things in a named category (items in a refrigerator, pro-football teams, makes of cars, etc.) in twenty seconds without saying a vocalized pause word or phrase. It sounds easy, but it isn't, especially on the spot with a radio audience. It is a good way to practice focusing on the content and not saying a vocalized pause.

The ten items listed above represent the major delivery issues you will want to be aware of when giving a speech, but it is by no means an exhaustive list. There is, however, one final piece of delivery advice we would like to offer. We know that no matter how hard you practice and how diligent you are in preparing for your speech, you are most likely going to mess up some aspect of your speech when you give it in class, at least a

little. That's normal. Everyone does it. The key is to not make a big deal about it or let the audience know you messed up. Odds are that they will never even realize your mistake if you don't tell them there was a mistake. Saying something like "I can't believe I messed that up" or "Can I start over?" just telegraphs to the audience your mistake. In fact, you have most likely never heard a perfect speech delivered in your life. It is likely that you just didn't realize that the speaker missed a line or briefly forgot what they wanted to say.

Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in class.

Since you know you are likely going to make some sort of mistake in class, use your practice time at home to work on how you will deal with those mistakes. If you say a word incorrectly or start reading the wrong sentence, don't go back and begin that section anew. That's not what you would do in class, so just correct yourself and move on. If you practice dealing with your mistakes at home, you will be better prepared for the inevitable errors that will find their way into your speech in class.

A final thought on practice. We have all heard, "Practice makes perfect." That is not always true. Practice makes permanent; the actions become habitual. If you practice incorrectly, your performance will be incorrect. Be sure your practice is correct.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=612#h5p-18>



# CHAPTER 10: INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

## Learning Objectives

- Identify key elements of an effective introduction.
- List methods of grabbing the audience's attention.
- Identify key elements of an effective conclusion.

## Key Terms

- **Attention-Getter**
- **Brakelight**
- **Character**
- **Competence**
- **Credibility**
- **Note of Finality**
- **Preview**
- **Summary**
- **Thesis**



---

## 10.1 Introductions

The very first words you use when starting a speech create a first impression for the audience that either encourages them to listen or tune out. While this is usually a short part of your presentation, it is important to take your time developing the introduction because you are creating a first impression of yourself and the topic. The introduction sets the tone for the speech, and it lets the audience know what to expect and what type of information they will receive.

There are four important tasks that must be accomplished during the first few minutes of a speech. You must:

1. Capture the audience's attention and give them a reason to listen.
2. Self-introduce and establish your credibility or ethos.
3. Reveal the topic of the speech through a clear thesis and relate it to the audience.
4. Preview the body of the speech by specifically outlining the main points you will cover.

### Capture the Audience's Attention

Audience members do not attend a presentation with the intention of losing interest or being bored to tears. Truth be told, audience members do not give a speaker a terribly long time to win them over either. You may only have several sentences and, possibly, a chance to actually introduce the topic of the speech before the audience mentally votes "Yes, I want to listen further" or "No, I'm tuning out and thinking about lunch." If there is nothing in the speech that connects to the audience or gives them a reason to listen, then it is easy to decide not to listen. This opening statement is known as an **attention-getter**. This is your opportunity to capture the audience's attention, but also help them to understand how this speech relates to them.

Depending on the overall time limit of a presentation, an ideal introduction should last no more than 30 seconds to 1 minute, and this includes your thesis and preview of your main points. This seems like a long time, but in truth, it is not. Hence, you have a short yet precious window to lure your audience and hope to keep them there. Here are top attention-gaining strategies to try in your upcoming speeches:

### Ask a Question

Ask insightful, meaningful questions. Better yet, ask a series of questions designed to draw the audience further and further into your speech.

When you ask your audience a question, they must think. In the process of thinking, they are paying attention. Ideally your question should be rhetorical, you don't want the audience to answer out loud, that can be distracting from your planned introduction and can interfere with the timing of the speech. Asking a rhetorical question allows the audience to connect to your topic—if they raise their hands or agree with you, then this topic is important to them; if they don't connect, they want to know what they are missing. Asking a question draws the audience into your topic and makes it important to them.

*“How many of you would categorize yourselves as ‘givers’? How many of you search for the perfect Christmas or birthday gift each year for your best friend or perhaps your mom? You go all out, right? Then, how many of you have signed up to be an organ donor? Isn't that the ultimate gift? The gift of life?”*

## Find a Quotation

It could be a historical quote, a humorous one, even a song lyric. Ensure you credit the originator of the quote. Ensure the quote is relevant to your topic. If you use a quote, it should be impactful and cause your audience to want to hear more. When used effectively, the quote is relatively short and directly related to the topic.

*“Make sure you have finished speaking before your audience has finished listening.” –Dorothy Sarnoff*  
*“Courage is being scared to death—but saddling up anyway.” –John Wayne*

## Use a Startling Statistic

Use a startling statistic or a shocking statement. For every topic, there is a statistic that the audience doesn't know or is meaningful. Audiences tend to remember startling information even after the speech ends, and it helps to get their attention. Finding a statistic that also connects the audience to the topic can be very impactful. Make sure you correctly cite your source when you state the statistic.

*“According to HIV.gov, 34,800 new HIV infections occurred in 2019, while we don't hear much about this disease anymore, it continues to disproportionately affect people in the South.”*

*“According to the FBI, statistics show that one in every four women will be assaulted in her lifetime. As I look around this room, that means that 5 of us will be victims of assault; is that you?”*

## Reference a Recent Event

Reference a local event, place, or activity. Use a recent news story, tragedy, or occurrence that your audience would be sure to recall. A recent event can make your topic more meaningful to the audience because it demonstrates that your topic is happening right now, that this topic matters. There is always something going on, whether it's Hispanic Heritage Month or a recent news story that you can connect your topic to and help the audience to know this topic matters to them.

*“I'm sure all of you will recall the news story a few months back in which a car went over the Buckman*



*Bridge, sideswiped by a drunk driver, as stated on the ABC news station KVUE. Today, I want to discuss how you can be a defensive driver—and hopefully—save yourself from becoming the next headline.”*

## Tell a Story

Engage us, draw us in, and make the details of the story vivid and real to us.

*“When I was four years old, I became separated from my parents while visiting the zoo. One minute they were there; the next, they were gone. While you might imagine that I was frightened, I wasn’t. I continued to look at the snakes in each display, fascinated. I tagged along with other visitors following the same path, staring in awe at each new exhibit. I certainly didn’t realize then what we all know now. How dangerous the world can be for a child alone?”*

If you ever listened to a scary story told by a camp counselor at night when all were sitting near a campfire, you know the power of a good story. Plan to tell your audience a story, and you will have them listening as attentively to you as campers listen to a counselor’s scary story. Use vivid details; paint a mental picture in the minds of your listeners. You want them to relate—to smell the cookies baking, to see the tears in your grandmother’s eyes, to feel the softness of a baby in your arms. Make sure the story is short and directly related to the topic and the introduction is short and designed to move the audience into the body of the speech—if you have a longer story, that might be a main point.

Sometimes a story can be too personal or difficult to tell as a speaker, in which case you could use a personal reference instead. Rather than telling the whole story, it is just as meaningful to share your connection.

*“According to the FBI statistics, 1 in 4 women will be a victim of assault in their lifetimes, I was a victim of assault due to an unfortunate and scary choice in a romantic relationship.”*

While the story might be hard to share, even stating the connection from the speaker to the topic can be just as impactful.

## Use Humor

If the topic is funny, then start with a funny story or a humorous admission of your own to connect the topic to the audience. Not every topic is serious or designed to save the world, some topics are lighthearted and funny, and the introduction should be funny as well. It is important to remember the audience however, not every humorous story is appropriate for every audience. In a classroom setting, you would want to ensure your humor was academically appropriate, and at work, your humor would need to be work appropriate. Note that humor does not work for every speaker. If you are not originally a funny person or unconfident of using humor in your speech, it might be safer to avoid humor.

## Find a Compelling Visual Aid

A picture is worth a thousand words. Find a poignant, shocking, funny, or charming picture to get your audience's attention. For example:

- A photo of a homeless child.
- A picture of a crystal-clear lake and mountain range.
- A cartoon depicting a political news story.

## Self-Introduce and Establish Your Credibility

An audience may or may not have a preconceived notion about you when you stand before them, but your audience will make up its mind about you quickly. Humans are notoriously quick to judge and often form a first impression about a date, a stranger, or a speaker within the first 30 seconds. It becomes imperative, then, for you to introduce yourself and establish your **credibility** after you have grabbed the audience's attention. While some in your audience will form a first impression of you based upon your outfit or your smile, **most will judge your credibility based upon two crucial factors: your perceived competence and character.**

**Competence** ensures your audience that you know your subject well. You have a strong knowledge base, and you are well prepared to share the topic with your listeners. Reveal your expertise in the introduction, so your audience knows from the beginning that you can be trusted. If you have a special relationship to the topic, either personal or professional or by association, the beginning of your presentation is the time to share that. If you do not have in-depth knowledge of the topic, it's time to hit the books, access the Internet, or talk with the experts. You have the ability to become a minor expert on most any topic by doing some research. Then ensure that your audience knows of your research; they want to know that your information is valid.

A second component of credibility comes from the audience's ***assessment of your character***. Can you be trusted? Do you have their best interests at heart? Will the information you provide be useful and relevant to their lives or do you have your own agenda? This aspect of credibility is often referred to as “ethos,” the Greek word for character.

A great example is the stereotype of a used car salesman. You need a car, but you are not sure which one is right for you and which one you can really afford. The salesman knows all the necessary information about the vehicles—gas consumption, mileage, and accessories. But you just do not trust that s/he has your best interest at heart. Is s/he trying to get rid of a particular car or make more commission? Is the car you are being shown best for you or best for the salesman? While you feel confident of the salesperson's competence, you are doubtful of his/her character. It is important that you show your audience that you are credible in both areas (Banks).

Some of the different ways to get the audience's attention can also be used to establish your credibility. If

you told a story of how this topic happened to you, or you ask a rhetorical question and then state that you have or do whatever the question was about, this can help to get our attention and establish credibility.

*“How many people in here have ever watched an important person in your life suffer through an illness? I watched my sister struggle with breast cancer and today I will be explaining what breast cancer is.”*

Sometimes you might not have a personal connection to the topic, where your research will be important to demonstrate that you are knowledgeable.

*“Ever since my grandfather gave me a telescope, I have been fascinated by the stars. This has become a topic that I research and read about every chance I get.”*

Whatever topic you choose to present in your speeches, it is important that you have some connection to that topic, you have to be credible to speak on a topic in order for the audience to believe you, it would be unfair to ask the audience to do something that you don’t do or have no connection to.

## Reveal the Topic of the Speech Through a Thesis Statement & Preview the Body of the Speech

After you grab your audience’s attention and before you reach the actual body of the speech, you will reveal your **thesis** statement. Remember, a thesis statement is a singular thought that tells the audience what the speech is about. It should be a strong, single, declarative sentence that captures the main point of your presentation. For example, if you are giving an informative speech on how to properly use a fire extinguisher, your thesis may be:

*“Knowing how to operate a fire extinguisher by following four simple steps can be beneficial and potentially lifesaving.”*

or

*“Using a fire extinguisher can be accomplished by following four simple steps.”*

A **preview** statement is also an important component of your introduction. While many people attempt to combine the thesis and preview statement, it is more thorough to include them as separate distinct items. The preview statement is usually the last sentence of the introduction. The preview is like giving your audience a map for a car trip: They will have an overview of where you will be taking them. It will be easier for them to pay attention as you present your information, and it will help them retain the main points of your presentation.

Using the same topic as used above, a preview statement might sound like:

*“Today we will cover four specific steps that you should follow when using a fire extinguisher. I will explain the PASS acronym of pull, aim, squeeze, and sweep in my speech.”*

Or perhaps it will be spoken this way:

*“In our time today, we will discuss how to properly use a fire extinguisher. You should pull the pin, aim the nozzle, squeeze the trigger and use a sweeping motion when using a fire extinguisher in an emergency situation.”*

Notice that in each case, the speaker laid out the roadmap for what was going to be presented during the presentation. The audience had a framework to fill in when the supporting material was presented.

To prepare yourself, review the main points you intend to cover, and write one sentence that previews each of those points, separated by commas. You can also write three shorter sentences and use periods. Beware of going into the details reserved for the main body of the speech while previewing your topic. This will confuse the audience, and they will wonder what else you plan to discuss. Remember, the introduction is short, and your goal is to move the audience into the body of the speech.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1022#oembed-1>*

---

## 10.2 Conclusions

You have riveted your audience with an engaging introduction. Your introduction led to a compellingly written and logically organized speech. Now, it is time to wrap up the entire experience, but how? Do not make the mistake of thinking, “Well, my speech is just about over at this point, so it doesn’t matter how I end it.” You need a conclusion just as dynamic and memorable as your speech opener. How do you feel when a movie has a disappointing ending that does not wrap up the story or, worse, simply leaves you hanging? You feel frustrated, quite possibly like you wasted your money and time. Your audience will feel the same way if your closing remarks do not provide effective closure for your speech. Too many speakers do not realize that when a speech fizzles out, the audience is left with a negative impression. Your speech introduction and body may have included the most profound words known to man, but it could be said that a speaker is only as strong as her/his last sentence. You want your final sentences to be ones that are remembered and valued. The conclusion is the last opportunity to share anything with the audience; you don’t want to waste those valuable seconds.

### What a Speech Conclusion Is Meant to Do

The speech conclusion has four basic missions:

1. Wraps things up: This portion is often referred to as a “**Brakelight**.” Much like brake lights on a car warn us the car will be stopping, this “brake light” or transitional statement warns the audience that the speech is ending.
2. Summarizes: A solid conclusion briefly restates the preview statement in past tense to remind the audience of the main points that were covered in the presentation.
3. Tells the audience where to go from here: Depending on the purpose of your presentation, this component may play different roles. If your goal was to inform the audience, this is where you might tell them of a rich source they can go to for more information if their curiosity was piqued. If your goal is to persuade, this spot serves as a great opportunity to challenge the audience to take action based on the goals of your speech. Tell them what you want them to do now that they heard your speech.
4. Closes the speech: The note of finality, clincher, closing statement, or whatever you want to call it is an important element that leaves the audience reflecting on the topic.

## Wrapping Things Up: It Says, “We Are Nearing the End!”

Hopefully, your audience will want you to speak for an hour, rather than just five or eight minutes. However, when you transition into your conclusion and use appropriate signposting, your audience realizes that the speech will come full circle. Usually, the first transitional phrase is a “brake light” of sorts. It lets the audience know that you are starting to wrap up your presentation. You may use a transitional statement to illustrate this such as “In conclusion...” “In summary...” or “To wrap things up....”

## The Summary: It Tells the Audience, “Here's What I Told You.”

Just as you used a mapping statement to preview your main points, now you will **summarize** your points within your conclusion. Simply rewording—or even restating—your original thesis statement or preview statement in the past tense will effectively summarize your speech. While this will feel very repetitive to you as a speaker, it is useful in helping the audience understand and retain the information you covered. While you may be tempted to revisit all the details of your speech, this element is best served by a clear, concise, declarative sentence that restates the main points you addressed.

Your conclusion for the fire extinguisher speech might begin with wrapping up and a summary for the audience.

*“In conclusion, I have explained how to safely use a fire extinguisher. We have to talk about the PASS system of pulling the pin, aiming the nozzle, squeezing the trigger, and sweeping the fire.”*

## Where to Go From Here: It Says, “Here's What To Do Now!”

The conclusion is the last chance you have to speak to the audience about this topic. Depending on your general purpose, this portion of the speech will vary. Informative speaking often creates an interest in the audience to learn more about your topic. It's best to give the audience a good resource to check out if they want to learn more information. Avoid telling the audience to “google it.” We all know how to do that. Since you've done the research, tell us the best one you found. An example is, “If you'd like to learn more about the history of Stillwater, I recommend visiting The Sheerar Museum at 702 South Duncan here in Stillwater.”

Persuasive presentation conclusions want to utilize the last opportunity to challenge the listeners to action. A conclusion in a persuasive speech is where the call to action or advocacy is provided and is what makes your speech truly persuasive. This portion gives you a specific opportunity to tell them what you hope they do as a result of hearing your speech. You may say something like “As you leave here today, I challenge you to pick up five pieces of trash as you walk back to your dorm or car.”

## Note of Finality: It Lets the Audience Know, “The Speech Is Over.”

Your speech conclusion is a mental takeaway for the audience, and you will want a strong **note of finality**. Your conclusion should contain enough memorable words and phrases that will help the audience positively recall the experience—and even recollect certain points that you made. Do not forget to include that “ta-da” moment. The last statement of your presentation should be thoroughly planned to let the audience know you are done. You want your final statement to leave a strong lasting impact. It should leave the audience reflecting on your topic and your information. Some speech writers like to reference the attention-getter as a nice way to bring the speech full circle by revisiting a story, question, or video clip they used originally to grab the audience’s attention. After your closing statement and applause from the audience, you are, of course, welcome to thank them for their attention and/or attendance.

To complete our fire extinguisher speech, we might end strong by saying, *“While a fire can be a scary event, having the knowledge to put it out can make all the difference for loss of property or even lives.”*

## Putting It All Together



The introduction and conclusion are the last part of creating your speech, but they should receive the same attention as the body of your speech. This is the opportunity to get the audience’s attention and draw them in, and to leave them something to think about.

Your introduction and conclusion should be thought of as bookends to the speech, holding up the body and all the important information the speech is sharing.

Bookends are similar but not exactly the same. When

creating your introduction and conclusion, you are setting the tone for the speech; how do you want the audience to feel about this topic? Choose an introduction that creates that feel. If the speech is scary, use a quote or startling statistic; if the speech is fun, use humor or a recent event. When you conclude, you want to bring the speech full circle, back to where the speech started. If you used humor in the introduction, you want to leave the audience with a laugh, if the speech was scary, you want to help them find more information. Everything in a speech is planned, and the introduction and conclusion help to make the speech memorable and interesting to the audience.





*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1031#oembed-1>*



# CHAPTER 11: LANGUAGE

## Learning Objectives

- Explain how language is used for power.
- Describe how language choices affect the effectiveness of public speaking.
- Explain the standard of clarity.
- Choose clear language that is appropriate for audiences.
- Determine your own language ability in speaking.

## Key Terms

- **Abstract Language**
- **Alliteration**
- **Anaphora**
- **Antithesis**
- **Appropriateness**
- **Assonance**
- **Clichés**
- **Connotative**
- **Denotative**
- **Ethnic Identity**
- **Euphemisms**
- **Figurative Language**
- **Hyperbole**
- **Imagery**

- **Irony**
- **Jargon**
- **Language**
- **Literal Language**
- **Metaphors**
- **Parallelism**
- **Similes**
- **Slang**

## 11.1 What Language Is and Does



The Ancient Romans who studied and taught rhetoric divided its study and process into five “canons”: invention, disposition, style, memory, and delivery. To explain the term *style*, in this case we refer to not fashion, but rather language choices. Should a public speaker use very basic language because the audience is unfamiliar with their topic? Or more technical language with many acronyms, abbreviations, and jargon because the audience has expertise in the topic? Or academic language with abstract vocabulary, or flowery, poetic language with lots of metaphors? Perhaps you have never thought about those questions, but they are ones that influence both the clarity of the message as well as the credibility a speaker will gain during the presentation.

However, we would be wrong if we treated language as an “add-on” to the ideas and structure of the speech. Language is a far too complex and foundational aspect of our lives for us to consider it as an afterthought for a speech. In this chapter, we will look at how language functions in communication, what standards language choices should meet in public speaking, and how you can become more thoughtful and deliberate in using language in public speaking.

**Language** is any formal system of gestures, signs, sounds, and symbols used or conceived as a means of communicating thought, either through written, enacted, or spoken means. Linguists believe there are far more than 6,900 languages and distinct dialects spoken in the world today (Anderson, 2012). The language spoken by the greatest number of people on the planet is Mandarin (a dialect of Chinese). Other widely spoken languages are English, Spanish, and Arabic. English is spoken widely on every continent (thanks to the British Empire) but Mandarin is spoken by the most people. While we tend to think of language in its print form, for most of history and for most of the world, language has been or is spoken, or oral. More than half of spoken languages have not even been put into written form yet (Anderson & Harrison, 2007).

We have already seen in earlier chapters that public speakers have to consciously make adjustments to

language for audiences. For example, spoken language is more wordy and repetitive than written language needs to be or should be. It is accompanied by gestures, vocal emphasis, and facial expressions. Additionally, spoken language includes more personal pronouns and more expressive, emotional, colloquial, slang, and nonstandard words.

The study of language is, believe it or not, controversial. If, in college, you are an education, social sciences, pre-law, or English major, you will somewhere in your academic career come up against this truth. While we use words daily and don't think about it, scholars in different fields concern themselves with how we choose words, why we choose words, what effect words have on us, and how the powerful people of the world use words. One theory of language, general semantics, says that meaning resides in the person using the word, not in the word ("Basic Understandings," 2015). It is helpful for the public speaker to keep this in mind, especially in regard to **denotative** and **connotative** meaning. Wrench, Goding, Johnson, and Attias (2011) use this example to explain the difference:

When we hear or use the word "blue," we may be referring to a portion of the visual spectrum dominated by energy with a wavelength of roughly 440–490 nano-meters. You could also say that the color in question is an equal mixture of both red and green light. While both of these are technically correct ways to interpret the word "blue," we're pretty sure that neither of these definitions is how you thought about the word. When hearing the word "blue," you may have thought of your favorite color, the color of the sky on a spring day, or the color of a really ugly car you saw in the parking lot. When people think about language, there are two different types of meanings that people must be aware of: denotative and connotative. (p. 407)

Denotative meaning is the specific meaning associated with a word. We sometimes refer to denotative meanings as dictionary definitions. The [scientific] definitions provided in the first two sentences of the quotation above are examples of definitions that might be found in a dictionary. Connotative meaning is the idea suggested by or associated with a word at a cultural or personal level. In addition to the examples above, the word "blue" can evoke many other ideas:

- State of depression (feeling blue)
- Indication of winning (a blue ribbon)
- Side during the Civil War (blues vs. grays)
- Sudden event (out of the blue).
- States that lean toward the Democratic Party in their voting
- A slang expression for obscenity (blue comedy)
- In plural form, a genre of music (the blues)

Language is not just something we use; it is part of who we are and how we think. When we talk about language, we have to use words to do so, and language is also hard to separate from who we are. Each of us has our own way of expressing ourselves. Even more, it is almost impossible to separate language from thinking.

Some people believe the federal government should enact a law that only English is spoken in the United States (in government offices, schools, etc.). This is opposed by some groups because it is discriminatory to immigrants, based on the belief that everyone's language is part of their identity and self-definition.

Not only is language about who we are; it is about power or at least is used by powerful people. In fact, some educational and political theorists believe that language is all about power. For instance, **euphemisms** are often used to make something unpleasant sound more tolerable. In one of the more well-known examples of the use of euphemisms, the government commonly tries to use language to “soften” what many would see as bad. During the Vietnam War, “air support” was invented to cover the real meaning: “bombing.” When you hear air support, you probably think “planes bringing supplies in,” not “bombing.”

Even today, terms like “revenue enhancement” are used instead of “tax increases.” The word euphemism has at its core “eu,” (which is a prefix from Greek meaning “good” or “pleasant”) and “phem” (a root word for speaking). Just as blasphemy is speaking evil about sacred things, “euphemism” is “pleasant speaking about unpleasant things.” We use euphemisms every day, but we have to be careful not to obscure meaning or use them deceptively. This is an example of how language choices can be both ethical and unethical.

There's an old saying in debate, “He who defines the terms wins the debate.” In the 1988 election, George H.W. Bush was running against Michael Dukakis, who was the governor of Massachusetts. Vice President Bush was able to stick a label on Dukakis, and it stuck—that of “liberal.” He not only labeled Governor Dukakis, but he also defined what “liberal” meant. The word was in disuse after that, and you don't hear it as much now. The word in use now is “progressive.” Unfortunately, this incident in 1988 politics obscured the fact that the U.S. has always been a “liberal” democratic republic. The word “liberal” has shifted meaning, another trait of language, since meaning exists in the minds of users, not in some protected, never-changing space or form. In the majority of Americans' minds, “liberal” has become associated with specific political positions rather than a form of government in general.

This example brings up another issue with language: words change meaning over time, or more specifically, the meaning we attach to them changes. “Pretty” used to mean “clever” 250 years ago. “Prevent” meant to “precede,” not to keep from happening. Language is simply not static, as much as we might like it to be. One of the main reasons some find Shakespeare daunting is that so many of the Elizabethan words are either no longer used or they have changed meanings.

With regard to the use of language for power, even unknowingly, feminists in the 1970s argued that the common way we use the English language was biased against women. King-sized means “big and powerful,” but “queen-sized” means “for overweight women.” “Master” was not equivalent to “mistress.” “Madame” has taken on a negative connotation, even though it should have been equivalent to “sir.” Many words referring to women had to add a suffix that was often “less than,” such as “-ess” or “-ette” or “co-ed.” In the last thirty years we have gotten away from that, so that you often hear a female actor referred to as “actor” rather than “actress,” but old habits die hard.

We see another example of power in language in the abortion debate. Prior to 1973, abortions could be obtained legally, to some extent, in three states: California, New York, and Hawaii. After the *Roe v. Wade*

decision in January of 1973, they could, at least theoretically, be obtained in all fifty states. *Roe v. Wade* did not make abortions legal so much as it made anti-abortion laws illegal or unconstitutional. Practically, the effect was basically the same, but we are often imprecise about language. The people who were against abortion were now on the defensive, and they had to start fighting. It's generally better to be "pro-" something rather than "anti-" something, so they became "pro-life." Those favoring abortion rights then automatically became "pro-death." One side had defined the terms of the debate, and the other had to come up with something comparable. "Pro-choice" takes advantage of the American belief in personal freedoms.

Can you think of how advertisers choose words in a way that is meant to affect your thinking and see an object in different ways? Realtors sell "homes," not houses. McDonald's sells "Happy Meals" even though it is essentially the same food they sell that are not "Happy Meals." As you progress as a public speaker, you will become more aware of the power certain words have over audiences. An ethical communicator will use language in a way that encourages respect for others, freedom of thought, and informed decision-making. First, however, a speaker should seek to meet the standards of clarity, effectiveness, appropriateness, and elegance in language, which are discussed in the next section.

## 11.2 Standards for Language in Public

The best way to ensure that your language is powerful is to strive for clarity. Clarity is the first concern of a public speaker when it comes to choosing how to phrase the ideas of his or her speech. If you are not clear, specific, precise, detailed, and sensory with your language, you won't have to worry about being emotional or persuasive, because you won't be understood. There are many aspects of clarity in language, listed below.

### Achieving Clarity

The first aspect of clarity is concreteness. We usually think of concreteness as the opposite of abstraction. Language that evokes many different visual images in the minds of your audience is **abstract language**. Unfortunately, when abstract language is used, the images evoked might not be the ones you really want to evoke. A word such as “art” is very abstract; it brings up a range of mental pictures or associations: dance, theater, painting, drama, a child's drawing on a refrigerator, sculpture, music, etc. When asked to identify what an abstract term like “art” means, twenty people will have twenty different ideas.

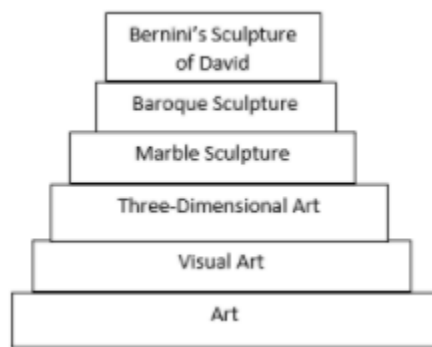


Figure 10.1 Ladder of Abstraction

In order to show how language should be more specific, the “ladder of abstraction” (Hayakawa, 1939) was developed. The ladder of abstraction in Figure 10.1 helps us see how our language can range from abstract (general and sometimes vague) to very precise and specific (such as an actual person that everyone in your audience will know). You probably understood the ladder in Figure 10.2 until it came to the word “Baroque.” At Bernini's, you might get confused if you do not know much about art history. If the top level said Bernini's “David,” a specific sculpture, that would be confusing to some because while almost everyone is familiar with Michelangelo's “David,” Bernini's version is very different. It's life-sized, moving, and clothed. Bernini's is as

much a symbol of the Baroque Age as Michelangelo's is of the Renaissance. But unless you've taken an art history course, the reference, though very specific, is meaningless to you, and even worse, it might strike you as showing off. In fact, to make my point, here they are in Figure 10.2. A picture is worth a thousand words, right?

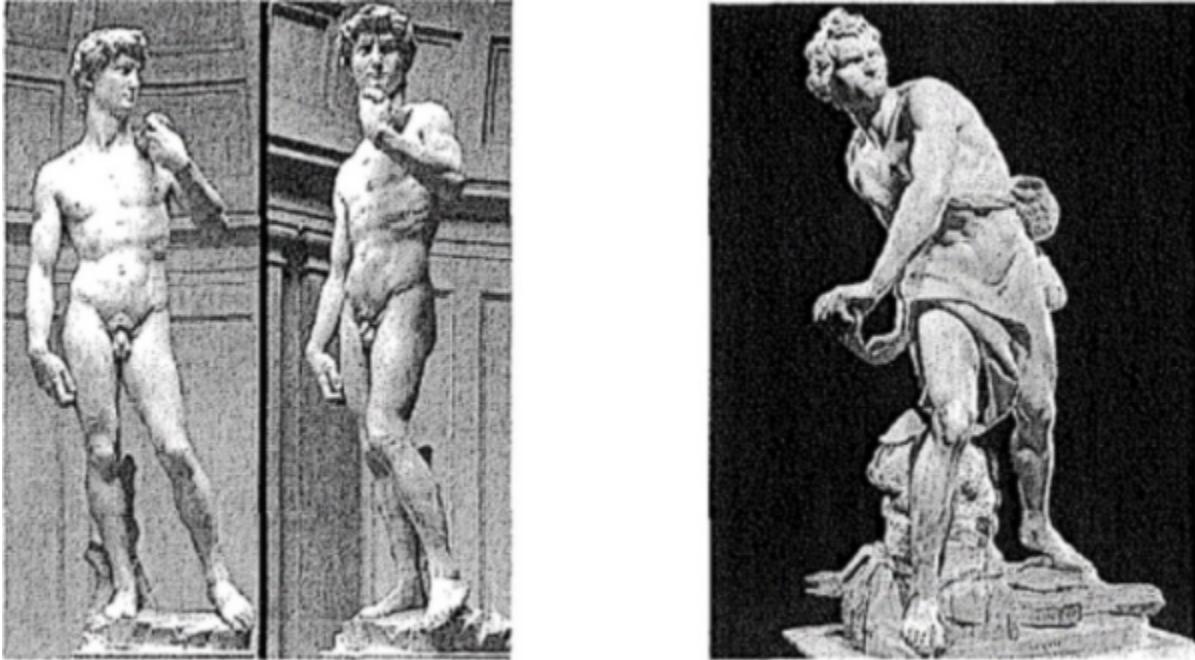


Figure 10.2 Michelangelo's "David" and Bernini's "David"

Related to the issue of specific vs. abstract is the use of the right word. Mark Twain said, "The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug." For example, the words "prosecute" and "persecute" are commonly confused, but not interchangeable. Two others are preemptory/pre-emptive and prerequisites/perquisites. Can you think of other such word pair confusion?

Your first concern is to be clear, and that begins with using language that is simple and familiar. Familiarity is a factor of attention; familiar language draws in the audience. Simple does not mean simplistic, but the avoidance of multi-syllable words. If a speaker said, "A collection of pre-adolescents fabricated an obese personification composed of compressed mounds of minute aquatic crystals," you might recognize it as "Some children made a snowman," but maybe not. The language is not simple or familiar and therefore does not communicate well, although the words are correct and do mean the same thing, technically.

Along with language needing to be specific and correct, language can use appropriate similes and metaphors to become clearer. **Literal language** does not use comparisons like similes and metaphors; **figurative language** uses comparisons with objects, animals, activities, roles, or historical or literary figures. Literal language use says, "The truck is fast." Figurative language use says, "The truck is as fast as..." or "The truck



runs like..." or "He drives that truck like Bubba Wallace at Daytona." **Similes** use some form of "like" or "as" in the comparisons. **Metaphors** are direct comparisons, such as "He is Bubba Wallace at Daytona when he gets behind the wheel of that truck." Here are some more examples of metaphors:

Love is a *battlefield*.

Upon hearing the charges, the accused *clammed up* and refused to speak without a lawyer.

Every year a new crop of activists is *born*.

For rhetorical purposes, metaphors are considered stronger, but both can help you achieve clearer language, if chosen wisely. To think about how metaphor is stronger than simile, think of the difference between "Love is a battlefield" and "Love is like a battlefield." Speakers are encouraged to pick and not overuse them. Also, avoid mixed metaphors, as in this example: "That's awfully thin gruel for the right wing to hang their hats on." Or "He found himself up a river and had to change horses." The mixed metaphor here is the use of "up a river" and "change horses" together; you would either need to use an all river-based metaphor (dealing with boats, water, tides, etc.) or a metaphor dealing specifically with horses. The example above about a "new crop" "being born," is actually a mixed metaphor, since crops aren't born, but planted and harvested. Additionally, in choosing metaphors and similes, speakers want to avoid clichés, discussed next.

**Clichés** are expressions, usually similes, that are predictable. You know what comes next because they are overused and sometimes out of date. Clichés do not have to be linguistic—we often see clichés in movies, such as teen horror films where you know exactly what will happen next! It is not hard to think of clichés: "Scared out of my . . ." or "When life gives you lemons. . ." or "All is fair in. . ." or, when describing a reckless driver, "She drives like a . . ." If you filled in the blanks with "wits," "make lemonade," "love and war," or "maniac," those are clichés.

Clichés are not just a problem because they are overused and boring; they also sometimes do not communicate what you need, especially to audiences whose second language is English. "I will give you a ballpark figure" is not as clear as "I will give you an estimate" and assumes the person is familiar with American sports. Therefore, they also will make you appear less credible in the eyes of the audience because you are not analyzing them and taking their knowledge, background, and needs into account. As the United States becomes more diverse, being aware of your audience members whose first language is not English is a valuable tool for a speaker.

Additionally, some clichés are so outdated that no one knows what they mean. "The puppy was as cute as a button" is an example. You might hear your great-grandmother say this, but who really thinks buttons are cute nowadays? Clichés are also imprecise. Although clichés do have a comfort level to them, comfort puts people to sleep. Find fresh ways, or just use basic, literal language. "The bear was big" is imprecise in terms of giving your audience an idea of how frightful an experience faced by a bear would be. "The bear was as big as a house" is a cliché and an exaggeration and is therefore imprecise. A better alternative might be, "The bear was two feet taller than I am when he stood on his back legs." The opposite of clichés is clear, vivid, and fresh language.

In trying to avoid clichés, use language with **imagery**, or sensory language. This is language that makes the recipient smell, taste, see, hear, and feel a sensation. Think of the word "ripe." What is "ripe?" Do ripe fruits

feel a certain way? Smell a certain way? Taste a certain way? Ripe is a sensory word. Most words just appeal to one sense, like vision. Think of color. How can you make the word “blue” more sensory? How can you make the word “loud” more sensory? How would you describe the current state of your bedroom or dorm room to leave a sensory impression? How would you describe your favorite meal to leave a sensory impression? or a thunderstorm?

Poetry uses much imagery, so to end this section that discusses fresh, clear language, here is a verse from “Daffodils” by William Wordsworth. Notice the metaphors (“daffodils dancing,” “host,” which brings to mind great heavenly numbers), simile (“as the stars”), and the imagery (“golden” rather than “yellow,” and other appeals to feeling and sight):

A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.  
Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the Milky Way.

## Effectiveness

Language achieves effectiveness by communicating the right message to the audience. Clarity contributes to effectiveness, but there are some other aspects of effectiveness. To that end, language should be a means of inclusion and identification, rather than exclusion. Let’s establish this truth: Language is for communication; communication is symbolic, and language is the main (but not only) symbol system we use for communication. If language is for communication, then its goal should be to bring people together and to create understanding.

Unfortunately, we habitually use language for exclusion rather than inclusion. We can push people away with our word choices rather than uniting them. What follows are some examples of language that can exclude members of your audience from understanding what you are saying.

## Jargon

**Jargon** used in your profession or hobby should only be used with audiences who share your profession or hobby. Not only will the audience members who don’t share your profession or hobby miss your meaning, but they will feel that you are not making an honest effort to communicate or are setting yourself above them in intelligence or rank. Lawyers are often accused of using “legalese,” but other professions and groups do the same. If audience members do not understand your references, jargon, or vocabulary, it is unlikely that they will sit there and say, “This person is so smart! I wish I could be smart like this speaker.” The audience member is more likely to be thinking, “Why can’t this speaker use words we understand and get off the high horse?” (which, I admit, is a cliché!)

What this means for you is that you need to be careful about assumptions of your audience's knowledge and their ability to interpret jargon. For example, if you are trying to register for a class at the authors' college and your adviser asks for the CRN, most other people would have no idea what you are talking about (course reference number). Acronyms, such as NPO, are common in jargon. Those trained in the medical field know it is based on the Latin for "nothing by mouth." The military has many acronyms, such as MOS (military occupational specialty, or career field in civilian talk). If you are speaking to an audience who does not know the jargon of your field, using it will only make them annoyed by the lack of clarity.

Sometimes we are not even aware of our jargon and its inadvertent effects. A student once complained to one of the authors about her reaction when she heard that she had been "purged." The word sounds much worse than the meaning it had in that context: that her name was taken off the official roll due to nonpayment before the beginning of the semester.

## Slang

The whole point of slang is for a subculture or group to have its own code, almost like secret words. Once slang is understood by the larger culture, it is no longer slang and may be classified as "informal" or "colloquial" language. "Bling" was slang; now it's in the dictionary. Sports have a great deal of slang used by the players and fans that then gets used in everyday language. For example, "That was a slam dunk" is used to describe something easy, not just in basketball.

## Complicated Vocabulary

If a speaker used the word "recalcitrant," some audience members would know the meaning or figure it out ("Calci-" is like calcium, calcium is hard, etc.), but many would not. It would make much more sense for them to use a word readily understandable—"stubborn." Especially in oral communication, we should use language that is immediately accessible. However, do not take this to mean "dumb down for your audience." It means being clear and not showing off. For a speaker to say "I am cognizant of the fact that..." instead of "I know" or "I am aware of..." adds nothing to communication.

## Profanity and Cursing

It is difficult to think of many examples, other than artistic or comedy venues, where profanity or cursing would be effective or useful with most audiences, so this kind of language is generally discouraged.

## Credibility

Another aspect of effectiveness is that your language should enhance your credibility. First, audiences trust

speakers who use clear, vivid, respectful, engaging, and honest language. On the other hand, audiences tend not to trust speakers who use language that excludes others or who exhibit uneducated language patterns. All of us make an occasional grammatical or usage error. However, constant verb and pronoun errors and just plain getting words confused will hurt the audience's belief that you are competent and knowledgeable. In addition, a speaker who uses language and references that are not immediately accessible or that are unfamiliar will have diminished credibility. Finally, you should avoid the phrase "I guess" in a speech. Credible speakers should know what they are talking about.

## Rhetorical Techniques

There are several traditional techniques that have been used to engage audiences and make ideas more attention-getting and memorable. These are called rhetorical techniques. Although "rhetorical" is associated with persuasive speaking, these techniques are also effective with other types of speeches. We will not mention all of them here, but some important ones are listed below. Several of them are based on a form of repetition. You can refer to an Internet source for a full list of the dozens of rhetorical devices.

**Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds in a sentence or passage. As such, it is a kind of rhyme. Minister Tony Campolo said, "When Jesus told his disciples to pray for the kingdom, this was no pie in the sky by and by when you die kind of prayer."

**Alliteration** is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in a sentence or passage. In his "I Have a Dream Speech," Dr. Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Not only does this sentence use alliteration; it also uses the next rhetorical technique on our list, antithesis.

**Antithesis** is the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced or parallel words, phrases, or grammatical structures. Usually, antithesis goes: Not this, but this. John F. Kennedy's statement from his 1961 inaugural address is one of the most quoted examples of antithesis: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." In that speech he gave another example: "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

**Parallelism** is the repetition of sentence structures. It can be useful for stating your main ideas. Which one of these sounds better?

"Give me liberty or I'd rather die."

"Give me liberty or give me death."

The second one uses parallelism. Quoting again from JFK's inaugural address: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." The repetition of the three-word phrases in this sentence (including the word "any" in each) is an example of parallelism.

**Anaphora** is a succession of sentences beginning with the same word or group of words. In his inaugural

address, JFK began several succeeding paragraphs with “To those”: “To those old allies,” “To those new states,” “To those people,” etc.

**Hyperbole** is intentional exaggeration for effect. Sometimes it is for serious purposes, other times for humor. Commonly we use hyperbolic language in our everyday speech to emphasize our emotions, such as when we say “I’m having the worst day ever” or “I would kill for a cup of coffee right now.” Neither of those statements is (hopefully) true, but it stresses to others the way you are feeling. Ronald Reagan, who was often disparaged for being the oldest president, would joke about his age. In one case he said, “The chamber is celebrating an important milestone this week: your 70th anniversary. I remember the day you started.”

**Irony** is the expression of one’s meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect. Although most people think they understand irony as sarcasm (such as saying to a friend who trips, “That’s graceful”), it is a much more complicated topic. A speaker may use it when they profess to say one thing but clearly means something else or say something that is obviously untrue and everyone would recognize that and understand the purpose. Irony in oral communication can be difficult to use in a way that affects everyone in the audience the same way.

Using these techniques alone will not make you an effective speaker. Dr. King and President Kennedy combined them with strong metaphors and images as well; for example, Dr. King described the promises of the founding fathers as a “blank check” returned with the note “insufficient funds” as far as the black Americans of his time were concerned. That was a very concrete, human, and familiar metaphor to his listeners and still speaks to us today.

## Appropriateness

**Appropriateness** relates to several categories involving how persons and groups should be referred to and addressed based on inclusiveness and context. The term “politically correct” has been overused to describe the growing sensitivity to how the power of language can marginalize or exclude individuals and groups. While there are silly extremes such as the term “vertically challenged” for “short,” these humorous examples overlook the need to be inclusive about language. Overall, people and groups should be respected and referred to in the way they choose to be. Using inclusive language in your speech will help ensure you aren’t alienating or diminishing any members of your audience.

## Gender-Inclusive Language

The first common form of non-inclusive language is language that privileges one of the sexes over the other. There are three common problem areas that speakers run into while speaking: using “he” as generic, using “man” to mean all humans, and gender-typing jobs. Consider the statement, “Every morning when an officer of the law puts on his badge, he risks his life to serve and protect his fellow citizens.” Obviously, both male and female police officers risk their lives when they put on their badges.

A better way to word the sentence would be, “Every morning when officers of the law put on their badges, they risk their lives to serve and protect their fellow citizens.” Notice that in the better sentence, we made the subject plural (“officers”) and used neutral pronouns (“they” and “their”) to avoid the generic “he.” Likewise, speakers of English have traditionally used terms like “man,” and “mankind” when referring to both females and males. Instead of using the word “man,” refer to the “human race.”

The last common area where speakers get into trouble with gender and language has to do with job titles. It is not unusual for people to assume, for example, that doctors are male and nurses are female. As a result, they may say “she is a woman doctor” or “he is a male nurse” when mentioning someone’s occupation, perhaps not realizing that the statements “she is a doctor” and “he is a nurse” already inform the listener as to the sex of the person holding that job.

## Ethnic Identity

**Ethnic identity** refers to a group an individual identifies with based on a common culture. For example, within the United States, we have numerous ethnic groups, including Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Japanese Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Cuban Americans, and Mexican Americans. As with the earlier example of “male nurse,” avoid statements such as “The committee is made up of four women and a Vietnamese man.” All that should be said is, “The committee is made up of five people.”

If for some reason gender and ethnicity have to be mentioned—and usually they do not—the gender and ethnicity of each member should be mentioned equally. “The committee is made up of three European-American women, one Latina, and one Vietnamese male.” In recent years, there has been a trend toward steering inclusive language away from broad terms like “Asians” and “Hispanics” because these terms are not considered precise labels for the groups they actually represent. If you want to be safe, the best thing you can do is ask a couple of people who belong to an ethnic group how they prefer to be referred to in that context.

## Disability

The last category of exclusive versus inclusive language that causes problems for some speakers relates to individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities or forms of mental illness. Sometimes it happens that we take a characteristic of someone and make that the totality or all of what that person is. For example, some people are still uncomfortable around persons who use wheelchairs and don’t know how to react. They may totalize and think that the wheelchair defines and therefore limits the user. The person in the wheelchair might be a great guitarist, sculptor, parent, public speaker, or scientist, but those qualities are not seen, only the wheelchair.

Although the terms “visually impaired” and “hearing impaired” are sometimes used for “blind” and “deaf,” this is another situation where the person should be referred to as he or she prefers. “Hearing impaired” denotes

a wide range of hearing deficit, as does “visually impaired.” “Deaf” and “blind” are not generally considered offensive by these groups.

Another example is how to refer to what used to be called “autism.” Saying someone is “autistic” is similar to the word “retarded” in that neither is appropriate. Preferable terms are “a person with an autism diagnosis” or “a person on the autism spectrum.” In place of “retarded,” “a person with intellectual disabilities” should be used. Likewise, slang words for mental illness should always be avoided, such as “crazy” or “mental.”

## Other Types of Appropriateness

Language in a speech should be appropriate to the speaker and the speaker’s background and personality, to the context, to the audience, and to the topic. Let’s say that you’re an engineering student. If you’re giving a presentation in an engineering class, you can use language that other engineering students will know. On the other hand, if you use that engineering vocabulary in a public speaking class, many audience members will not understand you. As another example, if you are speaking about the Great Depression to an audience of young adults or recent immigrants, you can’t assume they will know the meaning of terms like “New Deal” and “WPA,” which would be familiar to an audience of senior citizens. Audience analysis is a key factor in choosing the language to use in a speech.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1060#h5p-19>



## 11.3 Using Effective Language in Public Speaking



At this point, we will make some applications and suggestions about using language as you grow as a public speaker.

First, get in the habit of using “stipulated definitions” with concrete examples (defining operationally). In other words, define your terms for the audience. If you are using jargon, a technical term, a word that has multiple meanings in different contexts, or an often-misunderstood word, you can say at the beginning of the body of your speech, “In this speech I am going to be using the word ‘X,’ and what I mean by it is...” And then the best way to define a word is with a picture or example of what you mean, and perhaps also an example of what you don’t mean (visual aids can help here). Don’t worry; this is not insulting to most audiences if the word is technical or unfamiliar to them. On the other hand, providing dictionary definitions of common words such as “love” or “loyalty” would be insulting to an audience and pretty boring.

Second, develop specific language. The general semantics movement suggested ways to develop more specific language that reflects the imperfection of our perceptions and the fact that reality changes. You can develop specific language by the following:

- Distinguishing between individuals and the group (that is, avoid stereotyping). Person 1 is not Person 2 is not Person 3, etc., and none of them are all the People in the world.
- Specifying time and place of behavior instead of making broad statements. What was true of a person in 1999 is not necessarily true of the person now.
- Using names for jobs or roles (“accountants,” “administrative assistants,” “instructors”) instead of “people” or “workers.”
- Avoid “always/never” language. “Always” and “never” usually do not reflect reality and tend to make listeners defensive.



- Avoid confusing opinion for fact. If I say, “Frozen is a stupid movie,” I am stating an opinion in the language of fact. If you preface opinions with “I believe,” or “It is my opinion” you will be truthful and gain the appearance of being fair-minded and non-dogmatic. What should be said is “The first time I saw Frozen, I didn’t realize the underlying message of the film, but after I saw it a second time, I understood it better.” This sentence is much more specific and clarifying than “Frozen is a stupid movie.” Using this kind of language also helps make the speaker seem less dogmatic and closed-minded.

Third, personalize your language. In a speech, it’s fine to use personal pronouns as opposed to the third person. That means “I,” “me,” “we,” “us,” “you,” etc. are often helpful in a speech. It gives more immediacy to the speech. Be careful of using “you” for examples that might be embarrassing. “Let’s say you are arrested for possession of a concealed weapon,” sounds like the audience members are potential criminals.

Finally, develop your vocabulary, but not to show it off. One of the benefits of a college education is that your vocabulary will expand greatly, and it should. A larger vocabulary will give you access to more complicated reading material and allow you to understand the world better. But knowing the meaning of a more complicated word doesn’t mean you have to use it with every audience.

## Conclusion

Although the placement of this chapter may seem to indicate that language choices, or what the ancient rhetoricians called “style,” are not as important as other parts of speaking, language choices are important from the very beginning of your speech preparation, even to your research and choice of search terms. Audience analysis will help you to develop language that is clear, vivid, appropriate, credible, and persuasive.

## Reference

Anderson, Gregory, and David Harrison. (2007) “Global Language HotSpots.” Language Hotspots – Fast Facts, Living Tongues, <https://langhotspots.swarthmore.edu/fastfacts.html>.



# CHAPTER 12: PRESENTATION AIDS

## Learning Objectives

- List and explain reasons why presentation aids are important in public speaking.
- Explain how presentation aids function in public speaking.
- Describe the various computer-based and non-computer-based types of presentation aids available to the students.
- Explain the correct use of various types of presentation aids.
- Design professional-looking slides using presentation software.

## Key Terms

- **Bar Graph**
- **Chart**
- **Diagram**
- **Graph**
- **Gustatory**
- **Line Graph**
- **Olfactory**
- **Pictograph**
- **Pie Graph**
- **Presentation Aids**
- **Tone**



## 12.1 What Are Presentation Aids?

When you give a speech, you are presenting much more than just a collection of words and ideas. Because you are speaking “live and in person,” your audience members will experience your speech through all five of their senses: hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch. In some speaking situations, the speaker appeals only to the sense of hearing. They more or less ignore the other senses except to avoid visual distractions by dressing and presenting themselves in an appropriate manner. But the speaking event can be greatly enriched by appeals to the other senses. This is the role of presentation aids.

**Presentation aids** are the resources beyond the speech words and delivery that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience. The type of presentation aids that speakers most typically make use of are visual aids: pictures, diagrams, charts and graphs, maps, and the like. Audible aids include musical excerpts, audio speech excerpts, and sound effects. A speaker may also use fragrance samples or food samples as **olfactory** (sense of smell) or **gustatory** (sense of taste) aids. Finally, presentation aids can be three-dimensional objects, animals, and people.

As you can see, the range of possible presentation aids is almost unlimited. However, all presentation aids have one thing in common: To be effective, each presentation aid a speaker uses must be a direct, uncluttered example of a specific element of the speech. It is understandable that someone presenting a speech about Abraham Lincoln might want to include a photograph of him, but because everyone already knows what Lincoln looked like, the picture would not contribute much to the message unless, perhaps, the message was specifically about the changes in Lincoln’s appearance during his time in office.

Other visual artifacts are more likely to deliver information more directly relevant to the speech—a diagram of the interior of Ford’s Theater where Lincoln was assassinated, a facsimile of the messy and much-edited Gettysburg Address, or a photograph of the Lincoln family, for example. The key is that each presentation aid must directly express an idea in your speech.

Moreover, presentation aids must be used at the time when you are presenting the specific ideas related to the aid. For example, if you are speaking about coral reefs and one of your supporting points is about the location of the world’s major reefs, it would make sense to display a map of these reefs while you’re talking about location. If you display it while you are explaining what coral actually is, or describing the kinds of fish that feed on a reef, the map will not serve as a useful visual aid—in fact, it’s likely to be a distraction.

To be effective, presentation aids must also be easy to use and easy for the listeners to see and understand. In this chapter, we will present some principles and strategies to help you incorporate effective presentation aids into your speech. We will begin by discussing the functions that good presentation aids fulfill. Next, we will explore some of the many types of presentation aids and how best to design and utilize them. We will

also describe various media that can be used for presentation aids. We will conclude with tips for successful preparation and use of presentation aids in a speech.

## 12.2 Functions of Presentation Aids

Why should you use presentation aids? If you have prepared and rehearsed your speech adequately, shouldn't a good speech with a good delivery be enough to stand on its own? While it is true that impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech, a good speech can often be made even better by the strategic use of presentation aids. Presentation aids can fulfill several functions: they can serve to improve your audience's understanding of the information you are conveying, enhance audience memory and retention of the message, add variety and interest to your speech, and enhance your credibility as a speaker. Let's examine each of these functions.

### Improving Audience Understanding

Human communication is a complex process that often leads to misunderstandings. Most people can easily remember incidents when they misunderstood a message or when someone else misunderstood what they said to them. Misunderstandings happen in public speaking just as they do in everyday conversations.

One reason for misunderstandings is the fact that perception and interpretation are highly complex individual processes. Most of us have seen the image in which, depending on your perception, you see either the outline of a vase or the facial profiles of two people facing each other. Or perhaps you have seen the image of the woman who may or may not be young, depending on your frame of reference at the time. This shows how interpretations can differ, and it means that your presentations must be based on careful thought and preparation to maximize the likelihood that your listeners will understand your presentations as you intend them to do so (you can see these images at <http://members.optusnet.com.au/~charles57/Creative/Drawing/vases.htm>).

As a speaker, one of your basic goals is to help your audience understand your message. To reduce misunderstanding, presentation aids can be used to clarify or to emphasize.

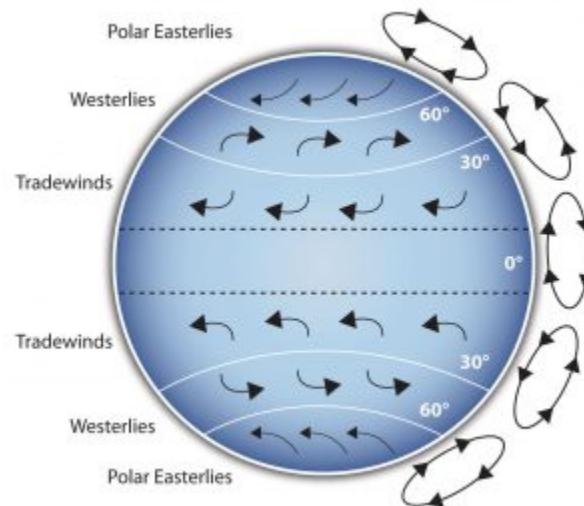


Figure 12.1 – Coriolis Effect

## Clarifying

Clarification is important in a speech because if some of the information you convey is unclear, your listeners will come away puzzled or possibly even misled. Presentation aids can help clarify a message if the information is complex or if the point being made is a visual one.

If your speech is about the impact of the Coriolis effect on tropical storms, for instance, you will have great difficulty clarifying it without a diagram because the process is a complex one. The diagram in Figure 12.1 (“Coriolis effect”) would be effective because it shows the audience the interaction between equatorial wind patterns and wind patterns moving in other directions. The diagram allows the audience to process the information in two ways: through your verbal explanation and through the visual elements of the diagram. By the way, the Coriolis Effect is defined as “an effect whereby a mass moving in a rotating system experiences a force (the Coriolis force) acting perpendicular to the direction of motion and to the axis of rotation. On the earth, the effect tends to deflect moving objects to the right in the northern hemisphere and to the left in the southern and is important in the formation of cyclonic weather systems.” You can see why a picture really helps with this definition.

Figure 12.2 (“Model of Communication”) is another example of a diagram that maps out the process of human communication. In this image, you clearly have a speaker and an audience with the labels of source, channel, message, receivers, and feedback to illustrate a basic model of human communication. As with most models, it is simplified (can you remember what two components of the communication process, explained in Chapter 1, are missing here?).



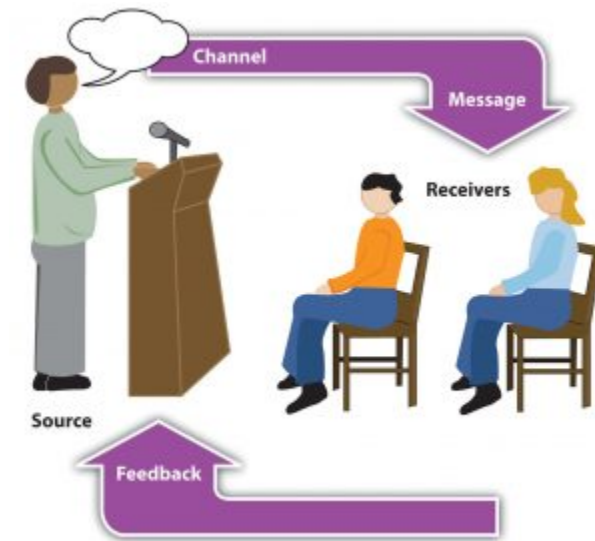


Figure 12.2 – Model of Communication



Figure 12.3 – Petroglyph Example

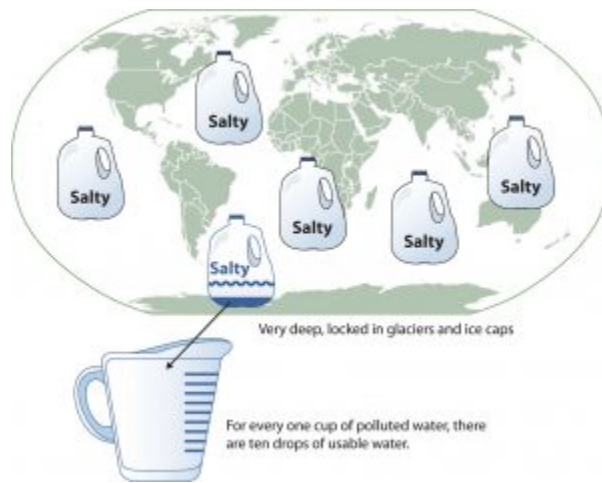


Figure 12.4 – Planetary Water Supply

Another aspect of clarifying occurs when a speaker wants to help audience members understand a visual concept. For example, if a speaker is talking about the importance of petroglyphs in Native American culture, just describing the petroglyphs won't completely help your audience to visualize what they look like. Instead, showing an example of a petroglyph, as in Figure 12.3 ("Petroglyph") can more easily help your audience form a clear mental image of your intended meaning.



Figure 12.5 – Chinese Lettering Amplified.

Source: Image courtesy of Wikimedia,  
<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

## Emphasizing

When you use a presentational aid for emphasis, you impress your listeners with the importance of an idea. In a speech on water conservation, you might try to show the environmental proportions of the resource. When you use a conceptual drawing like the one in Figure 12.4 ("Planetary Water Supply"), you show that if the world water supply were equal to ten gallons, only ten drops would be available and drinkable for human or household consumption. This drawing is effective because it emphasizes the scarcity of useful water and thus draws attention to this important information in your speech.

Another way of emphasizing that can be done visually is to zoom in on a specific aspect of interest within your speech. In Figure 12.5 (“Chinese Lettering Amplified”), we see a visual aid used in a speech on the importance of various parts of Chinese characters. On the left side of the visual aid, we see how the characters all fit together, with an emphasized version of a single character on the right.

So, clarifying and emphasizing are two roles that support the “Improving Audience Understanding” purpose of presentation aids. What are other purposes?

## Aiding Retention and Recall

The second function that presentation aids can serve is to increase the audience’s chances of remembering your speech. An article by the U.S. Department of Labor (1996) summarized research on how people learn and remember. The authors found that “83% of human learning occurs visually, and the remaining 17% through the other senses—11% through hearing, 3.5% through smell, 1% through taste, and 1.5% through touch.”

For this reason, exposure to an image can serve as a memory aid to your listeners. When your graphic images deliver information effectively and when your listeners understand them clearly, audience members are likely to remember your message long after your speech is over. Moreover, people often are able to remember information that is presented in sequential steps more easily than if that information is presented in an unorganized pattern. When you use a presentation aid to display the organization of your speech (such as can be done with PowerPoint slides), you will help your listeners to observe, follow, and remember the sequence of information you conveyed to them. This is why some instructors display a lecture outline for their students to follow during class and why a slide with a preview of your main points can be helpful as you move into the body of your speech.

An added plus of using presentation aids is that they can boost your memory while you are speaking. Using your presentation aids while you rehearse your speech will familiarize you with the association between a given place in your speech and the presentation aid that accompanies that material.

## Adding Variety and Interest

A third function of presentation aids is simply to make your speech more interesting. For example, wouldn’t a speech on varieties of roses have greater impact if you accompanied your remarks with a picture of each rose? You can imagine that your audience would be even more engaged if you had the ability to display an actual flower of each variety in a bud vase. Similarly, if you were speaking to a group of gourmet chefs about Indian spices, you might want to provide tiny samples of spices that they could smell and taste during your speech.

## Enhancing a Speaker's Credibility

Presentation aids alone will not be enough to create a professional image. As we mentioned earlier, impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech. Even if you give a good speech, you run the risk of appearing unprofessional if your presentation aids are poorly executed. Conversely, a high quality presentation will contribute to your professional image. This means that in addition to containing important information, your presentation aids must be clear, clean, uncluttered, organized, and large enough for the audience to see and interpret correctly. Misspellings and poorly designed presentation aids can damage your credibility as a speaker. In addition, make sure that you give proper credit to the source of any presentation aids that you take from other sources. Using a statistical chart or a map without proper credit will detract from your credibility, just as using a quotation in your speech without credit would. This situation will usually take place with digital aids such as PowerPoint slides. The source of a chart or the data shown in a chart form should be cited at the bottom of the slide.

If you focus your efforts on producing presentation aids that contribute effectively to your meaning, that look professional, and that are handled well, your audience will most likely appreciate your efforts and pay close attention to your message. That attention will help them learn or understand your topic in a new way and will thus help the audience see you as a knowledgeable, competent, and credible speaker. With the prevalence of digital communication, the audience expectation of quality visual aids has increased.

## Avoiding Problems with Presentation Aids

Using presentation aids can come with some risks. However, with a little forethought and adequate practice, you can choose presentation aids that enhance your message and boost your professional appearance in front of an audience. One principle to keep in mind is **to use only as many presentation aids as necessary** to present your message or to fulfill your classroom assignment. The number and the technical sophistication of your presentation aids should never overshadow your speech.

Another important consideration is technology. **Keep your presentation aids within the limits of the working technology available to you.** Whether or not your technology works on the day of your speech, you will still have to present. What will you do if the computer file containing your slides is corrupted? What will you do if the easel is broken? What if you had counted on stacking your visuals on a table that disappears right when you need it? Or the Internet connection is down for a YouTube video you plan to show?

**You must be prepared to adapt to an uncomfortable and scary situation.** This is why we urge students to go to the classroom well ahead of time to test the equipment and ascertain the condition of the items they're planning to use. As the speaker, you are responsible for arranging the things you need to make your presentation aids work as intended. Carry a roll of masking tape so you can display your poster even if the easel is gone. Test the computer setup. Have your slides on a flash drive AND send them to yourself as an attachment or upload to a Cloud service. Have an alternative plan prepared in case there is some glitch that

prevents your computer-based presentation aids from being usable. And of course, you must know how to use the technology.

More important than the method of delivery is the audience's ability to see and understand the presentation aid. It must deliver clear information, and it must not distract from the message. **Avoid overly elaborate presentation aids.** Instead, simplify as much as possible, emphasizing the information you want your audience to understand.

Another thing to remember is that presentation aids do not “speak for themselves.” **When you display a visual aid, you should explain what it shows, pointing out and naming the most important features.** If you use an audio aid such as a musical excerpt, you need to tell your audience what to listen for. Similarly, if you use a video clip, it is up to you as the speaker to point out the characteristics in the video that support the point you are making—but probably beforehand, so you are not speaking over the video. At the same time, a visual aid should be quickly accessible to the audience. This is where simplicity comes in. Just as in organization of a speech you would not want to use 20 main points, but more like 3-5, you should limit categories of information on a visual aid.

## 12.3 Types of Presentation Aids

Now that we've explored some basic hints for preparing visual aids, let's look at the most common types of visual aids: charts, graphs, representations, objects/models, and people.

### Charts

A **chart** is commonly defined as a graphical representation of data (often numerical) or a sketch representing an ordered process. Whether you create your charts or do research to find charts that already exist, it is important for them to exactly match the specific purpose in your speech. Figure 12.6 ("Acupuncture Charts") shows two charts related to acupuncture. Although both charts are good, they are not equal. One chart might be useful in a speech about the history and development of acupuncture, while the other chart would be more useful for showing the locations of meridians (the lines along which energy flows) and the acupuncture points. The rest of this section will explore three common types of charts: statistical charts, sequence-of-steps charts, and decision trees.



Figure 12.6 – Acupuncture Charts. Source: Image on the left from Wikimedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Acupuncture\\_chart\\_300px.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Acupuncture_chart_300px.jpg). Image on the right © Thinkstock

## Statistical Charts

For most audiences, statistical presentations must be kept as simple as possible, and they must be explained. Unless you are familiar with statistics, this type of chart may be very confusing. When visually displaying information from a quantitative study, you need to make sure that you understand the material and can successfully and simply explain how one should interpret the data. If you are unsure about the data yourself, then you should probably not use this type of information. This is definitely an example of a visual aid that, though it delivers a limited kind of information, does not speak for itself. On the other hand, if you are presenting to an upper level or graduate class in health sciences or to professionals in health occupations, this chart would be appropriate. As with all other principles of public speaking, **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**.

## Sequence-of-Steps Charts

Charts are also useful when you are trying to explain a process that involves several steps. The two visual aids in Figure 12.7 (“Steps in Cell Reproduction”) both depict the process of cell division called mitosis using a sequence-of-steps chart, but they each deliver different information. The first chart lacks labels to indicate the

different phases of cell division. Although the first chart has more visual detail and may look more scientific, the missing information may confuse your audience. In the second chart, each phase is labeled with a brief explanation of what is happening, which can help your audience understand the process.

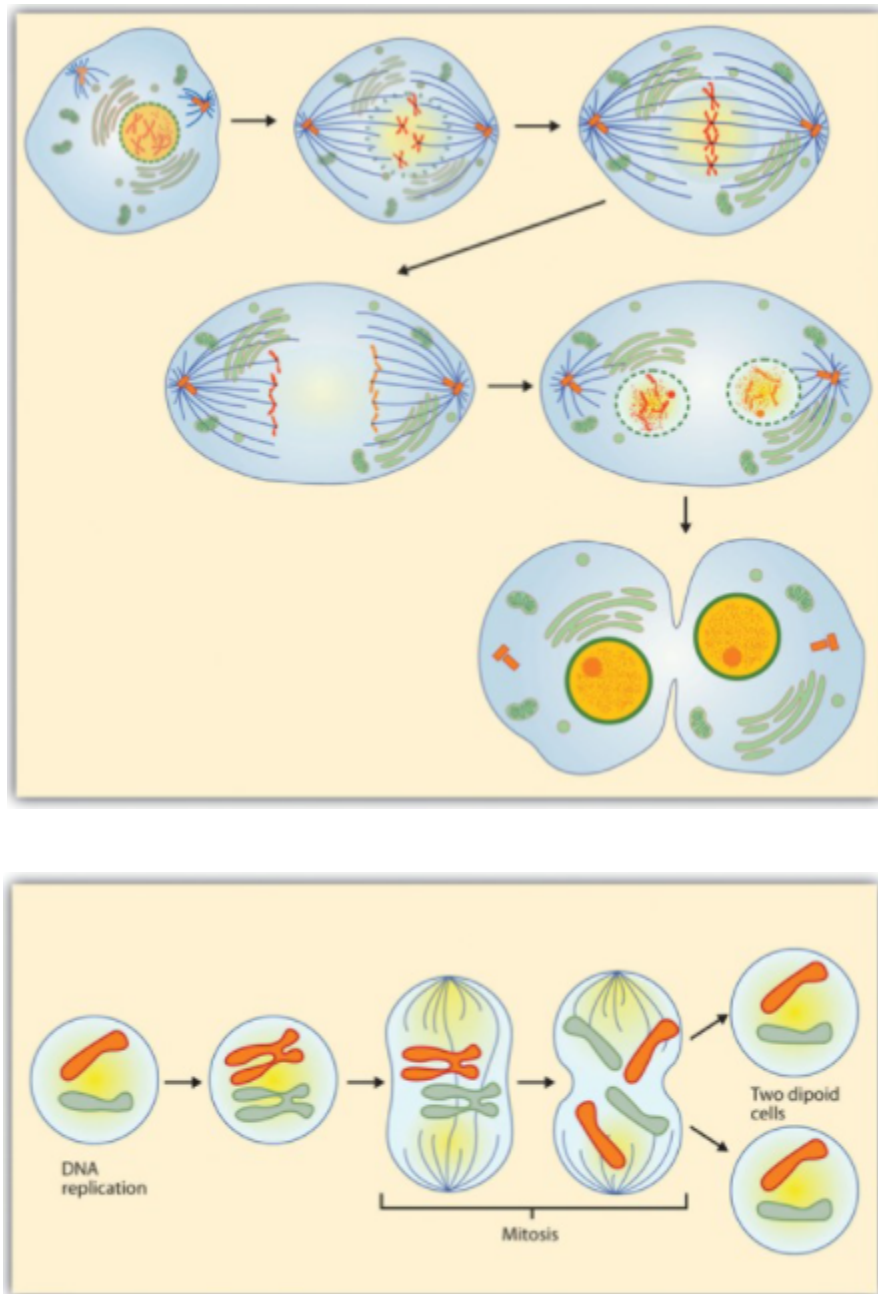


Figure 12.7 – Steps in Cell Reproduction. Source: Images courtesy of LadyofHats, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MITOSIS\\_cells\\_sequence.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MITOSIS_cells_sequence.svg), and the National Institutes of Health, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MajorEventsInMitosis.jpg>



## Decision Trees

Decision trees are useful for showing the relationships between ideas. The example in Figure 12.8 (“Customer Support Decision Tree”) shows how a decision tree could be used to determine how best to provide customer support. As with the other types of charts, you want to be sure that the information in the chart is relevant to the purpose of your speech and that each question and decision is clearly labeled.

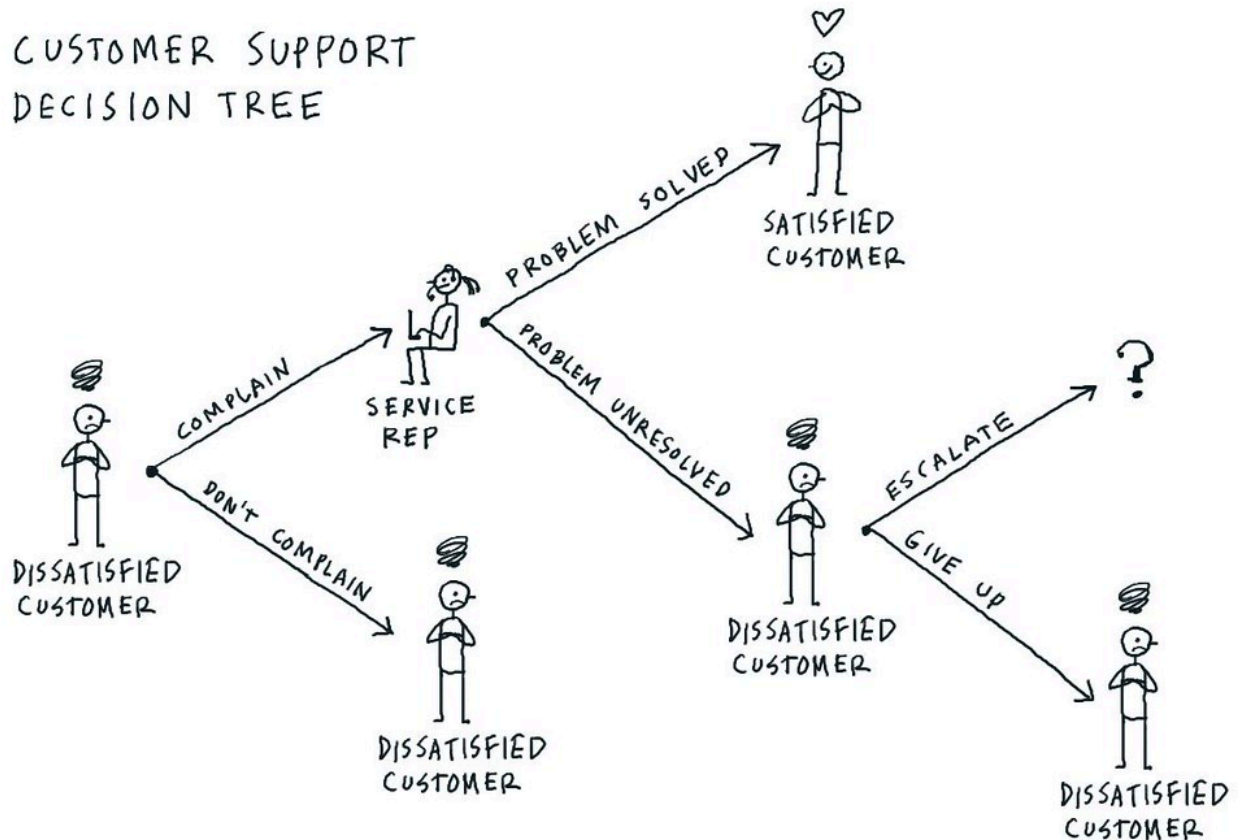


Figure 12.8 – Customer Support Decision Tree

## Graphs

Strictly speaking, a graph may be considered a type of chart, but graphs are so widely used that we will discuss them separately. A **graph** is a pictorial representation of the relationships of quantitative data using dots, lines, bars, pie slices, and the like. Graphs show how one factor (such as size, weight, number of items) varies in comparison to other items. Whereas a statistical chart may report the mean ages of individuals entering college, a graph would show how the mean age changes over time. A statistical chart may report the amount of computers sold in the United States, while a graph will use bars or lines to show their breakdown by operating systems such as Windows, Macintosh, and Linux.

Public speakers can show graphs using a range of different formats. Some of those formats are specialized for various professional fields. Very complex graphs often contain too much information that is not related to the purpose of a student's speech. If the graph is cluttered, it becomes difficult to comprehend. In this section, we're going to analyze the common graphs speakers utilize in their speeches: line graphs, bar graphs, pie graphs, and pictographs.

## Line Graph

A **line graph** is designed to show trends over time. In Figure 12.9 ("Enron's Stock Price"), we see a line graph depicting the fall of Enron's stock price from August 2000 to January 2002. Notice that although it has some steep rises, the line has an overall downward trend clearly depicting the plummeting of Enron's stock price. This is far more effective in showing the relationship of numbers than a chart or reading the numbers aloud.

### Enron Stock Price from August 23, 2000 to January 11, 2002

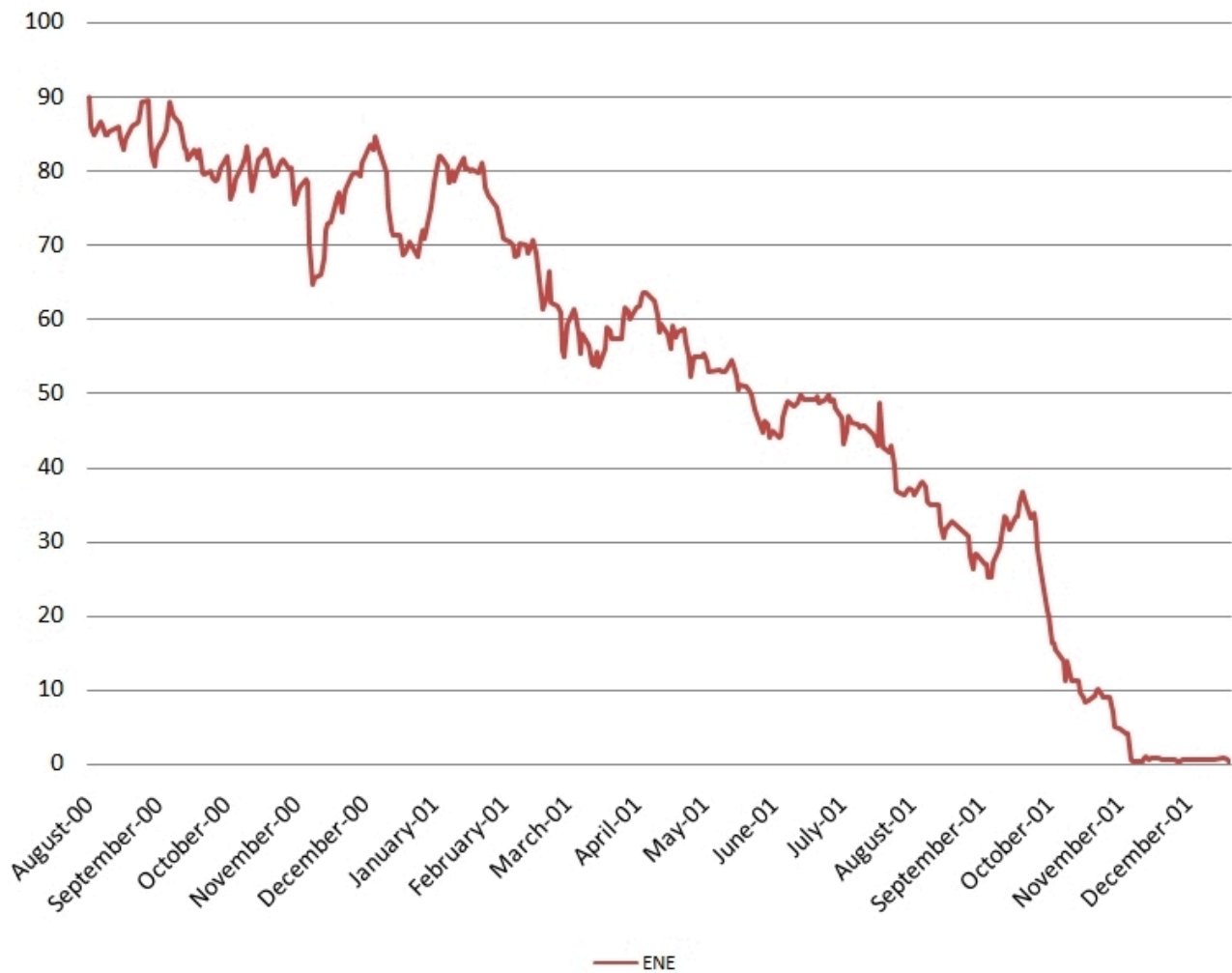


Figure 12.9 – Enron's Stock Price. Source: Image courtesy of Nehrams 2020, [http:// commons.wikimedia.org/ wiki/File:EnronStockPriceAug00Jan02.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EnronStockPriceAug00Jan02.jpg)

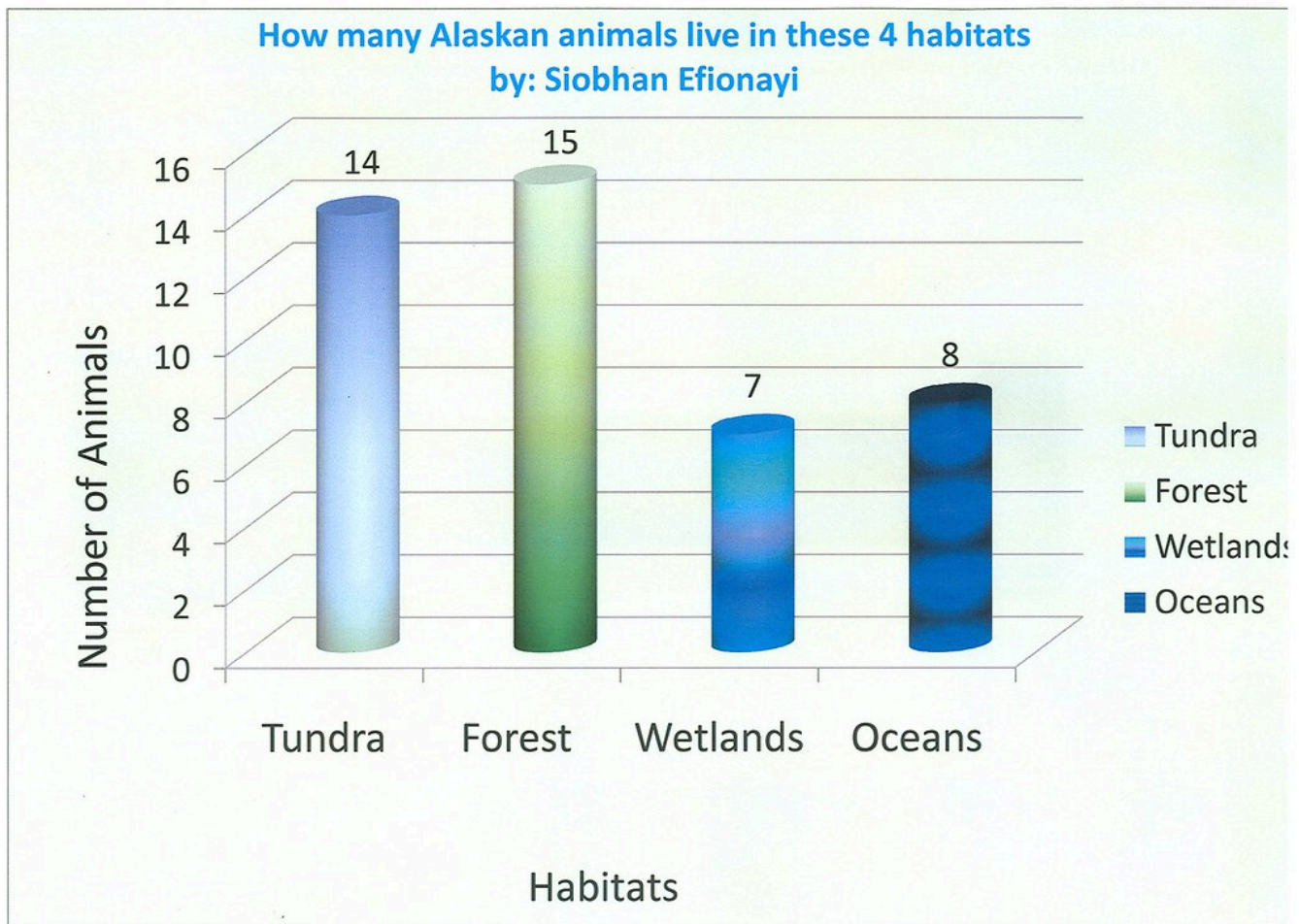


Figure 12.10 “How many Alaskan Animals Bar Graph” by DW 2002 <https://search.creativecommons.org/photos/6929323a-3eb3-405d-9a79-9b5235f43d76>

## Bar Graph

**Bar graphs** are useful for showing the differences between quantities. They can be used for population demographics, fuel costs, math ability in different grades, and many other kinds of data. The graph in Figure 12.10 (“How many Alaskan Animals Bar Graph”) is well designed. It is relatively simple and is carefully labeled, making it easy for the speaker to guide the audience through the recorded numbers of each type of animal. The bar graph is designed to show which animals live in which type of habitat. When you look at the data, the first grouping clearly shows that a large number of animals in Alaska call the “Tundra” their home.

The graph in Figure 12.11 (“Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States”) is a complicated bar graph depicting the disparity between the so-called “haves” and the “have nots” within the United States.

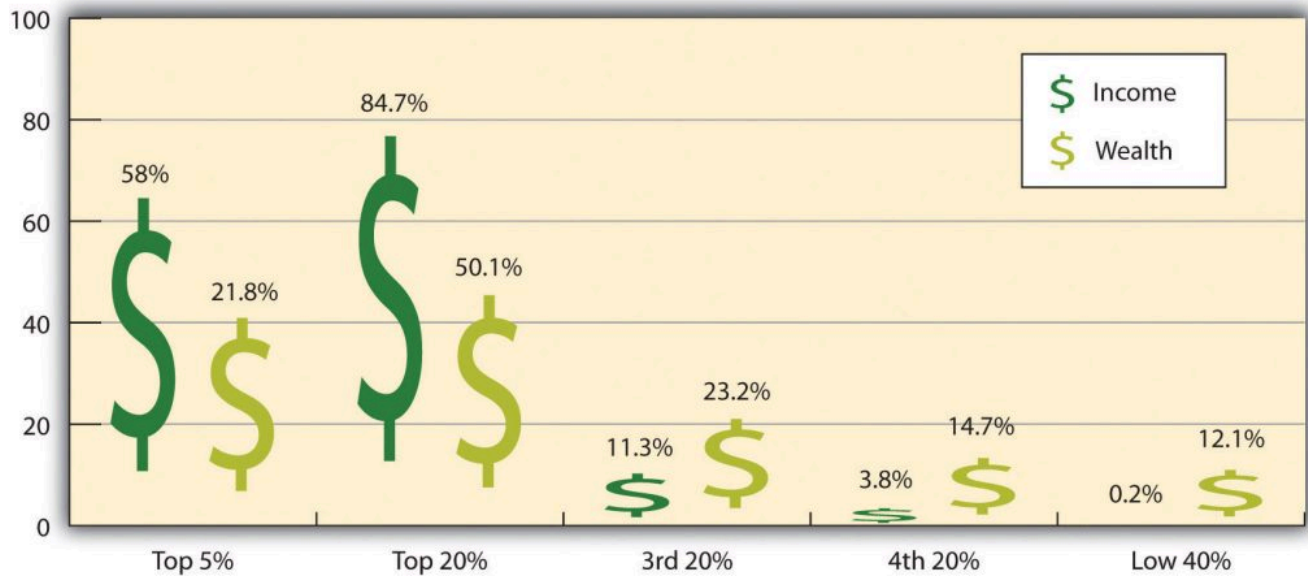


Figure 12.11 – Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States. Source: Wolff, E. N. (2007). Recent trends in household wealth in the United States: Rising debt and the middle-class squeeze (Working Paper No. 502). Retrieved from the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College website: [http://www.levy.org/pubs/wp\\_502.pdf](http://www.levy.org/pubs/wp_502.pdf)

While the graph is very well designed, it presents a great deal of information. For example, it shows “wealth” and “income” for several groups; however, these are related but different concepts. In a written publication, readers will have time to sit and analyze the graph, but in a speaking situation, audience members need to be able to understand the information in a graph very quickly. For that reason, this graph is probably not as effective for speeches as the one in Figure 12.10 (“How many Alaskan Animals”).

## Pie Graph

**Pie graphs** are usually depicted as circles and are designed to show proportional relationships within sets of data; in other words, they show parts of or percentages of a whole. They should be simplified as much as possible without eliminating important information. As with other graphs, the sections of the pie need to be plotted proportionally. In the pie graph shown in Figure 12.12 (“Causes of Concussions in Children”) we see a clear and proportional chart that has been color-coded. Color-coding is useful when it’s difficult to fit the explanations in the actual sections of the graph; in that case, you need to include a legend, or key, to indicate what the colors in the graph mean. In this graph, audience members can see very quickly that falls are the primary reason children receive concussions. However, the pie graph in Figure 12.13 (“World Populations”) is jumbled, illegible, confusing, and overwhelming in every way. The use of color coding doesn’t help. Overall, this graph simply contains too much information and is more likely to confuse an audience than help them understand something.

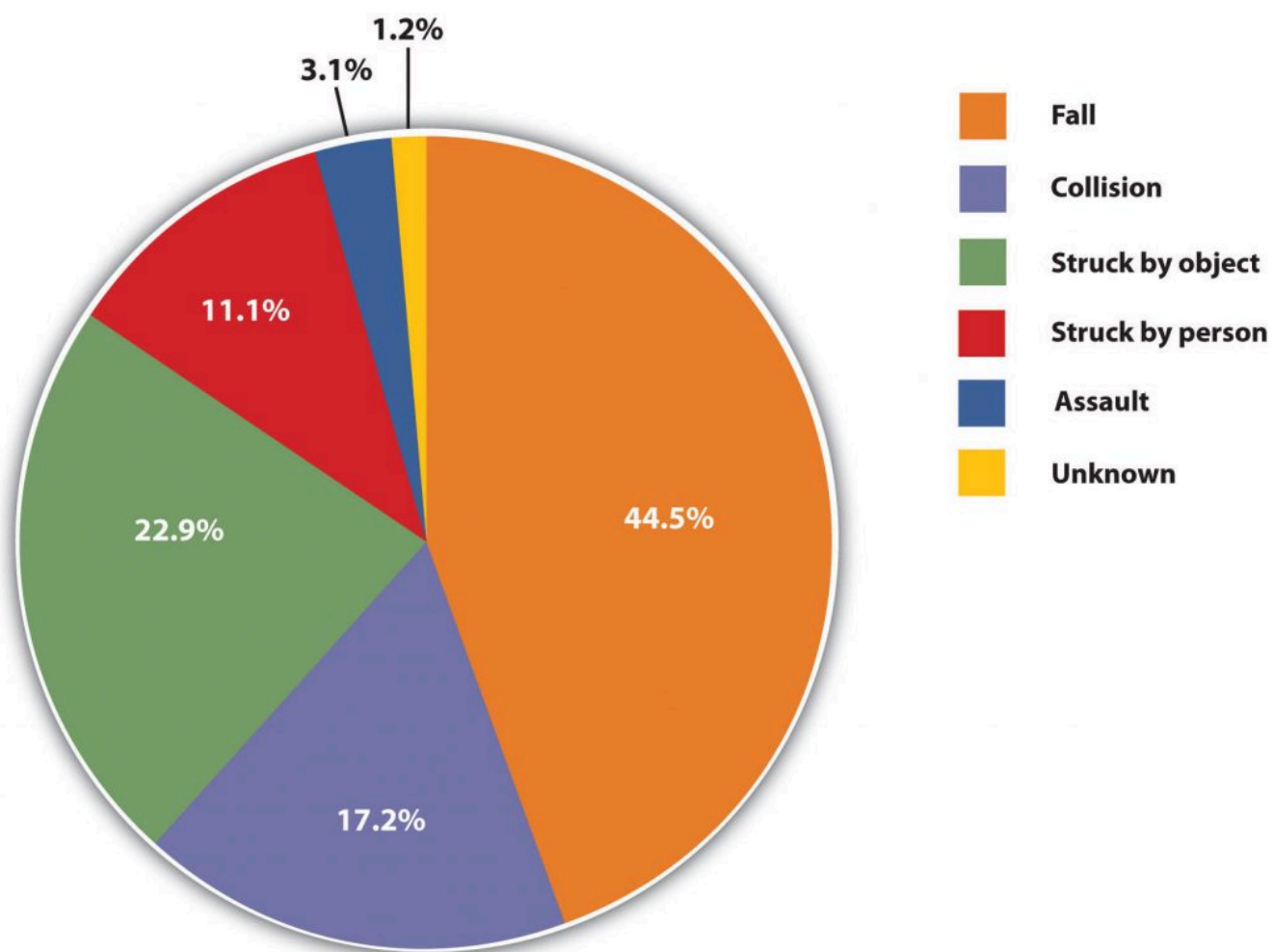


Figure 12.12 – Causes of Concussions in Children



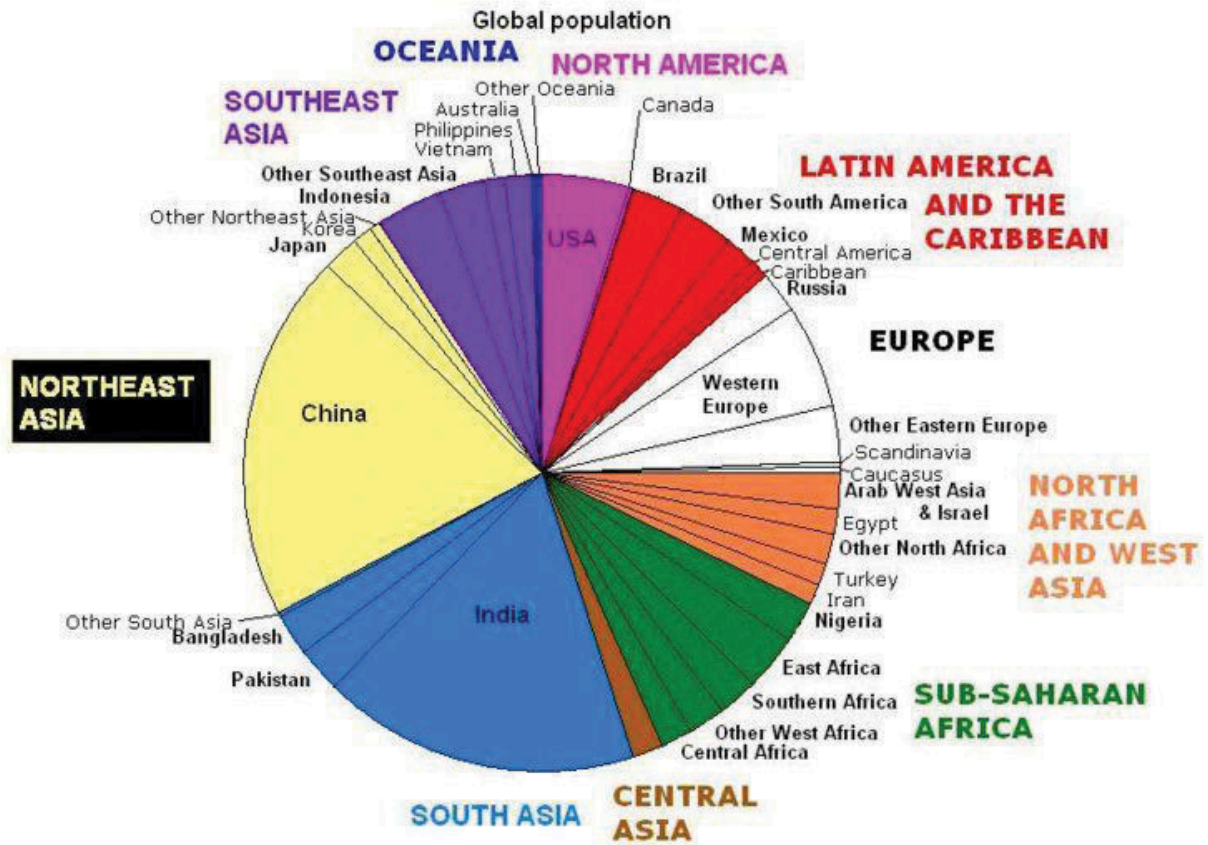


Figure 12.13 – World Populations

## Pictograph

Similar to bar graphs, **pictographs** use numbers and/or sizes of iconic symbols to dramatize differences in amounts. An example is found in Figure 12.14. Pictographs, although interesting, do not allow for depiction of specific statistical data. If you were trying to show the output of oil from various countries through oil wells, each oil well representing ten million barrels a day, it might be hard for the audience to see the difference between a third of an oil well and a fourth of one, but that is a significant difference in amounts (3.3 million versus 2.5 million).

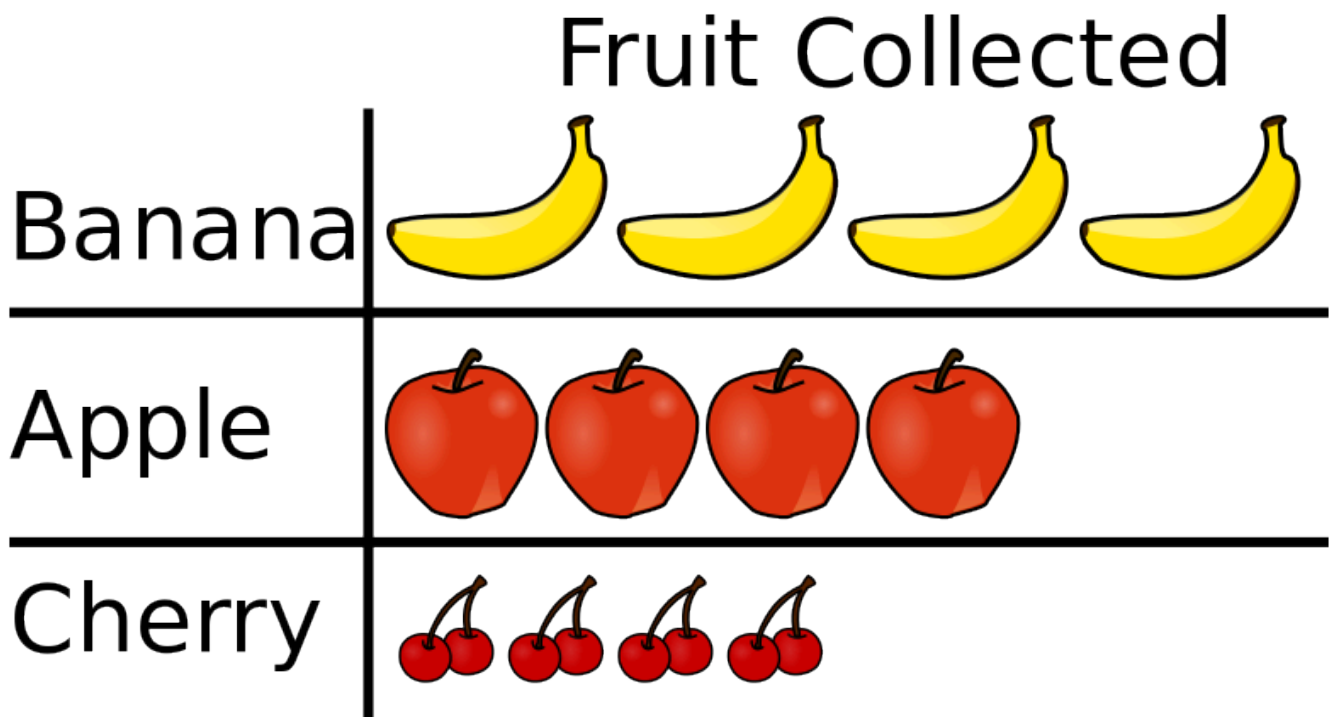


Figure 12.14 – Pictograph – “Fruit Collected”

Graphs can present challenges in being effective but also in being ethical. To be both ethical and effective, you need a good understanding of what statistics mean, and you need to create or use graphs that show amounts clearly. For example, if you were showing GPAs of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students at your college, and the bottom number on the graph was 2.25 rather than 0.0, that would result in a visually bigger difference than what really exists.

## Diagrams

**Diagrams** are drawings or sketches that outline and explain the parts of an object, process, or phenomenon that cannot be readily seen. Like graphs, diagrams can be considered a type of chart, as in the case of organizational charts and process-flow charts. When you use a diagram, be sure to explain each part of the phenomenon, paying special attention to elements that are complicated or prone to misunderstanding. In the example shown in Figure 12.15 (“The Human Eye”), you might wish to highlight that the light stimulus is reversed when it is processed through the brain or that the optic nerve is not a single stalk as many people think.



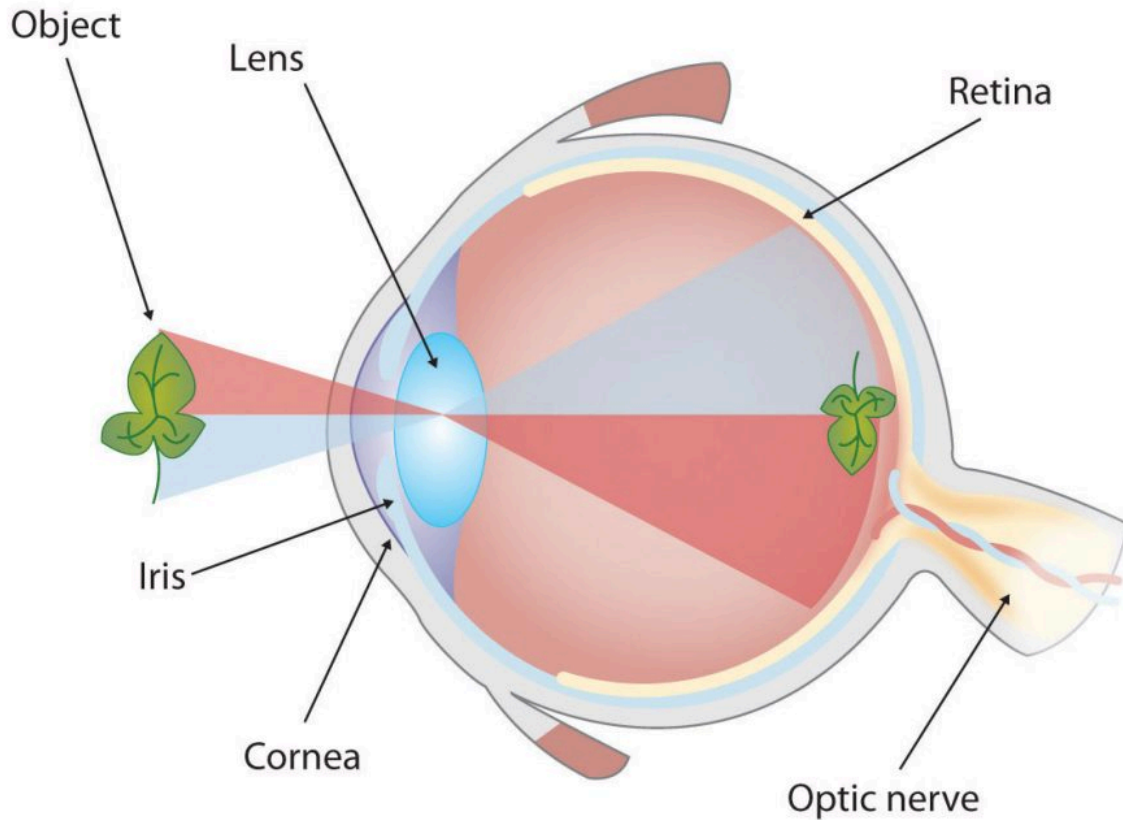


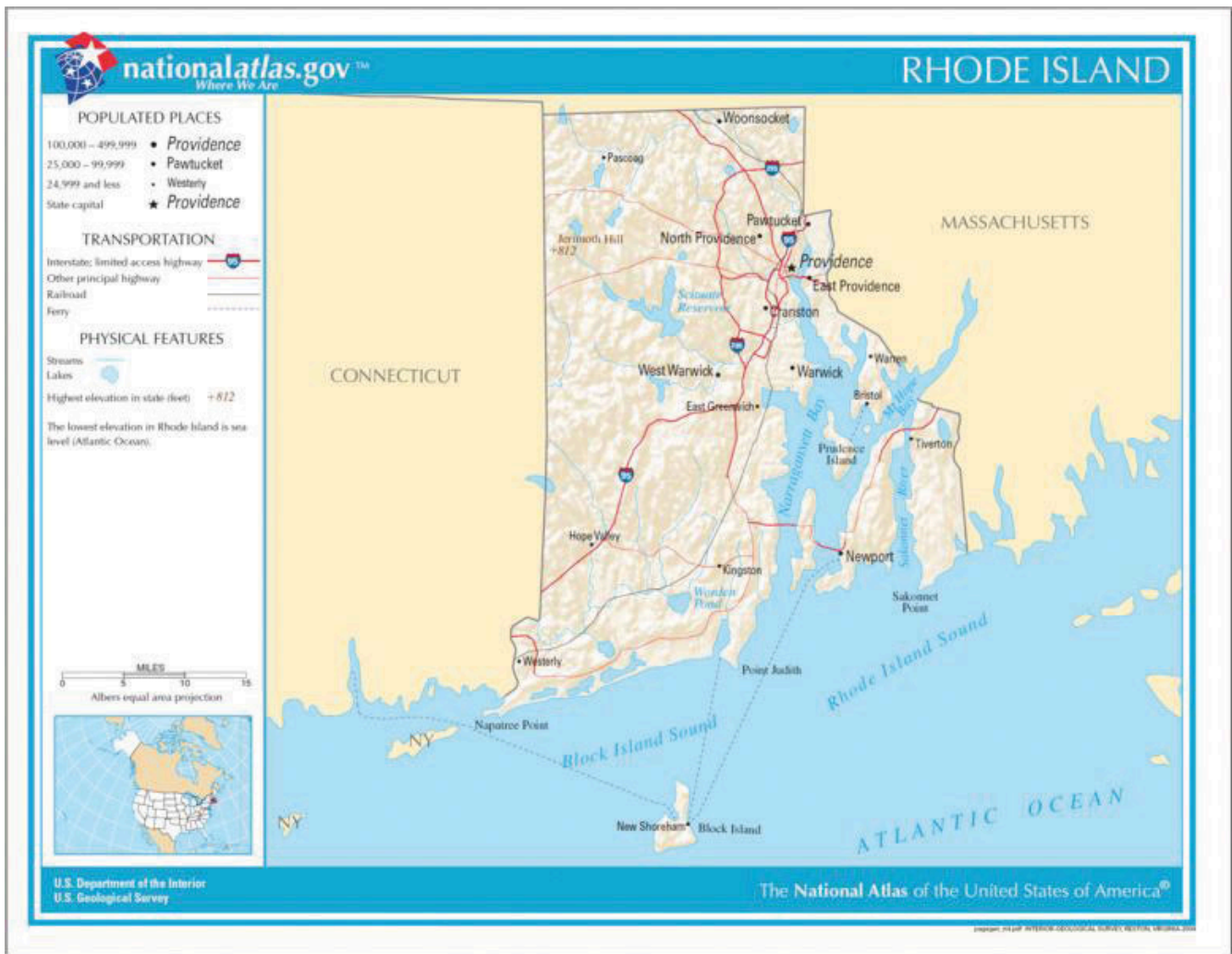
Figure 12.15 – The Human Eye

## Maps

Maps are extremely useful if the information is clear and limited. There are all kinds of maps, including population, weather, ocean currents, political, and economic maps, so you should find the right kind for the purpose of your speech. Choose a map that emphasizes the information you need to deliver. The map shown in Figure 12.16 (“African Map with Nigerian Emphasis”) is simple, showing clearly the geographic location of Nigeria. This can be extremely valuable for some audiences who might not be able to name and locate countries on the continent of Africa. The map also shows the relative size of Nigeria compared to its neighbors. Figure 12.17 (“Rhode Island Map”) is a map of the state of Rhode Island, and it emphasizes the complicated configuration of islands and waterways that characterize this state’s geography.



Figure 12.16 – Map of Africa with Nigerian Emphasis



### Figure 12.17 – Rhode Island Map

## Photographs and Drawings

Sometimes a photograph or a drawing is the best way to show an unfamiliar but important detail. Figure 12.18 (“Wigwam Photograph”) is a photograph of a wigwam, a dwelling used by Native Americans in the North East. Audiences expect high quality in photographs now, and as with all presentation aids, they should enhance the speech and not just “be there.” It is common to put stock photographs on PowerPoint slides as “clip art,” but they should be relevant and not detract from the message of the slide.



Figure 12.18 – Wigwam Photograph

## Video or Audio Recordings

Another very useful type of presentation aid is a video or audio recording. Whether it is a short video from a website such as YouTube or Vimeo, a segment from a song, or a piece of a podcast, a well-chosen video or audio recording may be a good choice to enhance your speech. Imagine, for example, that you're giving a speech on how Lap-Band surgeries help people lose weight. One of the sections of your speech could explain how the Lap-Band works, so you could easily show a forty-three second video available on YouTube to demonstrate the part of the surgery. Maybe you could include a recording of a real patient explaining why they decided to get the Lap-Band. There is one major warning to using audio and video clips during a speech: do not forget that they are supposed to be aids to your speech, not the speech itself. In addition, be sure to avoid these five mistakes that speakers often make when using audio and video clips:



- Avoid choosing clips that are too long for the overall length of the speech. Your instructor can give you some guidelines for how long video and audio clips should be for the speeches in your class, if they are allowed (and make sure they are).
- Practice with the audio or video equipment prior to speaking. If you are unfamiliar with the equipment, you'll look foolish trying to figure out how it works. This fiddling around will not only take your audience out of your speech but also have a negative impact on your credibility. It also wastes valuable time. Finally, be sure that the speakers on the computer are on and at the right volume level.
- Cue the clip to the appropriate place prior to beginning your speech. We cannot tell you the number of times we've seen students spend valuable speech time trying to find a clip on YouTube or a DVD. You need to make sure your clip is ready to go before you start speaking. Later in this chapter we will look at using video links in slides.
- In addition to cuing the clip to the appropriate place, the browser window should be open and ready to go. If there are advertisements before the video, be sure to have the video cued to play after the ad. The audience should not have to sit through a commercial.
- The audience must be given context before a video or audio clip is played, specifically what the clip is and why it relates to the speech. At the same time, the video should not repeat what you have already said, but add to it.

## Objects or Models

Objects and models are another form of presentation aid that can be very helpful in getting your audience to understand your message. Objects refer to anything you could hold up and talk about during your speech. If you're talking about the importance of not using plastic water bottles, you might hold up a plastic water bottle and a stainless steel water bottle as examples. Models, on the other hand, are re-creations of physical objects that you cannot have readily available with you during a speech. If you're giving a speech on heart murmurs, you may be able to show how heart murmurs work by holding up a model of the human heart. As will be discussed in the section on handouts below, a speaker should not pass an object or model around during a speech. It is highly distracting.

## People and Animals

The next category of presentation aids are people and animals. We can often use ourselves or other people to adequately demonstrate an idea during our speeches.

## Animals as Presentation Aids

When giving a speech on a topic relating to animals, it is often tempting to bring an animal to serve as your presentation aid. While this can sometimes add a very engaging dimension to the speech, it carries some serious risks that you need to consider.

The first risk is that animal behavior tends to be unpredictable. You may think this won't be a problem if your presentation aid animal is small enough to be kept confined throughout your speech—for example, a goldfish in a bowl or a lizard or bird in a cage. However, even caged animals can be very distracting to your audience if they run about, chirp, or exhibit other agitated behavior. The chances are great that an animal will react to the stress of an unfamiliar situation by displaying behavior that does not contribute positively to your speech or to the cleanliness of the physical environment. Additionally, the animal's behavior may not only affect audience attention during your speech, but potentially during your classmates' speeches as well.

The second risk is that some audience members may respond negatively to a live animal. In addition to common fears and aversions to animals like snakes, spiders, and mice, many people have allergies to various animals. One of the authors had an experience where a student brought his six-foot yellow python to class for a speech. As a result, one of the other students refused to stay in the room because of her snake phobia (the instructor was not too comfortable either).

The third risk is that some locations may have regulations about bringing non-service animals onto the premises. If animals are allowed, the person bringing the animal may be required to bring a veterinary certificate or may be legally responsible for any damage caused by the animal.

For these reasons, before you decide to use an animal as a presentation aid, ask yourself if you could make your point equally well with a picture, model, diagram, or other representation of the animal in question.

## Speaker as Presentation Aid

Speakers can often use their own bodies to demonstrate facets of a speech. If your speech is about ballroom dancing or ballet, you might use your body to demonstrate the basic moves in the cha-cha or the five basic ballet positions.

## Other People as Presentation Aids

In some cases, such as for a demonstration speech, you might want to ask someone else to serve as your presentation aid. You should arrange ahead of time for a person (or persons) to be an effective aid—do not assume that an audience member will volunteer on the spot. If you plan to demonstrate how to immobilize a broken bone, your volunteer must know ahead of time that you will touch them as much as necessary to splint the break.

You must also make certain that they will arrive dressed presentably and that they will not draw attention

away from your message through their appearance or behavior. The transaction between you and your human presentation aid must be appropriate, especially if you are going to demonstrate something like a dance step. In short, make sure your helper will know what is expected of them and consents to it.

## 12.4 Using Presentation Slides

Ever since the 1990s and the mainstreaming of personal computer technology, speakers have had the option of using slide presentation software to accompany their speeches and presentations. The most commonly known one is PowerPoint, although there are several others:

- Prezi, available at <https://prezi.com/>
- Google Slides, available in Google Drive and useful for collaborative assignments
- Impress, an Open Office product (<http://www.openoffice.org/product/impress.html>)
- Keynote, the Apple presentation slide software on MACs
- Adobe Acrobat Presenter

These products, some of which are offered free for trial or basic subscriptions (called a “freemium”), allow you to present professional-looking slides. Each one is “robust,” a word used to mean it has a large number of functions and features, some of which are helpful and some of which are distracting. For example, you can use the full range of fonts, although many of them are not appropriate for presentations because they are hard to read. In this section we will discuss the proper use of presentation slides, with the assumption that you understand the basics of cutting, pasting, inserting, etc. involved in these products. You may have taken a class in high school where you learned to use the technology, but that is not the same as learning to use them for actual presentations.

### The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Presentation Slides

In some industries and businesses, there is an assumption that speakers will use presentation slides. They allow visualization of concepts, they are easily portable, they can be embedded with videos and audio, words can dance around the screen—why wouldn’t a speaker use them? You will probably also be expected to have slide presentations in future assignments in college. Knowing how to use them, beyond the basic technology, is vital to being a proficient presenter.

But why not use them? Franck Frommer, a French journalist and communication expert, published the book *How PowerPoint Makes You Stupid* (2012), whose title says it all. He criticizes the “linearity” of PowerPoint and similar presentation software, meaning that audiences are not encouraged to see the



relationships between ideas and that PowerPoint hurts critical thinking in the audience. Slide follows slide of bulleted information without one slide being more important or the logical connections being clear.

As recently as the mid-2000s, critics such as well-known graphic expert and NASA consultant Edward Tufte (2005) charged that PowerPoint's tendency to force the user to put a certain number of bullet points on each slide in a certain format was a serious threat to the accurate presentation of data. As Tufte put it, "the rigid slide-by-slide hierarchies, indifferent to content, slice and dice the evidence into arbitrary compartments, producing an anti-narrative with choppy continuity."

Tufte argues that poor decision making, such as was involved with the 2003 space shuttle *Columbia* disaster, may have been related to the shortcomings of such presentation aids in NASA meetings. While more recent versions of PowerPoint and similar programs allow much more creative freedom in designing slides, this freedom comes with a responsibility—the user needs to take responsibility for using the technology to support the speech and not get carried away with the many special effects the software is capable of producing.

It should be mentioned here that Prezi helps address one of the major criticisms of PowerPoint. Because Prezi, in its design stage, looks something like a mind map on a very large canvas with grid lines, it allows you to show the relationship and hierarchy of ideas better. For example, you can see and design the slides so that the "Big Ideas" are in big circles and the subordinate ideas are in smaller ones.

In addition to recognizing the truth behind Frommer's and Tufte's critiques, we have all sat through a presenter who committed the error of putting far too much text on the slide. When a speaker does this, the audience is confused—do they read the text or listen to the speaker? An audience member cannot do both. Then, the speaker feels the need to read the slides rather than use PowerPoint for what it does best, visual reinforcement and clarification. We have also seen many poorly designed PowerPoint slides, either through haste or lack of knowledge: slides where the graphics are distorted (elongated or squatty), words and graphics not balanced, text too small, words printed over photographs, garish or nauseating colors, or animated figures left up on the screen for too long and distracting the audience. What about you? Can you think about PowerPoint "don'ts" that have hurt your reception of a presentation or lecture? This would be a good discussion for class, and a good way to know what not to do with your own slides.

## Creating Quality Slide Shows

Slides should show the principles of good design, which include unity, emphasis or focal point, scale and proportion, balance, and rhythm (Lauer & Pentak, 2000). Presenters should also pay attention to tone and usability. With those principles in mind, here are some tips for creating and then using presentation software.

### Unity and Consistency

Generally it is best to use a single font for the text on your visuals so that they look like a unified set. Or you can use two different fonts in consistent ways, such as having all headings and titles in the same font and all bullet

points in the same font. Additionally, the background should probably remain consistent, whether you choose one of the many design templates or if you just opt for a background color.

In terms of unity, the adage “Keep It Simple, Speaker” definitely applies to presentation slides. Each slide should have one message, one photo, one graphic. The audience members should know what they are supposed to look at on the slide. A phrase to remember about presentation slides and the wide range of design elements available is “Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.”

Another area related to unity and consistency, as well as audience response, is the use of animation or movement. There are three types of animation in slideshows. First, you can embed little characters or icons that have movement. These may seem like fun, but they have limited use and should not stay on the screen very long—you can use the second type of animation to take them off the screen.

That second type is the designed movement of text or objects on and off the screen. Although using this function takes up time in preparing your slides, especially if you want to do it well and be creative with it, it is very useful. You can control what your audience is seeing. It also avoids bringing up all the text and material on a slide at one time, which tempts the audience again to pay more attention to the screen than to you. Movement on the screen attracts attention, for better or worse. PowerPoint, for example, allows bouncing words, pulsating text, swirling phrases, even Star Wars scroll, which may or may not serve your purpose.

The third type of animation is called slide transitions, which is the design of how the next slide appears. In PowerPoint you can have the slides appear automatically or as blinds, as little checkerboards, from different sides of the screen, in opening circles, etc. (You can also use sound effects, but that is strongly discouraged.) In Prezi, the slides transition by zooming in and out, which is a clever effect but does make some audience members experience motion sickness. In general, you want to use a consistent and efficient pattern of movement with the second and third types of animation.

## Emphasis, Focal Point, and Visibility

Several points should be made about how to make sure the audience sees what they need to see on the slides.

1. It is essential to make sure the information is large enough for the audience to see; since the display size may vary according to the projector you are using, this is another reason for practicing in advance with the equipment you intend to use.
2. The standard rule for text is 7 X 7, or sometimes (if the screen is smaller) 6 X 6. Does this mean 49 or 36 words on the slide? No. It means, in the case of 7 X 7, that you should have no more than seven horizontal lines of text (this does not mean bullet points, but lines of text, including the heading) and the longest line should not exceed seven words.
3. Following the 7 X 7 rule will keep you from putting too much information on a slide, and you should also avoid too many slides. Less sometimes really is more. Again, there is no hard-and-fast rule, but a ten-minute speech probably needs fewer than ten slides, unless you can make a good argument for more

based on the content of the speech. If, however, the slides are just text, more than ten is too many.

4. Do not assume that all the templates feature visible text. Text should not be smaller than 22 point font for best visibility, and some of the templates use much smaller fonts than 22 point. This is especially important in those situations where the speaker creates handouts. Text smaller than 22 is very difficult to see on handouts of your slides. (However, handouts are not recommended for most situations.)
5. High contrast between the text and slides is extremely important. White fonts against very dark backgrounds and black fonts against very light backgrounds are probably your safest bet here. Remember that the way it looks on your computer screen is not exactly how it will look when projected—the light is coming from a different place. Avoid words on photos. Figure 12.19 shows a photo with the words placed across the center of the image. Not only does this obviously obscure some of the picture, it also makes the words difficult to read. Figure 12.20, by contrast, has the accompanying text placed just below the image, making both much easier to see, and a citation is provided.
6. Also in terms of visibility, most experts say that sans serif fonts such as Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana are better for reading from screens than serif fonts such as Times New Roman, Bookface, Georgia, or Garamond. Merriam-Webster (2018) defines “serif” as “any of the short lines stemming from and at an angle to the upper and lower ends of the strokes of a letter.” Serifs are additions to the letters on different fonts that give them a different appearance and help the flow of the eye when reading.



Figures 12.19 – Captioning blocking Photographs on Presentation Slides



Figures 12.20 – Captioning under Photograph on Presentation Slides

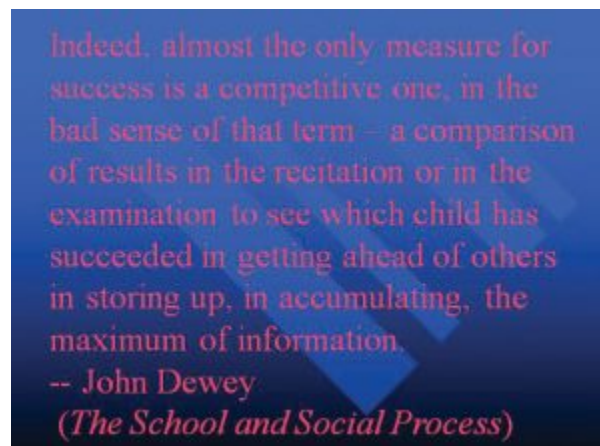


Figure 12.21 – Sample Slide for Critique

How does the slide in Figure 12.21 stack up beside these rules for visibility? You probably noticed that the slide is a “fail” in terms of high contrast between the font and background and the use of a block of text not broken up for easy reading. The audience would feel like they are supposed to read it but not be able to. Also, since the text is a quotation from John Dewey, the text should have quotation marks around it.

## Tone

Fonts, color, clip art, photographs, and templates all contribute to **tone**, which is the attitude being conveyed in the slides. If you want a light tone, such as for a speech about cruises, some colors (springtime, pastel, cool, warm, or primary colors) and fonts (such as Comic Sans) and lots of photographs will be more appropriate. For a speech about the Holocaust, more somber colors and design elements would be more fitting, whereas clip art would not be.

## Scale and Proportion

Although there are several ways to think about scale and proportion, we will discuss three here. First, bullet points. Bullet points infer that the items in the bulleted list are equal and the sequence doesn't matter. If you want to communicate order or sequence or priority, use numbers. Do not mix outline points or numerical points with bullet points. Also, you should not put your outline (Roman numerals, etc.) on the slide.

Bullet points should be short—not long, full sentences—but at the same time should be long enough to mean something. In a speech on spaying and neutering pets, the bullet point “pain” may be better replaced with “Pet feels little pain.” Second, when you are designing your slides, it is best to choose a template and stick with it. If you input all your graphics and material and then change the template, the format of the slide will change, in some cases dramatically, and you will have distorted graphics and words covered up. You will then have to redesign each slide, which can be unnecessarily time-consuming.

The third aspect of scale and proportion is the relationship between the graphics and text in terms of size. This aspect is discussed below in the next section on “Balance.” Also, a graphic should be surrounded by some empty space and not just take up the whole slide.

## Balance

In general, you want symmetrical slides. Below are four examples of slides that are unbalanced (Figures 12.22-12.25); the last one (Figure 12.26) achieves a better symmetry and design.

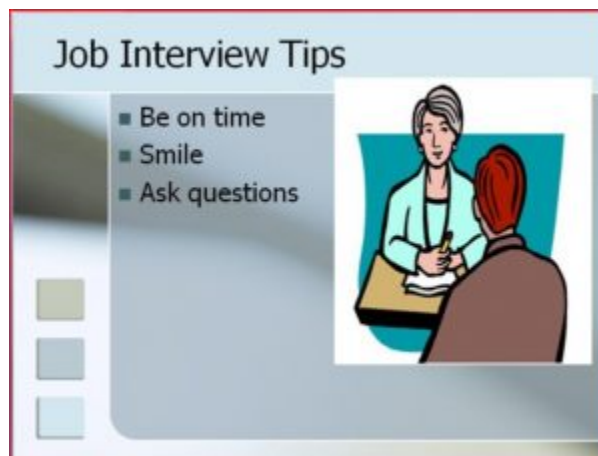


Figure 12.22 – This slide leaves too much “white space” below the text, leaving an imbalance between the text and graphic; the graphic goes up into the title, and the title could be centered.

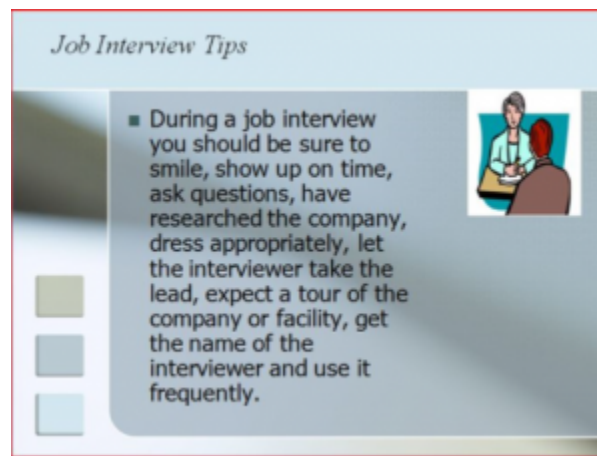


Figure 12.23 – This slide does not break the text up into bullets and is therefore hard to read; the graphic is strangely small, and the heading is in a different font. Script fonts are often hard to read on screens.

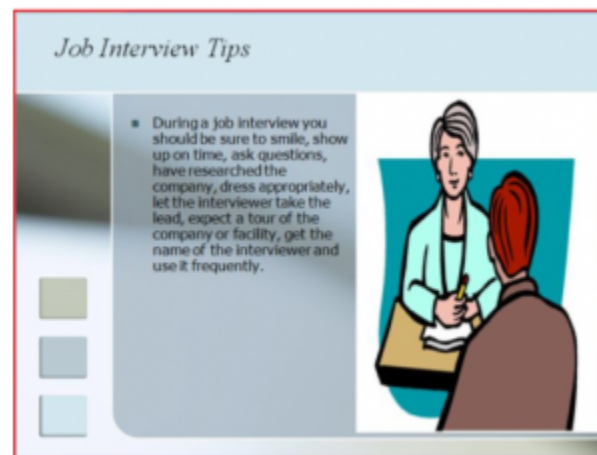


Figure 12.24 – In this slide, similar problems from Figure 12.23 are repeated, but the text is also too small and the graphic is distorted because it was not sized from the corner.

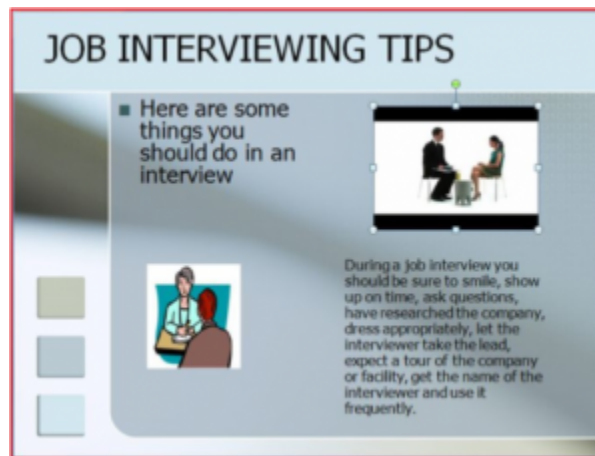


Figure 12.25 – This slide is far too “busy.” The additional clip art is not helpful, the font is too small, and the ideas are disconnected. Having text in all caps is also difficult to read



Figure 12.26 – This version provides more visual balance and does not violate the 7X7 rule. Probably a photograph would work better than clip art on this slide. It also has a few typos—can you find them?

## Rhythm in Presenting

The rhythm of your slide display should be reasonably consistent—you would not want to display a dozen different slides in the first minute of a five-minute presentation and then display only one slide per minute for the rest of the speech. Timing them so that the audience can actually take them in is important. Presenters often overdo the number of slides, thinking they will look more professional, but too many slides just dilutes the message.

If you can obtain a remote mouse to change slides, that can help you feel independent of the mouse attached



to the computer. However, you have to practice with the remote “clicker.” But if you have to use the mouse to change slides, keep your hands off of it between clicks. We have seen students wiggle the little arrow all over the screen. It is extremely annoying.

Whether using a remote “clicker” or the attached mouse, you must attend to the connection between what is on the screen and what you are actually talking about at the moment. Put reminders in your notes about when you need to change slides during your speech.

For better or worse, we have become very screen-oriented in our communication, largely because screens change often and that changing teaches us to expect new stimuli, which we crave. If the screen is up but you are not talking about what is on the screen, it is very confusing to the audience.

If you are using PowerPoint and if you are not talking about something on a slide, hit the “B” key or the blank screen button on the remote mouse. This action will turn the screen to black. You can also hit the “W” key, which turns the screen to white, but that will make the audience think something is coming. Unfortunately, the downside of the “B” key action is that it will return you to the previous screen. To avoid this, some presenters put a black slide between slides in the presentation so that hitting the forward key gives the same effect, but hitting it again takes them to a new screen. (Other programs have similar functions; for example, if using Prezi, the “B” key also shows a black screen.)

In fact, a basic presentation rule is to only show your visual aid when you are talking about it, and remove it when you no longer are talking about it. Some other practical considerations are as follows:

1. Be sure the file is saved in a format that will be “readable” on the computer where you are presenting. A common example is that a Keynote presentation (Apple) does not open on all PCs. You can save Keynote as a .ppt file for use on a PC. Likewise, if you choose to use Prezi or other web-based presentation software, you will need a strong, reliable Internet connection to show the slides.
2. Any borrowed graphic must be cited on the slide where it is used; the same would be true of borrowed textual material. Putting your sources only on the last slide is insufficient.
3. A very strong temptation for speakers is to look at the projected image rather than the audience during the speech. This practice cuts down on eye contact, of course, and is distracting for the audience. Two solutions for that are to print your notes from the presentation slides and/or use the slides as your note structure. Also remember that if the image is on the computer monitor in front of you, it is on the screen behind you.
4. Always remember—and this cannot be emphasized enough—technology works for you. The presentation aids are aids, not the speech itself.
5. As mentioned before, sometimes life happens—technology does not work. It could be that the projector bulb goes out or the Internet connection is down. The show must go on.
6. If you are using a video or audio clip from an Internet source, it is probably best to hyperlink the URL on one of the slides rather than minimize the program and change to the Internet site. You can do this by highlighting a key word on the slide, right clicking to find “hyperlink,” and then pasting the URL



there. Although you can also embed video in a PowerPoint, it makes the file extremely large and that may cause problems of its own.

7. Finally, it is common for speakers to think “the slide changes, so the audience knows there is a change, so I don’t need a verbal transition.” Please do not fall into this trap. Verbal transitions are just as, and maybe more, necessary for a speech using slides.

## 12.5 Low-Tech Presentation Aids

One reason for using digital media is that they can't be prone to physical damage in the form of smudges, scratches, dents, and rips. Unlike posters and objects, presentation software can be kept professional looking if you have to carry them through a rainstorm or blizzard. However, there are times when it makes sense to use "low-tech" media for presentations. Here are some directions for those times.

### Dry-Erase Board

If you use a chalkboard or dry-erase board, you are not using a prepared presentation aid. Your failure to prepare visuals ahead of time can be interpreted in several ways, mostly negative. If other speakers carefully design, produce, and use attractive visual aids, yours will stand out by contrast. You will be seen as the speaker who does not take the time to prepare even a simple aid. Do not use a chalkboard or dry-erase board and pretend it's a prepared presentation aid.

However, numerous speakers do utilize chalk and dry-erase boards effectively. Typically, these speakers use the chalk or dry-erase board for interactive components of a speech. For example, maybe you're giving a speech in front of a group of executives. You may have a PowerPoint all prepared, but at various points in your speech you want to get your audience's responses. (More recent technologies, such as on iPads, allow you to do the interaction on the screen, but this would have to be supported by the environment.) Chalk or dry-erase boards are very useful when you want to visually show information that you are receiving from your audience. If you ever use a chalk or dry-erase board, follow these four simple rules:

1. Write large enough so that everyone in the room can see (which is harder than it sounds; it is also hard to write and talk at the same time!).
2. Print legibly; don't write in cursive script.
3. Write short phrases; don't take time to write complete sentences.
4. Be sure you have markers that will not go dry, and clean the board afterward.

### Flipchart

A flipchart is useful for situations when you want to save what you have written for future reference or to distribute to the audience after the presentation. As with whiteboards, you will need good markers and readable handwriting, as well as a strong easel to keep the flipchart upright.

## Posters

You may have the opportunity in your college years to attend or participate in a “poster session.” These are times during an academic conference where visitors can view a well-designed poster depicting a research project and discuss it one-on-one with the researcher. These kinds of posters are quite large and involve a great deal of work. They can be generated from PowerPoint but often require a special printer. Otherwise, posters are probably not the best way to approach presentation aids in a speech. There are problems with visibility as well as portability. Avoid producing a presentation aid that looks like you simply cut pictures out of magazines and pasted them on. Slapping some text and images on a board looks unprofessional and will not be viewed as credible or effective.

## Handouts

Handouts are appropriate for delivering information that audience members can take away with them. As we will see, handouts require a great deal of management if they are to contribute to your credibility as a speaker.

First, make sure the handout is worth the trouble of making, copying, and distributing it. Does the audience really need the handout? Second, make sure to bring enough copies of the handout for each audience member to get one. Having to share or look on with one’s neighbor does not contribute to a professional image. Under no circumstances should you ever provide a single copy of a handout to pass around. It is distracting, and everyone will see it at different times in the speech, which is also true about passing any object around the room.

There are three possible times to distribute handouts: before you begin your speech, during the speech, and after your speech is over. Naturally, if you need your listeners to follow along in a handout, you will need to distribute it before your speech begins. If you have access to the room ahead of time, place a copy of the handout at or on each seat in the audience. If not, ask a volunteer to distribute them as quickly as possible while you prepare to begin speaking. If the handout is a “takeaway,” leave it on a table near the door so that those audience members who are interested can take one on their way out; in this case, don’t forget to tell them to do so as you conclude your speech. It is almost never appropriate to distribute handouts during your speech, as it is distracting, takes up time, and interrupts the pace of your presentation.

## Conclusion

To finish this chapter, we will recap and remind you about the principles of effective presentation aids. Whether your aid is a slide show, object, a person, or dry erase board, these standards are essential:

- Presentation aids must be easily seen or heard by your audience. Squinting and head-cocking are not good reactions. Neither should the audience look at the screen the whole time and ignore the speaker.

- Presentation aids must be portable, easily handled, and efficient.

# CHAPTER 13 INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

## Learning Objectives

- Recognize opinion versus factual information.
- Recognize the different types of informative speeches.
- Distinguish the best organizational approach for types of informative speeches.
- Employ proven guidelines for preparing an informative speech.
- Construct an informative speech.



## 13.1 What is an Informative Speech?

An informative speech can first be defined as a speech based entirely and exclusively on facts. Basically, an informative speech conveys knowledge, a task that every person engages in every day in some form or another. Whether giving someone who is lost driving directions, explaining the specials of the day as a server, or describing the plot of a movie to friends, people engage in forms of informative speaking daily. Secondly, an informative speech does not attempt to convince the audience that one thing is better than another. It does not advocate a course of action.

Consider the following two statements:

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

George Washington was the first President of the United States.

In each case, the statement made is what can be described as irrefutable, meaning a statement or claim that cannot be argued. In the first example, even small children are taught that having two apples and then getting two more apples will result in having four apples. This statement is irrefutable in that no one in the world will (or should!) argue this: It is a fact.

Similarly, with the statement “George Washington was the first President of the United States,” this again is an irrefutable fact. If you asked one hundred history professors and read one hundred history textbooks, the professors and textbooks would all say the same thing: Washington was the first president. No expert, reliable source, or person with any common sense would argue about this.

(Someone at this point might say, “No, John Hanson was the first president.” However, he was president under the Articles of Confederation for a short period—November 5, 1781, to November 3, 1782—not under our present Constitution. This example shows the importance of stating your facts clearly and precisely and being able to cite their origins.)

### Informative Speech is Not a Persuasive Speech

Informative speech is fundamentally different from a persuasive speech in that it does not incorporate opinion as its basis. This can be the tricky part of developing an informative speech, because some opinion statements sometimes sound like facts (since they are generally agreed upon by many people), but are really opinion. For example, in an informative speech on George Washington, you might say, “George Washington was one of the greatest presidents in the history of the United States.” While this statement may be agreed upon by most people, it is possible for some people to disagree and argue the opposite point of view. The statement “George Washington was one of the greatest presidents in the history of the United States” is not irrefutable, meaning

someone could argue this claim. If, however, you present the opinion as an opinion from a source, that is acceptable: it is a fact that someone (hopefully someone with expertise) holds the opinion. You do not want your central idea, your main points, and the majority of your supporting material to be opinion or argument in an informative speech.

Unlike in persuasive speeches, in an informative speech, you should never take sides on an issue, nor should you “spin” the issue in order to influence the opinions of the listeners. Even if you are informing the audience about differences in views on controversial topics, you should simply and clearly describe and explain the issues. This is not to say, however, that the audience’s needs and interests have nothing to do with the informative speech. We come back to the WIIFM principle (“What’s in it for me?”) because even though an informative speech is fact-based, it still needs to relate to people’s lives in order to maintain their attention.

## Why Informative Speech Is Important

The question may arise here, “If we can find anything on the Internet now, why bother to give an informative speech?” The answer lies in the unique relationship between audience and speaker found in the public speaking context. The speaker can choose to present information that is of most value to the audience. Secondly, the speaker is not just overloading the audience with data. As we have mentioned before, that’s not really a good idea because audiences cannot remember great amounts of data and facts after listening. The focus of the content is what matters. This is where the specific purpose and central idea come into play. Remember, public speaking is not a good way to “dump data” on the audience, but to make information meaningful.

Finally, although we have stressed that the informative speech is fact-based and does not have the purpose of persuasion, information still has an indirect effect on someone. If a classmate gives a speech on correctly using the Heimlich Maneuver to help a choking victim, the side effect (and probably desired result) is that the audience would use it when confronted with the situation.



## 13.2 Types of Informative Speeches

While topics that are suitable for informative speeches are nearly limitless, they can generally be pared down into five broad categories. Understanding the type of informative speeches can help you to figure out the best way to organize, research, and prepare for it.

### Type 1: History

A common approach to selecting an informative speech topic is to discuss the history or development of something. With so much of human knowledge available via the Internet, finding information about the origins and evolution of almost anything is much easier than it has ever been (with the disclaimer that there are quite a few websites out there with false information). With that in mind, some of the areas that a historical informative speech could cover are below.

#### Objects

History of objects such as the baseball or the saxophone can be presented in your informative speech. Someone at some point in history was the first to develop what is considered modern baseball. An informative speech speaker could give a speech on the history of baseball: Who was it? What was it originally made of? How did it evolve into the baseball that is used by Major League Baseball today?

#### Places

You can also give an informative speech on the history of physical places such as the Eiffel Tower or Disney World. The Disney World of today is different from the Disney World of the early 1970s; the design has developed over the last fifty plus years. Stories on the first things built in the Disney World, first theme parks, and how it expanded and built in other parts of the world can all be interesting historical elements to share with your audience.

#### Ideas

It is also possible to provide facts on ideas such as democracy or freedom of speech. For example, while no one can definitively point to a specific date or individual who first developed the concept of democracy, it is known

to have been conceived in ancient Greece (Raaflaub, Ober, & Wallace, 2007). By looking at the civilizations and cultures that adopted forms of democracy throughout history, it is possible to provide an audience with a better understanding of how the idea has been shaped into what it has become today.

## Type 2: Biography

A biography is similar to a history, but in this case the subject is specifically a person, whether living or deceased. For the purposes of this class, biographies should focus on people of some note or fame, since doing research on people who are not at least mildly well-known could be difficult. But again, as with histories, there are specific and irrefutable facts that can help provide an overview of someone's life, such as the dates that President Lincoln was born (February 12, 1809) and died (April 15, 1865) and the years he was in office as president (1861–1865).

This might be a good place to address research and support. The basic dates of Abraham Lincoln's life could be found in multiple sources and you would not have to cite the source in that case. But if you use the work of a specific historian to explain how Lincoln was able to win the presidency in the tumultuous years before the Civil War, that would need a citation of that author and the publication.

## Type 3: Processes

Process speeches provide information on steps to accomplish a specific task, goal, or process. For example, speakers can talk about how to bake chocolate chip cookies, how to throw a baseball, how a nuclear reactor works, and how a bill works its way through Congress.

Process speeches are sometimes referred to as demonstration or “how to” speeches because they often entail demonstrating or performing something. These speeches provide step-by-step instructions on completing a specific task (e.g., how to bake chocolate chip cookies in 10 steps). However, not all process speeches tell the audience how to perform something but rather only explain the procedures so the audience can gain an understanding of how things work (e.g., how a bill goes through Congress).

## Type 4: Ideas and Concepts

Sometimes an informative speech is designed to explain an idea or concept. What does democracy mean? What is justice? In speeches on ideas and concepts, speakers should first define the idea or concept and then provide specific examples to make your concept concrete, real, and “tangible” to your audience.

## Type 5: Categories or Divisions

Sometimes an informative speech topic doesn't lend itself to a specific type of approach, and in those cases the topics tend to fall into a "general" category of informative speeches. For example, if a student wanted to give an informative speech on the four "C's" of diamonds (cut, carat, color, and clarity), they certainly wouldn't approach it as if they were providing the history of diamonds, nor would they necessarily be informing anyone on "how to" shop for or buy diamonds or how diamonds are mined. The approach in this case would simply be to inform an audience on the four "C's" and what they mean. Other examples of this type of informative speech would be positions in playing volleyball or the customs to know when traveling in China.

As stated above, identifying the type of informative speech being given can help in several ways (conducting research, writing the introduction and conclusion), but perhaps the biggest benefit is that the type of informative speech being given will help determine, to some degree, the organizational pattern that will need to be used (see Chapter 8). For example, a How To speech must be in chronological order. There really isn't a way (or reason) to present a How To speech other than how the process is done in a time sequence. That is to say, for a speech on how to bake chocolate chip cookies, getting the ingredients (Main Point 1) must come before mixing the ingredients (Main Point 2), which must come before baking them (Main Point 3). Putting them in any other order will only confuse the audience.

Similarly, most histories and biographies will be organized chronologically, but not always. It makes sense to explain the history of baseball from when it was first developed to where it is today, but certain approaches to histories and biographies can make that irrelevant. For an informative speech on Benjamin Franklin, a student might choose as his or her three main points: 1) His time as a printer, 2) His time as an inventor, 3) His time as a diplomat. These main points are not in strict chronological order because Franklin was a printer, inventor, and diplomat at the same time during periods of his whole life. However, this example would still be one way to inform an audience about him without using the chronological organizational pattern.

As for general informative speeches, since the topics that can be included in this category are very diverse and cover a range of subject matter, the way they are organized will be varied as well. However, if the topic is "types of" something or "kinds of" something, the organizational pattern would be topical; if it were the layout of a location, such as the White House, it would be spatial.

## 13.3 Guidelines for Informative Speech Topic Selection and Preparation

### Pick a Focused Topic—Don't Be Too Broad

In preparing an informative speech, one of the most common misconceptions students have is that they must be comprehensive in covering their topic, which isn't realistic. Let's say a student selects a topic and proposes the following specific purpose statement: "To inform my audience about the Civil War." The Civil War was, conservatively speaking, four years long, resulted in over 750,000 casualties, and arguably changed the course of human history. So to think that it is possible to cover all of that in five to seven minutes is unrealistic. Also, a typical college library has hundreds of books dealing with the Civil War.

A revised specific purpose for this speech might be something like "To inform my audience about the Gettysburg Address." This topic is much more compact (the Gettysburg Address is only a few minutes long), and doing research will now be exponentially easier—although you will still find hundreds of sources on it. Or, an even more specific topic would be like the one in the outline at the end of this chapter: "To inform my classmates of the specific places in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, that are considered haunted."

Instead of looking through all the books in your campus library on the Civil War, searching through the library's databases and catalog for material on the Gettysburg Address will yield a much more manageable number of books and articles. It may sound counterintuitive, but selecting a speech topic that is very specifically focused will make the research and writing phases of the informative speech much easier.

Another example is a student who wants to deliver an informative speech on Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was 56 years old when he died, so to think that it is possible to cover his entire life's story in 5 to 7 minutes is unrealistic. The better option is to select three aspects of his life and focus on those as a way to provide an overall picture of who he was. So a proposed speech on Lincoln might have the specific purpose: "To inform my audience about Abraham Lincoln's administration of the Civil War." This is still a huge topic in that massive books have been written about it, but it could be addressed in three or four main points such as:

1. The Civil War began in the aftermath of Lincoln's election and inauguration
2. Finding the right military leaders for the Union was his major challenge at the beginning.
3. The Emancipation Proclamation changed the nature of the War.
4. Lincoln adopted a policy that led to the North's victory.

Regardless of the topic, you will never be able to cover everything that is known about your topic, so don't try.

Select the things that will best help the audience gain a general understanding of the topic, that will interest them, and that they hopefully will find valuable.

For additional tips for selecting the right informative speech topics and preparing the speech, watch the following videos:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1569#oembed-1>



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1569#oembed-2>

## Avoid Faux or Fake Informative Speech Topics

Sometimes students think that because something sounds like an informative speech topic, it is one. This happens a lot with political issues that are usually partisan in nature. Some students may feel that the speech topic “To inform my audience why William Henry Harrison was a bad president” sounds factual, but really this is an opinion.

Similarly, a number of topics that include conspiracy and paranormal subject matter are usually mistaken for good informative topics as well.

It is not uncommon for a student to propose the topic “To inform my audience about the existence of extraterrestrials,” thinking it is a good topic. After all, there is plenty of evidence to support the claim, right? There are pictures of unidentified objects in the sky that people claim are from outer space, there are people who claim to have seen extraterrestrials, and most powerful of all, there are people who say that they have been abducted by aliens and taken into space.

The problem here, as you have probably already guessed, is that these facts are not irrefutable. Not every single person who sees something unknown in the sky will agree it is an alien spacecraft, and there can be little doubt that not everyone who claims to have been abducted by a UFO is telling the truth. This isn’t to say that you can’t still do an informative speech on alien sites. For example, two viable options are “To inform my audience about the SETI Project” or “To inform my audience of the origin of the Area 51 conspiracy.” However, these types of speeches can quickly devolve into opinion if you aren’t careful, which would then make them persuasive speeches. Even if you start by trying to be objective, unless you can present each side

equally, it will end up becoming a persuasive speech. Additionally, when a speaker picks such a topic, it is often because of a latent desire to persuade the audience about them.

## Be Accurate, Clear, and Interesting

A good informative speech conveys accurate information to the audience in a way that is clear and that keeps the listener interested in the topic. Achieving all three of these goals—accuracy, clarity, and interest—is the key to being an effective speaker. If information is inaccurate, incomplete, or unclear, it will be of limited usefulness to the audience.

Part of being accurate is making sure that your information is current. Even if you know a great deal about your topic or wrote a good paper on the topic in a high school course, you will need to verify the accuracy and completeness of what you know, especially if it is medical or scientific information. Most people understand that technology changes rapidly, so you need to update your information almost constantly. The same is true for topics that, on the surface, may seem to require less updating.

For example, the Civil War occurred over 150 years ago, but contemporary research still offers new and emerging theories about the causes of the war and its long-term effects. So even with a topic that seems to be unchanging, carefully check the information to be sure it's accurate and up to date.

What defines “interesting?” In approaching the informative speech, you should keep in mind the good overall principle that the audience is asking, “What’s in it for me?” The audience is either consciously or unconsciously wondering, “What is in this topic for me? How can I use this information? Of what value is this speech content to me? Why should I listen to it?” One reason this textbook uses examples of the Civil War is that the authors’ college is located by several Civil War sites and even a major battlefield. Students see reminders of the Civil War on a regular basis.

You might consider it one of the jobs of the introduction to directly or indirectly answer these questions. If you can’t, then you need to think about your topic and why you are addressing it. If it’s only because the topic is interesting to you, you are missing the point. For example, why should we know about Abraham Lincoln’s administration of the Civil War? Obviously, because it had significant, long-term consequences for Americans, and you should articulate that in terms the audience can understand.

## Keep in Mind Audience Diversity

Finally, remember that not everyone in your audience is the same, so an informative speech should be prepared with audience diversity in mind. If the information in a speech is too complex or too simplistic, it will not hold the interest of the listeners. Determining the right level of complexity can be hard. Audience analysis is one important way to do this. Do the members of your audience belong to different age groups? Did they all go to public schools in the United States, or are some of them international students? Are they all students majoring

in the same subject, or is there a mixture of majors? Never assume that just because an audience is made up of students, they all share a knowledge set. Do enough research, and try to include examples and supporting material that will resonate with your diverse audience.

## 13.4 Sample Informative Speeches and Speech Outlines

### Sample Informative Speech Outline

By Shannon Stanley

Topic: Lord Byron

Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the life of George Gordon Byron, Lord Byron.

Central Idea: George Gordon (Lord Byron) overcame physical hardships, was a world-renowned poet, and was an advocate for the Greek's war for freedom.

### Introduction

A. **Attention step:** Imagine an eleven-year-old boy who has been beaten and sexually abused repeatedly by the very person who is supposed to take care of him.

B. **Reveal topic/thesis:** This is one of the many hurdles that George Gordon, better known as Lord Byron, overcame during his childhood. Lord Byron was also a talented poet with the ability to transform his life into the words of his poetry. Byron became a serious poet by the age of fifteen, and he was first published in 1807 at the age of nineteen. Lord Byron was a staunch believer in freedom and equality, so he gave most of his fortune, and in the end, his very life, supporting the Greek's war for independence.

C. **Establish credibility:** While many of you have probably never heard of Lord Byron, his life and written work will become more familiar to you when you take Humanities 1201, as I learned when I took it last semester.

D. **Preview body of speech:** In this speech I will talk about Lord Byron's early childhood, accomplishments, and life outside of poetry

**Transition:** Let me start with Lord Byron's childhood.

#### Body

#### A. Main point 1: Lord Byron's childhood

##### I. Subpoint 1: Birth and disability

a. Lord Byron was born on January 22, 1788, to Captain John Byron and Catherine Gordon Byron.

b. According to Paul Trueblood, the author of Lord Byron, Lord Byron's father only married Catherine for her dowry, which he quickly went through, leaving his wife and



child nearly Penniless.

- c. By the age of two, Lord Byron and his mother had moved to Aberdeen in Scotland and shortly thereafter, his father died in France at the age of thirty-six.
- d. Lord Byron was born with a clubbed right foot, which is a deformity that caused his foot to turn sideways instead of remaining straight, and his mother had no money to seek treatment for this painful and embarrassing condition.
- e. He would become very upset and fight anyone who even spoke of his lameness
- f. Despite his handicap, Lord Byron was very active and liked competing with the other boys.

II. Subpoint 2: Later childhood, sexual abuse.

- a. At the age of ten, his grand-uncle died, leaving him the title as the sixth Baron Byron of Rochdale. With this title, he also inherited Newstead Abbey, a dilapidated estate that was in great need of repair.
- b. Because the Abbey was in Nottinghamshire England, he and his mother moved there and stayed at the abbey until it was rented out to pay for the necessary repairs.
- c. During this time, May Gray, Byron's nurse, had already begun physically and sexually abusing him. A year passed before he finally told his guardian, John Hanson, about May's abuse; she was fired immediately. Unfortunately, the damage had already been done.
- d. In the book *Lord Byron*, it is stated that years later, he wrote, "My passions were developed very early—so early, that few would believe me if I were to state the period, and the facts which accompanied it."

**Transition:** Although Lord Byron had many obstacles to overcome, during his childhood, he became a world-renowned poet by the age of 24.

**B. Main point 2: Lord Byron's accomplishments as a poet**

I. Subpoint 1: Beginning of the career

- a. Lord Byron experienced the same emotions we all do, but he was able to express those emotions in the form of his poetry and share them with the world.
- b. According to Horace Gregory, the author of *Poems of George Gordon, Lord Byron*, the years from 1816 through 1824 is when Lord Byron was most known throughout Europe.
- c. But according to Paul Trueblood, *Childe Harold* was published in 1812 and became one of the best-selling works of literature in the 19th century.
- d. *Childe Harold* was written while Lord Byron was traveling through Europe after graduating from Trinity College.
- e. Many authors such as Trueblood, and Garrett, the author of *George Gordon, Lord Byron*, express their opinion that *Childe Harold* is an autobiography about Byron and his travels.

II. Subpoint 2: Poem topics

a. Lord Byron often wrote about the ones he loved the most, such as the poem “She Walks in Beauty” written about his cousin Anne Wilmont, and “Stanzas for Music” written for his half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

b. He was also an avid reader of the Old Testament and would write poetry about stories from the Bible that he loved. One such story was about the last king of Babylon. This poem was called the “Vision of Belshazzar,” and is very much like the bible version in the book of Daniel.

**Transition:** Although Lord Byron is mostly known for his talents as a poet, he was also an advocate for the Greek’s war for independence.

### C. Main point 3: Lord Byron’s life other than poetry

#### I. Sub point 1: Byron arrived in Greece in 1823 during a civil war.

a. Lord Byron, after his self-imposed exile from England, took the side of the Greeks in their war for freedom from Turkish rule.

b. The Greeks were too busy fighting amongst themselves to come together to form a formidable army against the Turks. According to Martin Garrett, Lord Byron donated money to refit the Greek’s fleet of ships, but did not immediately get involved in the situation. He had doubts as to if or when the Greeks would ever come together and agree long enough to make any kind of a difference in their war effort.

c. Eventually the Greeks united and began their campaign for the Greek War of Independence.

d. He began pouring more and more of his fortune into the Greek army and finally accepted a position to oversee a small group of men sailing to Missolonghi.

e. Lord Byron set sail for Missolonghi in Western Greece in 1824. He took a commanding position over a small number of the Greek army despite his lack of military training.

f. He had also made plans to attack a Turkish held fortress but became very ill before the plans were ever carried through.

#### II. Sub point II: Death

a. Lord Byron died on April 19, 1824, at the age of 36 due to the inexperienced doctors who continued to bleed him while he suffered from a severe fever.

b. After Lord Byron’s death, the Greek War of Independence, due to his support, received more foreign aid which led to their eventual victory in 1832.

c. Lord Byron is hailed as a national hero by the Greek nation

d. Many tributes such as statues and road-names have been devoted to Lord Byron since the time of his death.

### Conclusion

A. **Signal end of speech (transition):** In conclusion,

B. **Review main points and summarize:** Lord Byron overcame great physical hardships to become a

world-renowned poet, and is seen as a hero to the Greek nation and is mourned by them still today.

**C. Sense of completeness/clincher/memorable ending:** I have chosen not to focus on Lord Byron's more liberal way of life, but rather to focus on his accomplishments in life. He was a man who owed no loyalty to Greece, yet gave his life to support their cause. Most of the world will remember Lord Byron primarily through his written attributes, but Greece will always remember him as the "Trumpet Voice of Liberty."

Sample Informative Speech by Pamela Meyer



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1578#oembed-1>*

## References

- Garrett, M. (2000). George Gordon, Lord Byron. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Gregory, H. (1969). Poems of George Gordon, Lord Byron. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Trueblood, P. G. (1969). Lord Byron. (S. E. Bowman, Ed.). New York, NY: Twayne Publishers.



# CHAPTER 14: PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

## Learning Objectives

- Define persuasion.
- Define ethos, logos, and pathos.
- Explain the barriers to persuading an audience.
- Construct a clear, reasonable proposition for a short classroom speech.
- Compose an outline for a well-supported persuasive speech using an appropriate organizational pattern such as Monroe's Motivated Sequence.
- Analyze the audience to determine appropriate emotional and personal appeals.

## Key Terms

- **Cognitive Dissonance**
- **Ethos**
- **Logos**
- **Mental Dialogue**
- **Monroe's Motivated Sequence**
- **Pathos**
- **Persuasion**
- **Proposition**
- **Selective Exposure**
- **Target Audience**

- **Two-Tailed Arguments**

## 14.1 Why Persuade?



When your instructor first announced that you would be required to give a persuasive speech for this class, what was your reaction? “Oh, good, I’ve got a great idea,” or, “Oh, no!”? For many people, there is something a little uncomfortable about the word “persuasion.” It often gets paired with ideas of seduction, manipulation, force, lack of choice. The aim of this chapter is to help frame persuasion in terms of more positive concepts such as encouragement, influence, urging, or logical arguments. You might get suspicious if you think someone is trying to persuade you. You might not appreciate someone telling you to change your viewpoints. On the other hand, you might not think you have any beliefs, attitudes, values, or positions that are worth advocating for in front of an audience.

However, if you think of persuasion simply as a formal speech with a purpose of getting people to do something they do not want to do, then you will miss the value of learning persuasion and its accompanying skills of appeal, argument, and logic. Persuasion is something you do every day, in various forms. Convincing a friend to go see a movie instead of staying in to watch TV, providing your instructor a reason to give you an extension on an assignment, writing a cover letter and résumé and going through an interview for a job—all of these and so many more are examples of persuasion. In fact, it is hard to think of life without the everyday give-and-take of persuasion.

You may also be thinking, “I’ve given an informative speech. What’s the difference?” While this chapter will refer to all of the content of the preceding chapters as it walks you through the steps of composing your persuasive speech, there is a difference. Although your persuasive speech will involve information—probably even as much as in your informative speech—the key difference is the word “change.” Think of it like this:

$$\text{INFORMATION} + \text{CHANGE} = \text{PERSUASION}$$

You will be using the information for the purpose of changing something. First, we try to change the

audience's beliefs, attitudes, and actions, and second, possibly the context they act upon. In the next section we will investigate the persuasive act and then move on to the barriers to persuasion.



## 14.2 A Definition of Persuasion

**Persuasion** can be defined in two ways, for two purposes. The first (Lucas, 2015) is “the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people’s beliefs or actions” (p. 306). This is a good, simple, straightforward definition to start with, although it does not encompass the complexity of persuasion. This definition does introduce us to what could be called a “scaled” way of thinking about persuasion and change.

Think of persuasion as a continuum or line going both directions (see Figure 13.1). Your audience members, either as a group or individually, are sitting somewhere on that line in reference to your central idea statement, or what we are going to call a proposition in this chapter. In your speech you are proposing the truth or validity of an idea, one which the audience may not find true or acceptable. Sometimes the word “claim” is used for the proposition or central idea statement in a persuasive speech because you are claiming an idea is true or an action is valuable.

For example, your proposition might be, “The main cause of climate change is human activity.” In this case you are not denying that natural forces, such as volcanoes, can affect the climate, but you are claiming that climate change is mainly due to pollution and other harmful things humans have done to the environment. To be an effective persuasive speaker, one of your first jobs after coming up with this topic would be to determine where your audience “sits” on the continuum.

+3 means strongly agree to the point of making lifestyle choices to lessen climate change (such as riding a bike instead of driving a car, recycling, eating certain kinds of foods, and advocating for government policy changes).

+2 means agree but not to the point of acting upon it or only acting on it in small ways.

+1 as mildly in favor of your proposition; that is, they think it’s probably true but the issue doesn’t affect them personally.

0 means neutral, no opinion, or feeling too uninformed to make a decision.

–1 means mildly opposed to the proposition but willing to listen to those with whom they disagree.

–2 means disagreement to the point of dismissing the idea pretty quickly.

–3 means strong opposition to the point that the concept of climate change itself is not even listened to or acknowledged as a valid subject.

Since everyone in the audience is somewhere on this line or continuum, persuasion in this case means moving them to the right, somewhere closer to +3. Thinking about persuasion this way has three values:

- You can visualize and quantify where your audience “sits.”
- You can accept the fact that any movement toward +3 or to the right is a win.

- You can see that trying to change an audience from  $-3$  to  $+3$  in one speech is just about impossible. Therefore, you will be able to take a reasonable approach. In this case, if you knew most of the audience was at  $-2$  or  $-3$ , your speech would be about the science behind climate change in order to open their minds to its possible existence. However, that audience is not ready to hear about its being caused mainly by humans or what action should be taken to reverse it.

Your instructor may have the class engage in some activity about your proposed topics in order for you to write your proposition in a way that is more applicable to your audience. For example, you might have a group discussion on the topics or administer surveys to your fellow students. Some topics are so controversial and divisive that trying to persuade about them in class is inappropriate. Your instructor may forbid some topics or steer you in the direction of others. This is not done to discount the importance of such topics, but rather to avoid common negative conflict points that can occur in the classroom.

You might also ask if it is possible to persuade to the negative, for example, to argue against something or try to move the audience to be opposed to something. In this case, you would be trying to move your audience to the left on the continuum rather than to the right. Yes, it is possible to do so, but it might confuse the audience. Also, you might want to think in terms of phrasing your proposition so that it is favorable as well as reasonable. For example, “Elderly people should not be licensed to drive” could be replaced with “Drivers over the age of 75 in our state should be required to pass a vision and health test every two years to renew their drivers’ licenses.” The first one is not clear (what is “elderly?”), reasonable (no license at all?), or positive (based on restriction) in approach. The second is specific, reasonable, doable, and positive.

It should also be added that the proposition is assumed to be controversial. By that is meant that some people in the audience disagree with your proposition or at least have no opinion; they are not “on your side.” It would be foolish to give a speech when everyone in the audience totally agrees with you at the beginning of the speech. For example, trying to convince your classroom audience that attending college is a good idea is a waste of everyone’s time, since, for one reason or another, everyone in your audience has already made that decision. That is not persuasive.

Those who disagree with your proposition but are willing to listen could be called the **target audience**. These are the members of your audience on whom you are truly focusing your persuasion. At the same time, another cluster of your audience that is not part of your target audience are those who are extremely opposed to your position to the point that they probably will not give you a fair hearing. Finally, some members of your audience may already agree with you, although they don’t know why.

To go back to our original definition, persuasion is “the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people’s beliefs or actions,” and each of these purposes implies a different approach. You can think of *creating* as moving an audience from 0 to  $+1$ ,  $+2$ , or  $+3$ . You only really “create” something when it does not already exist, meaning the audience’s attitude will be a 0 since they have no opinion. In creating, you have to first engage the audience that there is a vital issue at stake. Then you must provide arguments in favor of your claim to give the audience a basis for belief.

*Reinforcing* is moving the audience from +1 toward +3 in the hope that they take action (since the real test of belief is whether people act on it). In reinforcing, the audience already agrees with you but needs steps and pushes (nudges) to make it action. Changing is moving from -1 or -2 to +1 or higher. In changing, you must first be credible and provide evidence for your side but also show why the audience's current beliefs are mistaken or wrong in some way.

However, this simple definition from Lucas, while it gets to the core of “change” that is inherent in persuasion, could be improved with some attention to the ethical component and the “how” of persuasion. For that purpose, let's look at Perloff's (2003) definition of persuasion:

A symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice. (p. 8)

This definition contains several important factors. First, notice that persuasion is symbolic—that is, uses language or other symbols (even graphics can be symbols), rather than force or other means. Second, notice that it is an attempt, not always fully successful. Third, there is an “atmosphere of free choice,” in that the persons being persuaded can choose not to believe or act. And fourth, notice that the persuader is “trying to convince others to change.” Modern psychological research has confirmed that the persuader does not change the audience directly. The processes that the human mind goes through while it listens to a persuasive message is like a silent, **mental dialogue** the audience is having with the speaker's ideas. The audience members as individuals eventually convince themselves to change based on the “symbols” used by the speaker.

Some of this may sound like splitting hairs, but these are important points. The fact that an audience has free choice means that they are active participants in their own persuasion and that they can choose whether the speaker is successful. This factor calls on the student speaker to be ethical and truthful. Sometimes students will say, “It is just a class assignment, I can lie in this speech,” but that is not a fair or respectful way to treat your classmates.

Further, the basis of your persuasion is language; even though “a picture is worth a thousand words” and can help add emotional appeal to your speech, you want to focus on communicating through words. Also, Perloff's definition distinguishes between “attitude” and “behavior,” meaning that an audience may be persuaded to think, to feel, or to act. Finally, persuasion is a process. Successful persuasion actually takes a while. One speech can be effective, but usually other messages influence the listener in the long run.

## 14.3 Why is Persuasion Hard?

Persuasion is hard mainly because most people have an aversion to change. As much as we hear statements like “The only constant is change” or “Variety is the spice of life,” the evidence from research and from our personal experience shows that, in reality, we do not like change. Recent research, for example, in risk aversion, points to how we are more concerned about keeping from losing something than gaining something. Change is often seen as a loss of something rather than a gain of something else. Change is a step into the unknown, a gamble (Vedantam & Greene, 2013).

In the 1960s, psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe wanted to investigate the effect of stress on life and health. As explained on the Mindtools website:

They surveyed more than 5,000 medical patients and asked them to say whether they had experienced any of a series of 43 life events in the previous two years. Each event, called a Life Change Unit (LCU), had a different “weight” for stress. The more events the patient added up, the higher the score. The higher the score, and the larger the weight of each event, the more likely the patient was to become ill. (The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, 2015)

You can find the Holmes-Rahe stress scale on many websites. What you will find is that the stressful events almost all have to do with change in some life situations—the death of a close family member (which might rate 100 LCUs), loss of a job, even some good changes like the Christmas holidays (12 LCUs). Change is stressful. We do not generally embrace things that bring us stress.

Additionally, psychologists have pointed to how we go out of our way to protect our beliefs, attitudes, and values. First, we selectively expose ourselves to messages that we already agree with, rather than those that confront or challenge us. This **selective exposure** is especially seen in choices of mass media that individuals listen to and read, whether TV, radio, or Internet sites. Not only do we selectively expose ourselves to information, we selectively attend to, perceive, and recall information that supports our existing viewpoints (referred to as selective attention, selective perception, and selective recall).

This principle led Leon Festinger (1957) to form the theory of **cognitive dissonance**, which states, among other ideas, that when we are confronted with conflicting information or viewpoints, we reach a state of dissonance. This state can be very uncomfortable, and we will do things to get rid of the dissonance and maintain “consonance.” Ideally, at least for a public speaker, the dissonance is relieved or resolved by being persuaded (changed) to a new belief, attitude, or behavior. However, the easiest way to avoid dissonance is to not expose oneself to conflicting messages in the first place.

Additionally, as mentioned before, during a persuasive speech the audience members are holding a mental dialogue with the speaker or at least the speaker’s content. They are putting up rebuttals or counter-arguments.

These have been called reservations (as in the audience member would like to believe the speaker but has reservations about doing so). They could be called the “yeah-buts”—the audience members are saying in their minds, “Yeah, I see what you are arguing, but...” Reservations can be very strong, since, again, the bias is to be loss averse and not to change our actions or beliefs.

In a sense, the reasons not to change can be stronger than even very logical reasons to change. For example, you probably know a friend who will not wear a seatbelt in a car. You can say to your friend, “Don’t you know that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2017) says, and I quote, ‘Seat belt use in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 14,955 lives?’” What will your friend probably say, even though you have cited a credible source?

They will come up with some reason for not wearing it, even something as dramatic as “I knew a guy who had a cousin who was in an accident and the cop said he died because he was wearing his seatbelt.” You may have had this conversation or one like it. Their arguments may be less dramatic, such as “I don’t like how it feels” or “I don’t like the government telling me what to do in my car.” For your friend, the argument for wearing a seat belt is not as strong as the argument against it, at least at this moment. If they are open-minded and can listen to evidence, they might experience cognitive dissonance and then be persuaded.

## Solutions to the Difficulty of Persuasion

With these reasons for the resistance audience members would have to persuasion, what is a speaker to do? Here are some strategies.

Since change is resisted, many do not often make major changes in their lives. People do, however, make smaller, concrete, step-by-step or incremental changes in their lives every day. Going back to our scale in Figure 13.1, trying to move an audience from  $-3$  to  $+2$  or  $+3$  is too big a move. Having reasonable persuasive goals is the first way to meet resistance. Even moving someone from  $-3$  to  $-2$  is progress, and over time these small shifts can eventually result in a significant amount of persuasion.

Secondly, a speaker must “deal with the reservations.” First, the speaker must acknowledge they exist, which shows audience awareness, but then the speaker must attempt to rebut or refute them. In reality, since persuasion involves a mental dialogue, your audience is more than likely thinking of counter-arguments in their minds. Therefore, including a refutation section in your speech, usually, after your presentation of arguments in favor of your proposition, is a required and important strategy.

However, there are some techniques for rebuttal or refutation that work better than others. You would not want to say, “One argument against my proposition is . . . , and that is wrong” or “If you are one of the people who believe this about my proposition, you are wrong.” On the other hand, you could say that the reservations are “misconceptions,” “myths,” or “mistaken ideas” that are commonly held about the proposition.

Generally, strong persuasive speeches offer the audience what are called **two-tailed arguments**, which bring up a valid issue against your argument that you, as the speaker, must then refute. After acknowledging them and seeking to refute or rebut the reservations, you must also provide evidence for your refutation. Ultimately,

this will show your audience that you are aware of both sides of the issue you are presenting and make you a more credible speaker. However, you cannot just say something like this:

One common misconception about wearing seatbelts is that if the car goes off a bridge and is sinking in water, you would not be able to release the belt and get out. First, that rarely happens. Second, if it did, getting the seat belt unbuckled would be the least of your worries. You would have to know how to get out of the car, not just the seat belt. Third, the seat belt would have protected you from any head injuries in such a crash, therefore keeping you conscious and able to help anyone else in the car.

This is a good start, but there are some assertions in here that would need support from a reliable source, such as the argument that the “submerging in water” scenario is rare. If it has happened to someone you know, you probably would not think it is rare.

The third strategy is to keep in mind that since you are asking the audience to change something, they must view the benefits of the change as worth the stress of the change. If you do good audience analysis, you know they are asking, “What’s in it for me?” What benefit or advantage or improvement would happen for the audience members?

If the audience is being persuaded to sign an organ donor card, which is an altruistic action that cannot benefit them in any way because they will be dead, what would be the benefit? Knowing others would have better lives, feeling a sense of contribution to the good of humanity, and helping medical science might be examples. The point is that a speaker should be able to engage the audience at the level of needs, wants, and values as well as logic and evidence.

## 14.4 Traditional Views of Persuasion



In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle took up the study of the public speaking practices of the ruling class in Athenian society. For two years he observed the rhetoric of the men who spoke in the assembly and the courts. In the end, he wrote *Rhetoric* to explain his theories about what he saw. Among his many conclusions, which have formed the basis of communication study for centuries, was the classification of persuasive appeals into ethos, logos, and pathos. Over the years, Aristotle's original understanding and definition of these terms have been refined as more research has been done.

### Ethos

**Ethos** has come to mean the influence of speaker credentials and character in a speech. Ethos is one of the more studied aspects of public speaking. During the speech, a speaker should seek to utilize their existing credibility, based on the favorable things an audience already knows or believes about the speaker, such as education, expertise, background, and good character. The speaker should also improve or enhance credibility through citing reliable, authoritative sources, strong arguments, showing awareness of the audience, and effective delivery.

The word “ethos” looks very much like the word “ethics,” and there are many close parallels to the trust an audience has in a speaker and their honesty and ethical stance. In terms of ethics, it goes without saying that your speech will be truthful. Another matter to consider is your own personal involvement in the topic. Ideally, you have chosen the topic because it means something to you personally.

For example, perhaps your speech is designed to motivate audience members to take action against bullying in schools, and it is important to you because you work with the Boys and Girls Club organization and have

seen how anti-bullying programs can have positive results. Sharing your own involvement and commitment is key to the credibility and emotional appeal (ethos and pathos) of the speech, added to the logos (evidence showing the success of the programs and the damage caused by bullying that goes unchecked). However, it would be wrong to manufacture stories of personal involvement that are untrue, even if the proposition is a socially valuable one.

## Logos

Aristotle's original meaning for **logos** had philosophical meanings tied to the Greek worldview that the universe is a place ruled by logic and reason. Logos in a speech was related to standard forms of arguments that the audience would find acceptable. Today we think of logos as both logical and organized arguments and credible evidence to support the arguments.

## Pathos

In words like “empathy,” “sympathy,” and “compassion,” we see the root word behind pathos. **Pathos**, to Aristotle, was using the emotions such as anger, joy, hate, desire for community, and love to persuade the audience of the rightness of a proposition. One example of emotional appeals is using strong visual aids and engaging stories to get the attention of the audience. Someone's just asking you to donate money to help homeless pets may not have a strong effect, but seeing the ASPCA's commercials that feature emaciated and mistreated animals is probably much more likely to persuade you to donate (add the music for full emotional effect).

Emotions are also engaged by showing the audience that the proposition relates to their needs. However, we recognize that emotions are complex and that they also can be used to create a smokescreen to logic. Emotional appeals that use inflammatory language—name-calling—are often unethical or at least counterproductive. Some emotions are more appropriate for persuasive speeches than others. Anger and guilt, for example, do have effectiveness, but they can backfire. Positive emotions such as pride, sympathy, and contentment are usually more productive.

One negative emotion that is useful and that can be used ethically is fear. When you think about it, we do a number of things in life to avoid negative consequences, and thus, out of fear. Why don't we drive 100 miles an hour on the interstate? Fear of getting a ticket, fear of paying more for insurance, fear of a crash, fear of hurting ourselves or others. Fear is not always applicable to a specific topic, but research shows that mild fear appeals, under certain circumstances, are very useful. When using fear appeals, the speaker must:

- Prove the fear appeal is valid.
- Prove that it applies to the audience



- Prove that the solution can work
- Prove the solution is available to the audience

Without these “proofs,” the audience may dismiss the fear appeal as not being real or not applying to them (O’Keefe, 2002). Mild and reasonable are the keys here. Intense, over-the-top fear appeals, especially showing gory photos, are often dismissed by the audience.

For example, a student gave a speech in one of our classes about flossing teeth. This may seem like an overdone subject, but in this case it wasn’t. He used dramatic and disturbing photos of dental and gum problems but also proved that these photos of gum disease really did come from lack of flossing. He also showed the link between lack of flossing and heart disease. The solution to avoid gum disease and other effects was readily available, and the student proved through his evidence that the solution of flossing regularly did work to avoid the disease. Fear appeals can be overdone, but mild ones supported by evidence are very useful.

Because we feel positive emotions when our needs are met and negative ones when our needs are not met, aligning your proposition with strong audience needs is part of pathos. One way to better understand human needs is by examining Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Students are often so familiar with it that they do not see its connection to real-life experiences. For example, safety and security needs, the second level on the hierarchy, is much broader than what many of us initially think. It includes:

- supporting the military and homeland security;
- buying insurance for oneself and one’s family;
- having investments and a will;
- personal protection such as taking self-defense classes;
- policies on crime and criminal justice in our communities;
- buying a security system for your car or home; seat belts and automotive safety; or even
- having the right kind of tires on one’s car (which is actually a viable topic for a speech).

The third level up in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, love and belongingness, deals with a whole range of human experiences, such as connection with others and friendship; involvement in communities, groups, and clubs; prioritizing family time; worship and connection to a faith community; being involved in children’s lives; patriotism; loyalty; and fulfilling personal commitments.

In the speech outline at the end of the chapter about eliminating time spent on Facebook, the speaker appeals to the three central levels of the hierarchy in her three points: safety and security from online threats, spending more time with family and friends in real-time rather than online (love and belonging), and having more time to devote to schoolwork rather than Facebook (esteem and achievement). Therefore, utilizing Maslow’s hierarchy of needs works as a guide for finding those key needs that relate to your proposition and, by doing so, allows you to incorporate emotional appeals based on needs.

Up to this point in the chapter, we have looked at the goals of persuasion, why it is hard, and how to think

about the traditional modes of persuasion based on Aristotle's theories. In the last section of this chapter, we will look at generating an overall organizational approach to your speech based on your persuasive goals.

---

## 14.5 Constructing a Persuasive Speech

In a sense, constructing your persuasive speech is the culmination of the skills you have learned already. In another sense, you are challenged to think somewhat differently. While the steps of analyzing your audience, formulating your purpose and central idea, applying evidence, considering ethics, framing the ideas using appropriate language, and then practicing delivery will of course apply, you will need to consider some expanded options about each of these steps.

### Formulating a Proposition

As mentioned before, when thinking about a central idea statement in a persuasive speech, we use the terms “proposition” or claim. Persuasive speeches have one of four types of propositions or claims, which determine your overall approach. Before you move on, you need to determine what type of proposition you should have (based on the audience, context, issues involved in the topic, and assignment for the class).

#### Proposition of Fact

Speeches with this type of proposition attempt to establish the truth of a statement. The core of the proposition (or claim) is not whether something is morally right and wrong or what should be done about the topic, only that a statement is supported by evidence or not. These propositions are not facts such as “the chemical symbol for water is H<sub>2</sub>O” or “Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008 with 53% of the vote.” Propositions or claims of fact are statements over which persons disagree and there is evidence on both sides, although probably more on one than the other. Some examples of propositions of fact are:

Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money.

John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald working alone.

Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.

Climate change has been caused by human activity.

Granting tuition tax credits to the parents of children who attend private schools will perpetuate educational inequality.

Watching violence on television causes violent behavior in children.

William Shakespeare did not write most of the plays attributed to him.

John Doe committed the crime of which he is accused.

Notice that in none of these are any values—good or bad—mentioned. Perpetuating segregation is not portrayed as good or bad, only as an effect of a policy. Of course, most people view educational inequality negatively, just as they view life-saving medical procedures positively. But the point of these propositions is to prove with evidence the truth of a statement, not its inherent value or what the audience should do about it. In fact, in some propositions of fact no action response would even be possible, such as the proposition listed above that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy.

## Propositions of Definition

This is probably not one that you will use in your class, but it bears mentioning here because it is used in legal and scholarly arguments. Propositions of definitions argue that a word, phrase, or concept has a particular meaning. There are various ways to define words, such as by negation, operationalizing, and classification and division. It may be important for you to define your terms, especially if you have a value proposition. Lawyers, legislators, and scholars often write briefs, present speeches, or compose articles to define terms that are vital to defendants, citizens, or disciplines. We saw a proposition of definition defended in the Supreme Court’s 2015 decision to redefine marriage laws as applying to same-sex couples, based on arguments presented in court. Other examples might be:

The Second Amendment to the Constitution does not include possession of automatic weapons for private use.

Alcoholism should be considered a disease because...

The action committed by Mary Smith did not meet the standard for first-degree murder.

Thomas Jefferson’s definition of inalienable rights did not include a right to privacy.

In each of these examples, the proposition is that the definition of these things (the Second Amendment, alcoholism, crime, and inalienable rights) needs to be changed or viewed differently, but the audience is not asked to change an attitude or action.

## Propositions of Value

It is likely that you or some of your classmates will give speeches with propositions of value. When the proposition has a word such as “good,” “bad,” “best,” “worst,” “just,” “unjust,” “ethical,” “unethical,” “moral,” “immoral,” “beneficial,” “harmful,” “advantageous,” or “disadvantageous,” it is a proposition of value. Some examples include

Hybrid cars are the best form of automobile transportation available today.

Homeschooling is more beneficial for children than traditional schooling.

The War in Iraq was not justified.

Capital punishment is morally wrong.

Mascots that involve Native American names, characters, and symbols are demeaning.

A vegan diet is the healthiest one for adults.

Propositions of value require a first step: defining the “value” word. If a war is unjustified, what makes a war “just” or “justified” in the first place? That is a fairly philosophical question. What makes a form of transportation “best” or “better” than another? Isn’t that a matter of personal approach? For different people, “best” might mean “safest,” “least expensive,” “most environmentally responsible,” “stylish,” “powerful,” or “prestigious.” Obviously, in the case of the first proposition above, it means “environmentally responsible.” It would be the first job of the speaker, after introducing the speech and stating the proposition, to explain what “best form of automobile transportation” means. Then the proposition would be defended with separate arguments.

## Propositions of Policy

These propositions are easy to identify because they almost always have the word “should” in them. These propositions call for a change in policy or practice (including those in a government, community, or school), or they can call for the audience to adopt a certain behavior. Speeches with propositions of policy can be those that call for passive acceptance and agreement from the audience and those that try to instigate the audience to action, to actually do something immediately or in the long-term.

Our state should require mandatory recertification of lawyers every ten years.

The federal government should act to ensure clean water standards for all citizens.

The federal government should not allow the use of technology to choose the sex of a fetus.

The state of Georgia should require drivers over the age of 75 to take a vision test and present a certificate of good health from a doctor before renewing their licenses.

Wyeth Daniels should be the next governor of the state.

Young people should monitor their blood pressure regularly to avoid health problems later in life.

As mentioned before, the proposition determines the approach to the speech, especially the organization. Also as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the exact phrasing of the proposition should be carefully done to be reasonable, positive, and appropriate for the context and audience. In the next section, we will examine organizational factors for speeches with propositions of fact, value, and policy.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1156#h5p-20>

## Organization Based on Type of Proposition

### Organization for a Proposition of Fact

If your proposition is one of fact, you will do best to use a topical organization. Essentially that means that you will have two to four discrete, separate arguments in support of the proposition. For example:

Proposition: Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money

1. Solar energy can be economical to install.
  - A. The government awards grants.
  - B. The government gives tax credits.
2. Solar energy reduces power bills.
3. Solar energy requires less money for maintenance.
4. Solar energy works when the power grid goes down.

Here is a first draft of another outline for a proposition of fact:

Proposition: Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.

1. Research of the past shows many successes from animal experimentation.
2. Research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons.
3. Computer models for research have limitations.

However, these outlines are just preliminary drafts because preparing a speech of fact requires a great deal of research and understanding of the issues. A speech with a proposition of fact will almost always need an argument or section related to the “reservations,” refuting the arguments that the audience may be preparing in their minds, their mental dialogue. So the second example needs revision, such as

1. The first argument in favor of animal experimentation is the record of successful discoveries from animal research.
2. A second reason to support animal experimentation is that research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons and computer models for research have limitations.
3. Many people today have concerns about animal experimentation.

- A. Some believe that all experimentation is equal, that experimenting on animals is no different than experimenting on people.
  - B. Others argue that the animals are mistreated.
  - C. While some animal experimentation is conducted for legitimate medical research, other animal experimentation is conducted to test cosmetics or shampoos.
  - D. Some believe the persuasion of certain advocacy groups like PETA.
4. However, some of these objections to animal experimentation are unfounded.
- A. There are protocols for the treatment of animals in experimentation.
    - i. Legitimate medical experimentation follows the protocols.
  - B. Many of the groups that protest animal experimentation have extreme views.
    - i. Some of these groups give untrue representations of animal experimentation

The completed outline would include quotations, statistics, and facts from reliable sources that support arguments for the proposition as well as refute any misconceptions.

## Organization for a Proposition of Value

A persuasive speech that incorporates a proposition of value will have a slightly different structure. As mentioned earlier, a proposition of value must first define the “value” word for clarity and provide a basis for the other arguments of the speech. The second or middle section would present the defense or “pro” arguments for the proposition based on the definition. The third section would include refutation of the counter arguments or “reservations.” The following outline draft shows a student trying to structure a speech with a value proposition. Keep in mind it is abbreviated for illustrative purposes, and thus incomplete as an example of what you would submit to your instructor, who will expect more detailed outlines for your speeches.

Proposition: Hybrid cars are the best form of automotive transportation available today.

I. Automotive transportation that is best meets three standards. (Definition)

- A. It is reliable and durable.
- B. It is fuel efficient and thus cost efficient.
- C. It is therefore environmentally responsible.

II. Studies show that hybrid cars are durable and reliable. (Pro-Argument 1)

- A. Hybrid cars have 99 problems per 100 cars versus 133 problems per 100 conventional cars, according to TrueDelta, a car analysis website much like Consumer Reports.
- B. J.D. Powers reports hybrids also experience 11 fewer engine and transmission issues than gas-powered vehicles, per 100 vehicles.

III. Hybrid cars are fuel-efficient. (Pro-Argument 2)

- A. The Toyota Prius gets 48 mpg on the highway and 51 mpg in the city.
- B. The Ford Fusion hybrid gets 47 mpg in the city and in the country.

1. Hybrid cars are environmentally responsible. (Pro-Argument 3)

A. They only emit 51.6 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.

B. Conventional cars emit 74.9 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.

C. The hybrid produces 69% of the harmful gas exhaust that a conventional car does.

V. Of course, hybrid cars are relatively new to the market and some have questions about them.

(Reservations)

A. Don't the batteries wear out and aren't they expensive to replace?

1. Evidence to address this misconception.

2. Evidence to address this misconception.

B. Aren't hybrid cars only good for certain types of driving and drivers?

1. Evidence to address this misconception.

2. Evidence to address this misconception.

C. Aren't electric cars better?

1. Evidence to address this misconception.

2. Evidence to address this misconception.

## Organization for a Proposition of Policy

The most common type of outline organizations for speeches with propositions of policy is problem-solution or problem-cause-solution. Typically we do not feel any motivation to change unless we are convinced that some harm, problem, need, or deficiency exists, and even more, that it affects us personally. As the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" As mentioned before, some policy speeches look for passive agreement or acceptance of the proposition. Some instructors call this type of policy speech a "think" speech since the persuasion is just about changing the way your audience thinks about a policy.

On the other hand, other policy speeches seek to move the audience to do something to change a situation or to get involved in a cause, and these are sometimes called a "do" speech since the audience is asked to do something. This second type of policy speech (the "do" speech) is sometimes called a "speech to actuate." Although a simple problem-solution organization with only two main points is permissible for a speech of actuation, you will probably do well to utilize the more detailed format called Monroe's Motivated Sequence.

This format, designed by Alan Monroe (1951), who wrote a popular speaking textbook for many years, is based on John Dewey's reflective thinking process. It seeks to go in-depth with the many questions an audience would have in the process of listening to a persuasive speech. **Monroe's Motivated Sequence** involves five steps, which should not be confused with the main points of the outline. Some steps in Monroe's Motivated Sequence may take two points.



## Monroe's Motivated Sequence

1. **Attention.** This is the introduction, where the speaker brings attention to the importance of the topic as well as his or her own credibility and connection to it. This step will include the thesis of the speaker's argument. The Attention step consists of four elements in the following order: the Attention-Getter, Orientation, Establishment of Credibility, and the Preview Statement. The Attention-Getter is a statement that pulls the audience into the presentation and makes them want to listen. Orientation establishes the presentation's topic and tone, which it does through elements that introduce the speaker, present any relevant background information, and establish the speech's thesis. The speaker can Establish Credibility both verbally and through body language and wardrobe. Speakers can Establish Credibility verbally by sharing with the audience any credentials or experience with the topic they might have. All speakers, regardless of credentials, should Establish Credibility non-verbally by dressing professionally, making consistent eye contact with the audience, properly citing sources, and demonstrating confidence. The Preview Statement is the roadmap for the entire presentation: it briefly introduces the problem and its negative impacts while hinting at the speaker's solution. Do not, however, give away the solution in the Preview Statement. Usually, it's best to let the curiosity build in the audience and introduce it for the first time in the Satisfaction step.
2. **Need.** Here the problem is defined and established with evidence that will show the audience the severity of the problem as well as how it affects them, their families, and/or their communities. The harm or need can be physical, financial, psychological, legal, emotional, educational, social, or a combination. Specific elements of Need are the Problem Statement, Illustration of the Problem, Ramifications (side effects) of the Problem, Pointing, and Clear Criteria for an acceptable solution. The Problem Statement is a direct statement focusing on the specific problem or concern. The Problem Statement is supported by an Illustration, a real-life instance of the problem's existence, and Ramifications, the side effects and harms of the problem. Ramifications might be supported with a variety of materials that underscore the gravity of the problem and its effects. Pointing is a direct statement drawing a clear connection between the audience and the problem. Pointing explicitly tells the audience why they should care about the problem. Speakers complete the Need step by establishing Clear Criteria that outline the vital features for a solution to be effective without giving away the solution yet.
3. **Satisfaction.** Satisfaction presents the solution to the problem described in Need, as well as explains how the solution works by addressing the causes and symptoms of the problem. Satisfaction includes the Solution Statement, Explanation, Theoretical Demonstration, Practical Experience, and Meeting of Objections. The Solution Statement introduces the solution, while the Explanation details the solution and how it will fix the problem. The Theoretical Demonstration shows how the solution meets the Criteria from the Need step, while the speaker shows where the solution has proven successful with Practical Experience. Practical Experience may be in the form of a success story or specific instance

where the solution made a difference. Finally, the speaker Meets Objectives by anticipating and refuting potential concerns about the solution.

4. **Visualization.** Visualization motivates the audience to support the proposed solution by revealing future benefits of implementing it (positive) and/or the harms of failing to implement it (negative). This step requires that the speaker use vivid imagery and language to describe a hypothetical positive or negative future. The conditions in this scenario, however, should be probable, and provide the audience with a personalized vision of how their lives will be affected by enacting (or failing to enact) the solution. Speakers can use either positive or negative scenarios, or both. However, where time is limited, speakers may opt to eliminate the “Visualization” step.
5. **Action.** The Action Step, the presentation’s conclusion, provides the audience with specific steps to take to implement the solution as soon as possible. The Action step consists of the Brake Light, Summary, Challenge/Appeal, and Note of Finality. The Brake Light indicates that the speaker’s presentation is nearing an end through the use of phrases such as “in conclusion” or “in summary.” The Brake Light should segue into the Summary Statement, where the speaker restates the Preview Statement in the past tense as well as emphasizes the solution. The Challenge/Appeal tells the audience what they should do individually to bring about the solution described in the speech, while the Note of Finality is a strong closing statement that leaves the audience reflecting on the presentation.

The more concrete you can make the Action Step, the better. Research shows that people are more likely to act if they know how accessible the action can be. For example, if you want students to be vaccinated against the chickenpox virus (which can cause a serious disease called shingles in adults), you can give them directions to and hours for a clinic or health center where vaccinations at a free or discounted price can be obtained.

For speeches of policy where no huge problem needs solving or where the audience already knows that the problem exists and requires solving, structure your arguments using the Comparative Advantages format, which focuses on how one possible solution is better than others. The organizational pattern for this kind of proposition might be topical:

- I. This policy is better because...
- II. This policy is better because...
- III. This policy is better because...

If Comparative Advantage sounds a little like a commercial, that is because advertisements often use comparative advantages to show that one product is better than another. Here is an example:

Proposition: Owning the Barnes and Noble Nook is more advantageous than owning the Amazon Kindle.

- I. The Nook allows owners to trade and loan books to other owners or people who have downloaded the Nook software, while the Kindle does not.
- II. The Nook has a color-touch screen, while the Kindle’s screen is black and grey and non-interactive.
- III. The Nook’s memory can be expanded through microSD, while the Kindle’s memory cannot be upgraded.

## Building Upon Your Persuasive Speech's Arguments

Once you have constructed the key arguments and order of points (remembering that if you use topical order, to put your strongest or most persuasive point last), it is time to be sure your points are well with evidence.

First, your evidence should be from sources that the audience will find credible. If you can find the same essential information from two sources but know that the audience will find the information more credible from one source than another, use and cite the information from the more credible one. For example, if you find the same statistical data on *Wikipedia* and the U.S. Department of Labor's website, cite the U.S. Department of Labor (your instructor will probably not accept the Wikipedia site anyway). Audiences also accept information from sources they consider unbiased or indifferent. Gallup polls, for example, have been considered reliable sources of survey data because, unlike some organizations, Gallup does not have a cause (political or otherwise) it is supporting. Consult Chapter 6 for detailed information about finding credible sources of information.

Secondly, your evidence should be new to the audience. In other words, the best evidence is that which is from credible sources and the audience has not heard before (Reinard, 1988; McCroskey, 1969). If they have heard it before and discounted it, they will not consider your argument well supported. An example is telling people who smoke that smoking will cause lung cancer. Everyone in the U.S. has heard that thousands of times, but 14% of the population still smokes, which is about one in seven (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). Many of those who smoke have not heard the information that really motivates them to quit yet, and of course quitting is very difficult. Additionally, new evidence is more attention-getting, and you will appear more credible if you tell the audience something new (as long as you cite it well) than if you use the “same old, same old” evidence they have heard before.

Third, in order to be effective and ethical, your supporting evidence should be relevant and not used out of context, and fourth, it should be timely and represent the most recent research on the topic.

After choosing the evidence and apportioning it to the correct parts of the speech, you will want to consider the use of metaphors, quotations, rhetorical devices, and narratives that will enhance the language and “listenability” of your speech. Narratives are especially good for introductions and conclusions, to get attention and to leave the audience with something dramatic. You might refer to the narrative in the introduction again in the conclusion to give the speech a sense of finality.

Next you will want to decide if you should use any type of presentation aid for the speech. The decision to use visuals such as PowerPoint slides or a video clip in a persuasive speech should take into consideration the effect of the visuals on the audience and the time allotted for the speech (as well as your instructor's specifications). The charts, graphs, or photographs you use should be focused and credibly done.

One of your authors remembers a speech by a student about using seat belts (which is, by the way, an overdone topic). What made the speech effective, in this case, were photographs of two totaled cars, both of which the student had been driving when they crashed. The devastation of the wrecks and his ability to stand before us and give the speech because he had worn his seat belt was effective (although it didn't say much for his

driving ability). If you wanted an audience to donate to disaster relief after an earthquake in a foreign country, a few photographs of the destruction would be effective, and perhaps a map of the area would be helpful. But in this case, less is more. Too many visual aids will likely distract from your overall speech claim.

Finally, since you've already had experience in class giving at least one major speech prior to this one, your delivery for the persuasive speech should be especially strong. Because delivery affects credibility (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990), you want to be able to connect visually as you make your appeals. You want to be physically involved and have vocal variety when you tell dramatic narratives that emphasize the human angle on your topic. If you do use presentation slides, you want them to work seamlessly, using black screens when the visuals are not necessary.

## Conclusion

Your persuasive speech in class, as well as in real life, is an opportunity to share a passion or cause that you believe will matter to society and help the audience live a better life. Even if you are initially uncomfortable with the idea of persuasion, we use it all the time in different ways. Choose your topic based on your own commitment and experience, look for quality evidence, craft your proposition so that it will be clear and audience appropriate, and put the finishing touches on it with an eye toward enhancing your logos, ethos, and pathos.

## 14.6 Sample Persuasive Speech Outlines

### **Sample Outline:** Persuasive Speech Using Topical Pattern

By Janet Aguilar

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classmates to eliminate their Facebook use.

Introduction: There she was late into the night, still wide awake staring at her phone's screen. In fact, she had to be at work early in the morning, but scrolling through her Facebook account kept her awake. That girl was me before I deactivated my Facebook account. I honestly could not tell you how many hours I spent on Facebook. In the survey that I presented to you all, one person admitted to spending "too much" time on Facebook. That was me in the past; I spent too much time on Facebook. Time is precious, and once it is gone it does not return. So why do you spend precious time on Facebook? Time that could be spent with family, resting, or just being more productive.

Thesis/Preview: Facebook users should eliminate their usage because Facebook can negatively affect their relationships with others, their sleeping patterns and health, and their ability to focus on school work.

I. Family relationships can be affected by your Facebook usage.

A. In the survey conducted in class, 11 of 15 students confessed to having ignored someone while they were speaking.

1. Found myself ignoring my children while they spoke.

2. Noticed other people doing the same thing especially in parks and restaurants.

B. According to Lynn Postell-Zimmerman on hg.org, Facebook has become a leading cause for divorce.

C. In the United States, 1 in 5 couples mentioned Facebook as a reason for divorce in 2009.

Transition: We have discussed how Facebook usage can lead to poor relationships with people, next we will discuss how Facebook can affect your sleep patterns and health.

II. Facebook usage can negatively affect your sleep patterns and health.

A. Checking Facebook before bed.

1. In my survey 11 students said they checked their Facebook account before bed.

2. Staying on Facebook for long hours before bed.

B. Research has shown that Facebook can cause depression, anxiety, and addiction.

1. According to researchers Steels, Wickham and Acitelli in an article in the Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology titled "Seeing everyone else's highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms," because Facebook users only view the positive of their friend's life, they become unhappy with their life and it can lead to becoming depressed and unhappy.

2. Marissa Maldonado on psychcentral.com concluded from recent studies that “Facebook increases people’s anxiety levels by making them feel inadequate and generating excess worry and stress.”

3. Facebook addiction is a serious issue, according to the article “Too much Facebook leads to anger and depression” found on cnn.com and written by Cara Reedy.

a. Checking Facebook everywhere we go is a sign of addiction

b. Not being able to deactivate your Facebook account.

Transitions: Many of you have probably never thought of Facebook as a threat to your health, but we will now review how it can affect you as a college student.

III. Facebook negatively affects students.

A. I often found myself on Facebook instead of doing schoolwork.

B. I was constantly checking Facebook, which takes away from study time.

C. I also found myself checking Facebook while in class, which can lead to poor grades and getting in trouble with the professor.

D. A study of over 1,800 college students showed a negative relationship between amount of Facebook time and GPA, as reported by Junco in a 2012 article titled “Too much face and not enough books” from the journal Computers and Human Behavior.

Conclusion: In conclusion, next time you log on to Facebook, try deactivating your account for a few days and see the difference. You will soon see how it can bring positive changes in your family relationships, will avoid future health problems, will help you sleep better, and will improve your school performance. Instead of communicating through Facebook, try visiting or calling your close friends. Deactivating my account truly helped me, and I can assure you we all can survive without Facebook.

References

Junco, R. (2012). *Too much face and not enough books: The relationship between multiple indices of Facebook use and academic performance*. Computers in Human Behavior, 28(1), 187-198.

Maldonado, M. (2014). *The anxiety of Facebook*. Psych Central. Retrieved from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-anxiety-of-facebook/>

Postell-Zimmerman, L. (1995–2015). *Facebook has become a leading cause in divorce cases*. HG.org. Retrieved from <http://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=27803>

Reedy, C. (2015, March 2). *Too much Facebook leads to envy and depression*. CNNMoney. Retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2015/03/02/technology/facebook-envy/>

Steers, M. L. N., Wickham, R. E., & Acitelli, L. K. (2014). *Seeing everyone else’s highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms*. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 33(8), 701-731. DOI:10.1521/jscp.2014.33.8.701

---

**Sample Outline:** Persuasive Speech Using Monroe's Motivated Sequence Pattern Speech to Actuate: Sponsoring a Child in Poverty

Specific Purpose: To actuate my audience to sponsor a child through an agency such as Compassion International.

Introduction (Attention Step)

I. How much is \$38? That answer depends on what you make, what you are spending it for, and what you get back for it. (Grabber)

II. \$38 per month breaks down to a little more than \$1.25 per day, which is probably what you spend on a snack or soda in the break room. For us, it's not very much. (Rapport)

III. I found out that I can provide better health care, nutrition, and even education for a child in Africa, South America, or Asia for \$38 per month by sponsoring a child through Compassion International. (Credibility)

IV. If I can do it, maybe you can too: (Bridge)

Thesis: Through a minimal donation each month, you can make the life of a child in the developing world much better.

Preview: In the next few minutes, I would like to discuss the problem, the work of organizations that offer child sponsorships, how research shows they really do alleviate poverty, and what you can do to change the life of a child.

Body

I. The problem is the continued existence and effects of poverty. (Need Step)

A. Poverty is real and rampant in much of the world.

1. According to a 2018 report of the Secretary General of the United Nations, 9.2% of the world lives on less than \$1.90 per day.

a. That is 600 million people on the planet.

2. This number is supported by the World Poverty clock of the World Data Lab, which states that 8% of the world's population lives in extreme poverty.

a. The good news is that this number is one third of what it was in 1990, mostly due to the rising middle class in Asia.

b. The bad news is that 70% of the poor will live in Africa, with Nigeria labeled the "Poverty Capital of the World," according to the Brookings Institute.

B. Poverty means children do not get adequate health care.

1. One prevalent but avoidable disease is malaria, which takes the lives of 3000 children every day, according to UNICEF.

2. According to the World Health Organization, diarrheal diseases claimed 2.46 million lives in 2012 and is the second leading cause of death of children under 5.

C. Poverty means children do not get adequate nutrition, as stated in a report from UNICEF.

1. Inadequate nutrition leads to stunted growth.



2. Undernutrition contributes to more than one third of all deaths in children under the age of five.

D. Poverty means children are unlikely to reach adult age, according to the CIA World Factbook quoted on the Info please website.

1. Child mortality rate in Africa is 8.04% (percentage dying before age 5), while in North America it is 0.64%

2. Life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa is almost 30 years less than in the U.S.

E. Poverty also means children are unlikely to receive education and be trained for profitable work.

1. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names, states the Global Issues website on Poverty Facts.

2. UNESCO, a part of the United Nations, reports that less than a third of adults in sub-Saharan Africa have completed primary education.

Transition: Although in all respects poverty is better in 2019 than it has been in the past, poverty is still pervasive and needs to be addressed. Fortunately, some great organizations have been addressing this for many years.

II. Some humanitarian organizations address poverty directly through child sponsorships. (Satisfaction Step)

A. These organizations vary in background but not in purpose. The following information is gleaned from each organization's websites.

1. Compassion International is faith-based, evangelical.

a. Around since the early 1950s, started in Korea.

b. Budget of \$887 Million.

c. Serves 1.92 million babies, children, and young adults.

d. Works through local community centers and established churches.

2. World Vision is faith-based, evangelical.

a. Around since the 1950s.

b. Budget of far over \$1 Billion.

c. 60% goes to local community programs but more goes to global networks, so that 86% goes to services.

d. World Vision has more extensive services than child sponsorship, such as water purification and disaster relief.

e. Sponsors three million children across six continents.

3. Children International is secular.

a. Around since 1936.

b. Budget of \$125 Million.

c. 88% of income goes directly to programs and children.

d. Sponsors children in ten countries on four continents.



- e. Sponsors X across X continents
- 4. Save the Children is secular, though...
  - a. One hundred years of history, began in post WWI Europe.
  - b. Budget of \$880 Million.
  - c. 87% goes to services.
  - d. Sponsors 134 million children in 120 countries, including 450,000 in U.S.
- 5. There are other similar organizations, such as ChildFund and PlanUSA.
- B. These organizations work directly with local community, on-site organizations.
  - 1. The children are involved in a program, such as after school.
  - 2. The children live with their parents and siblings.
  - 3. The sponsor's donation goes for medicine, extra healthy, nutritious food, shoes for school, and other items.
  - 4. Sponsors can also help donate for birthdays and holidays to the whole family to buy food or farm animals.

Transition: Of course, any time we are donating money to an organization, we want to be sure our money is being effectively and ethically used.

III. This concern should be addressed in two ways: Is the money really helping, and are the organizations honest? (Continuation of Satisfaction Step)

- A. The organizations' honesty can be investigated.
  - 1. You can check through Charity Navigator.
  - 2. You can check through the Better Business Bureau-Charity.
  - 3. You can check through Charity Watch.
  - 4. You can check through the organizations' websites.
- B. Secondly, is sponsoring a child effective? Yes.
  - 1. According to Bruce Wydick, Professor of Economics at the University of San Francisco, child sponsorship is the fourth most effective strategy for addressing poverty, behind water purification, mosquito nets, and deworming treatments.
  - 2. Dr. Wydick and colleagues' work has been published in the prestigious Journal of Political Economy from the University of Chicago.
  - 3. He states, "Two researchers and I recently carried out a study (sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development) on the long-term impacts of Compassion International's child sponsorship program. The study, gathering data from over 10,000 individuals in six countries, found substantial impact on adult life outcomes for children who were sponsored through Compassion's program during the 1980s and '90s...In adulthood, formerly sponsored children were far more likely to complete secondary school and had a much higher chance of having a white-collar job. They married and had children later in life, were more likely to be church and

community leaders, were less likely to live in a home with a dirt floor and more likely to live in a home with electricity.”

Transition: To this point, I have spoken of global problems and big solutions. Now I want to bring it down to real life with one example.

IV. I'd like to use my sponsored child, Ukwishaka in Rwanda, as an example of how you can. (Visualization Step)

- A. I have sponsored her for five years.
- B. She is now ten years old.
- C. She lives with two siblings and both parents.
- D. She writes me, I write her back, and we share photos at least every two months.
- E. The organization gives me reports on her project.
- F. I hope one day to go visit her.
- G. I believe Ukwishaka now knows her life can be more, can be successful.

Transition: We have looked at the problem of childhood poverty and how reliable, stable nongovernmental organizations are addressing it through child sponsorships. Where does that leave you?

V. I challenge you to sponsor a child like Ukwishaka. (Action Step)

- A. Although I sponsor her through Compassion International, there are other organizations.
- B. First, do research.
- C. Second, look at your budget and be sure you can do this.
  - 1. You don't want to start and have to stop.
  - 2. Look for places you “waste” money during the month and could use it this way.
  - 3. Fewer snacks from the break room, fewer movies at the Cineplex, brown bag instead of eating out.
- D. Talk to a representative at the organization you like.
- E. Discuss it with your family.
- F. Take the plunge. If you do...
  - 1. Write your child regularly.
  - 2. Consider helping the family, or getting friends to help with extra gifts.

Conclusion

I. In this speech, we have taken a look at the state of poverty for children on this planet, at organizations that are addressing it through child sponsorships, at the effectiveness of these programs, and what you can do.

II. My goal today was not to get an emotional response, but a realistically compassionate one.

III. You have probably heard this story before but it bears repeating. A little girl was walking with her mother on the beach, and the sand was covered with starfish. The little girl wanted to rescue them and send them back to the ocean and kept throwing them in. “It won't matter, Honey,” said her mother. “You can't get all of them back in the ocean.” “But it will matter to the ones that I do throw back,” the little girl answered.

IV. We can't sponsor every child, but we can one, maybe even two. As Forest Witcraft said, "What will matter in 100 years is that I made a difference in the life of a child." Will you make a difference?

#### References

- AGScientific. (2019). *Top ten deadly diseases in the world*. Retrieved from <http://agscientific.com/blog/2016/04/top-10-deadly-diseases/>
- Compassion International. (2019). *Financial integrity: The impact of our compassion*. Retrieved from <https://www.compassion.com/about/financial.htm>
- Exploring Public Speaking 285 Chapter 13: Persuasive Speaking Children's International. (2019). *Accountability*. Retrieved from <https://www.children.org/learn-more/accountability>
- Global Issues. (2013, January 7). *Poverty facts and stats*. Retrieved from <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>
- Infoplease. (2019). *What life expectancy really means*. Retrieved from <https://www.infoplease.com/world/health-and-social-statistics/life-expectancy-countries-0>
- Kharas, H., Hamel, K., & Hofer, M. (2018, Dec. 13). *Rethinking global poverty reduction in 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2018/12/13/rethinking-global-poverty-reduction-in-2019/>
- Roser, M. (2019). *Child and infant mortality rates*. Retrieved from <https://ourworldindata.org/child-mortality>
- Save the Children. (2019). *Financial information*. Retrieved from <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/financial-information>
- UNICEF. (2008). *Tracking progress on child and maternal nutrition: A survival and development priority*. Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Tracking\\_Progress\\_on\\_Child\\_and\\_Maternal\\_Nutrition\\_EN\\_110309.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Tracking_Progress_on_Child_and_Maternal_Nutrition_EN_110309.pdf)
- UNICEF (2019). *The reality of Malaria*. Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/health/files/health\\_africamalaria.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/health/files/health_africamalaria.pdf)
- United Nations. (2019). *Poverty eradication*. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/povertyeradication>
- World Vision. (2019). *Financial accountability*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/financial-accountability-2>
- Wydick, B., Glewwe, P., & Rutledge, L. (2013). *Does international child sponsorship work? A six-country study of impacts on adult life outcomes*. *Journal of Political Economy*, 121(2), 393–436. <https://doi.org/10.1086/670138>
- Wydick, B. (2012, Feb.). *Cost-effective compassion*. *Christianity Today*, 56(2), 24-29.
- Wydick, B. (2013). *Want to change the world? Sponsor a child*. *Christianity Today*.



# CHAPTER 15: SPECIAL OCCASION SPEAKING

## Learning Objectives

- Recognize the differences between research-based speeches (informative and persuasive) and special occasion speeches.
- Identify the types of special occasion speeches.
- Use language to create emotional and evocative phrases.
- Describe the proper techniques for delivering a special occasion speech.

## Key Terms

- **After Dinner Speeches**
- **Console**
- **Eulogy**
- **Hero Speech**
- **Lament**
- **Motivational Speech**
- **Religious Speech**
- **Roast**
- **Special Occasion Speech**
- **Speech of Acceptance**
- **Speech of Commencement**
- **Speech of Dedication**

- **Speech of Farewell**
- **Speech of Introduction**
- **Speech of Presentation**
- **Success Speech**
- **Survivor Speech**
- **Toast**

## 15.1 Understanding Special Occasion Speaking



Often the speaking opportunities life brings our way have nothing to do with specifically informing or persuading an audience; instead, we are commonly asked to speak during special occasions in our lives. Whether you are standing up to give a speech at an awards ceremony or a toast at a wedding, knowing how to deliver speeches in a variety of different contexts is the nature of special occasion speaking. In this chapter, we are going to explore what special occasion speeches are as well as several types of special occasion speeches ranging from humorous to somber.

In broad terms, a **special occasion speech** is a speech designed to address and engage the context and audience's emotions on a specific occasion. Like informative or persuasive speeches, special occasion speeches should communicate a clear message, but the manner of speaking used is typically different. The goal of a special occasion speech is ultimately to stir an audience's emotions and connect them to the situation or occasion.

Of all the types of speeches we are most likely to have to give during our lives, many of them will fall into the special occasion category. These often include speeches that are designed to inspire or motivate an audience to do something. These are, however, different from a traditional persuasive speech. Let's say you're the coach of your child's Little League team or a project leader at your work. In both cases you might find yourself delivering a speech to motivate and inspire your teams to do their best. You can imagine how giving a motivational speech like that would be different from a traditional persuasive speech, focusing on why a group of 50-somethings should change their investment strategy or a group of your peers to vote for a certain candidate for Student Senate.

To help us think through how to be effective in delivering special occasion speeches, let's look at four key

ingredients: preparation, adaptation to the occasion, adaptation to the audience, and mindfulness about the time.

## Be Prepared

First, and foremost, the biggest mistake you can make when standing to deliver a special occasion speech is to underprepare or simply not prepare at all. We've stressed the need for preparation throughout this text, just because you're giving a wedding toast or a eulogy doesn't mean you shouldn't think through the speech before you stand up and speak out. If the situation is impromptu, even jotting some basic notes on a napkin is better than not having any plan for what you are going to say.

Unlike previous speeches we have covered, a ceremonial speech is formatted differently. Rather than an introduction where we state the thesis, preview the main points, and establish credibility, for a ceremonial speech, we will reference the occasion. Referencing the occasion means telling the audience what we are celebrating, or why we are here. As a speaker at a ceremony of any kind, it is our job to connect the audience to the occasion, therefore we start by explaining why we are here. A toast at a wedding might start with the statement "I'm honored to be here today celebrating the union of my sister and her new partner" or "Please raise a glass to honor my parents on their 25th wedding anniversary." The introduction for special occasion speeches should be very short and let the audience know the importance of the ceremony.

After the introduction, a ceremonial speech should still have 2–3 main points, as we have discussed previously. For these speeches, the main points are best thought of as stories or shared events that the speaker can relate to the audience to connect them with the importance of the ceremony. For a toast at your parents' 25th wedding anniversary, we might use our main points to tell stories about how they first met, or things they have done to keep their love vibrant. Since we are celebrating, it is important to remember that your main points should be focused on the event and be appropriate to the tone of the event.

Finally, in a special occasion speech, the conclusion is short and tells the audience what to do. In a toast, we end with the statement "Cheers, everyone please share a drink" or "Congratulations to a special couple, cheers." The conclusion needs to indicate that the speech is over, and the audience should do something—toast, clap, or perhaps share a moment of silence.

## Adapt to the Occasion

Not all content is appropriate for all occasions. If you are asked to deliver a speech commemorating the first anniversary of a loved one's passing, then obviously using humor and telling jokes wouldn't be appropriate. But some decisions about adapting to the occasion are less obvious. Consider the following examples:

- You are the maid of honor giving a toast at the wedding of your younger sister. You might consider



telling appropriate stories of her relationship as it grew or using humor to talk about growing up together.

- You are receiving a Most Valuable Player award in your favorite sport. Merely thanking the teammates who supported you wouldn't really connect the audience to the occasion; you might talk about everyone's contributions or explain how hard you worked for the award.
- You are giving an after-dinner speech to the members of your fraternity. Humor is usually helpful in this event to connect the audience to the occasion; you might share stories of the past year, or explain memorable events the fraternity engaged in.

Remember that being a competent speaker is about being both personally effective and socially appropriate. Different occasions will call for different levels of social appropriateness. One of the biggest mistakes entertaining speakers can make is to deliver one generic speech to different groups without adapting the speech to the specific occasion. In fact, professional speakers always make sure that their speeches are tailored for different occasions by getting information about the occasion from their hosts. When we tailor speeches for special occasions, people are more likely to remember those speeches than if we give a generic speech.

## Adapt to Your Audience

Once again, we cannot stress the importance of audience adaptation enough in this text. Different audiences will respond differently to speech material, so the more you know about your audience, the more likely you'll succeed in your speech. One of our coauthors was once at a conference for teachers of public speaking. The keynote speaker stood and delivered a speech on the importance of public speaking. While the speaker was good and funny, the speech really fell flat. The keynote speaker basically told the public speaking teachers that they should take public speaking courses because public speaking is important. Right speech, wrong audience!

## Be Mindful of the Time

The last major consideration for delivering special occasion speeches successfully is to be mindful of your time. Different speech situations have their own conventions and rules regarding time. Acceptance speeches and toasts, for example, should be relatively short. A speech of introduction should be extremely brief—just long enough to tell the audience what they need to know about the person being introduced in a style that prepares them to appreciate that person's remarks. In contrast, commencement speeches, eulogies, and speeches to commemorate events can run ten to twenty minutes in length, depending on the context.

It's also important to recognize that audiences on different occasions will expect speeches of various lengths. For example, although it's true that graduation commencement speakers generally speak for ten to twenty

minutes, the closer that speaker heads toward twenty minutes the more fidgety the audience becomes. To hold the audience's attention, a commencement speaker would do well to make the closing minutes of the speech the most engaging and inspiring portion of the speech. If you're not sure about the expected time frame for a speech, ask the person who has invited you to speak.

## 15.2 Types of Special Occasion Speeches



Unlike the informative and persuasive speeches, special occasion speeches are much broader and allow for a wider range of topics, events, and approaches to be employed. However, while the following list of special occasion speeches is long, your instructor will have specific types of special occasion speeches that you will be allowed (or required) to do for class. Since you are likely to give many special occasion speeches in your life, we want to cover everything you might need to know to give a good one.

### Speeches of Introduction

The first type of special occasion speech is the **speech of introduction**, which is a mini speech given by the host of a ceremony that introduces another speaker and their speech. Few things are worse than when the introducer of a speaker stands up and says, “This is Wyatt Ford. He’s going to talk about stress.” While we did learn the speaker’s name and the topic, the introduction falls flat. Audiences won’t be the least bit excited about listening to Wyatt’s speech.

Just like any other speech, a speech of introduction should have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion—and should be brief. As a speech of introduction, it is important to focus on the person being introduced; the speech should be about them.

For an introduction, think of a hook that will make your audience interested in the upcoming speaker. You need to find something that can grab the audience’s attention and make them excited about hearing the main speaker.

The body of your speech of introduction should be devoted to telling the audience about the speaker’s topic, why the speaker is qualified, and why the audience should listen (notice we now have our three main

points). First, tell your audience in general terms about the overarching topic of the speech. Next, you need to tell the audience why the speaker is a credible presenter on the topic. Has the speaker written books or articles on the subject? Has the speaker had special life events that make him or her qualified? Lastly, you need to briefly explain to the audience why they should care about the upcoming speech. The outline can be adjusted; for example, you can give the biographical information first, but these three areas should be covered.

The final part of a good introduction is the conclusion, which is generally designed to welcome the speaker to the platform. Many introducers will conclude by saying something like, “I am looking forward to hearing Wyatt Ford’s advice; please join me in welcoming Dr. Wyatt Ford.” At this point, you as the person introducing the speaker are “handing off” the speaking duties to someone else, so it is not uncommon to end your speech of introduction by clapping as the speaker comes on stage or shaking the speaker’s hand.

## Speeches of Presentation

The second type of special occasion speech is the **speech of presentation**. A speech of presentation is a brief speech given to accompany a prize or honor.

The introduction in a speech of presentation needs to let the audience know what award is being presented, just a brief statement about the award is enough to begin the speech. In the body of the speech, you want to make sure you explain what the award or honor is and why the presentation is important. Next, you can explain what the recipient has accomplished in order for the award to be bestowed. Did the person win a race? Did the person write an important piece of literature? Did the person mediate conflict? Whatever the recipient has done, you need to clearly highlight his or her work. Lastly, if the race or competition was conducted in a public forum and numerous people didn’t win, you may want to recognize those people for their efforts as well. While you don’t want to steal the show away from the winner, you may want to highlight the work of the other competitors or nominees.

## Speeches of Acceptance

The complement to a speech of presentation is the speech of acceptance. The **speech of acceptance** is a speech given by the recipient of a prize or honor. In the introduction for this speech, you want to acknowledge the award, then the body of the speech usually shares these three typical components of a speech of acceptance: 1) put the award or honor into perspective, 2) thank those who helped you achieve your goal and tell stories of their contributions, and 3) discuss the work you did to achieve the award. First, you want to put the award in perspective. Tell the people listening to your speech why the award is meaningful to you.

Second, you want to give credit to those who helped you achieve the award or honor. No person accomplishes things in life on his or her own. We all have family members, friends, and colleagues who support us and help us achieve what we do in life, and a speech of acceptance is a great time to graciously recognize

those individuals. Lastly, you want to share the work you put in to achieve this award. If you know you are up for an award, have a speech ready. A good rule to remember is: Be thankful, be gracious, be short.

## Speeches of Dedication

A fourth special occasion speech is the **speech of dedication**. A speech of dedication is delivered when a new store opens, a building is named after someone, a plaque is placed on a wall, a new library is completed, and so on. These speeches are designed to highlight the importance of the project and possibly those to whom the project has been dedicated.

When preparing a speech of dedication, start by explaining how you are involved in the dedication. If the person to whom the dedication is being made is a relative, tell the audience about your relationship and your relative's accomplishments. Second, you want to explain what is being dedicated. If the dedication is a new building or a pre-existing building, you want to explain the importance of the structure. You should then explain who was involved in the project.

If the project is a new structure, talk about the people who built the structure or designed it. If the project is a pre-existing structure, talk about the people who put together and decided on the dedication. Lastly, explain why the structure is important for the community in which it is located. If the dedication is for a new store, talk about how the store will bring in new jobs and new shopping opportunities. If the dedication is for a new wing of a hospital, talk about how patients will be served and the advances in medicine the new wing will provide the community.

## Toasts

At one time or another, almost everyone is going to be asked to deliver a **toast**. A toast is a speech designed to congratulate, appreciate, or remember. First, toasts can be delivered for the purpose of congratulating someone for an honor, a new job, or getting married. You can also toast someone to show your appreciation for something he or she has done. Lastly, we toast people to remember them and what they have accomplished.

When preparing a toast, the first goal is always to keep your remarks brief. Toasts are generally given during the middle of festivities (e.g., wedding, retirement party, farewell party), and you don't want your toast to take away from those festivities for too long. Second, the goal of a toast is to focus attention on the person or persons being toasted—not on the speaker.

As such, you need to focus your attention toward the people being toasted, both by physically looking at them and by keeping your message about them. The body of the speech should share stories or fun information about the people being toasted and should be appropriate to the occasion. You should avoid any inside jokes between you and the people being toasted because toasts are public and should be accessible for everyone who hears them. To conclude a toast, simply say something like "Please join me in recognizing Gina

for her achievement,” and lift your glass. When you lift your glass, this will signal to others to do the same, and then you can all take a drink, which is the end of your speech.

## Roasts

A **roast** is a very interesting and peculiar speech because it is designed to both praise and good-naturedly insult a person being honored. Because of this combination of purposes, it is not hard to argue that the roast is a challenging type of speech to write given the difficult task of simultaneously praising and insulting the person. Generally, roasts are given at the conclusion of a banquet in honor of someone’s life achievements. The television station Comedy Central has been conducting roasts of various celebrities for a few years, and if you’ve ever watched one, you know that the “roasters” say some harsh things about the “roastees” even though they are friends.

How does one prepare for a roast? First, you want to really think about the person who is being roasted. Does he or she have any strange habits or amusing stories in their past that you can discuss? When you think through these questions, you want to make sure that you cross anything off your list that is truly private information or will really hurt the person. The goal of a roast is to poke at them in a good-natured manner.

Second, when selecting which aspects to poke fun at, you need to make sure that the items you choose are widely known by your audience. Roasts work when many people in the audience can relate to the jokes being made. If you have an inside joke with the roastee, bringing it up during the roast may be great fun for the two of you, but it will leave your audience unimpressed. Lastly, end on a positive note. While the jokes are definitely the fun part of a roast, you should leave the roastee and the audience knowing that you truly do care about and appreciate the person.

## Eulogies

A **eulogy** is a speech given in honor of someone who has died. Not to sound depressing, but since everyone who is alive will someday die, the chance of your being asked to give a eulogy someday for a friend or family member is significant. However, when the time comes to deliver a eulogy, it’s good to know what you’re doing and to adequately prepare your remarks.

When preparing a eulogy, first you need to know that you were asked because you are an important person in their lives and know about the deceased. The eulogy should be personal and help the audience to appreciate and celebrate the person who passed. Although eulogies are delivered on the serious and sad occasion, it is very helpful to look for at least one point to be lighter or humorous. In some cultures, in fact, the friends and family attending the funeral expect the eulogy to be highly entertaining and amusing.

Knowing the deceased and the audience is vital when deciding on the type and amount of humor to use in a eulogy. It would be appropriate to tell a funny story about Uncle Joe’s love for his car or Aunt Mary’s love

of tacky Christmas sweaters. Ultimately, the goal of the humor or lighter aspects of a eulogy is to relieve the tension that is created by the serious nature of the occasion and to celebrate the person who has passed.

If you are ever asked to give a eulogy, here are three parts of a eulogy (i.e., main points) you can use to write one: praise, lament, and consolation.

## Praise

The first thing you want to do when remembering someone who has passed away is remind the audience what made that person so special. So you will want to praise them and their accomplishments. This can include notable achievements (being an award winner; helping with charities), personal qualities (“she was always willing to listen to your problems and help in any way she could”), or anecdotes and stories (being a great mother; how she drove to college to visit you when you were homesick).

## Lament

The second thing you want to do in a eulogy is to lament the loss. To lament means to express grief or sorrow, which is what everyone at a funeral has gathered to do. You will want to acknowledge that everyone is sad and that the deceased’s passing will be difficult to get through. Here you might mention all the things that will no longer happen because of the death. “Now that Grandpa is gone, there won’t be any more Sunday dinners where he cooks chicken on the grill or bakes his famous macaroni and cheese.”

## Console

The final step in a eulogy is to console the audience, or to offer comfort in a time of grief. What you must remember is that a eulogy is not a speech for the person who has died; it is a speech for the people who are still living to try to help them deal with the loss. You will want to end your eulogy on a positive note. Offer some hope that someday, things will get better.

“We may miss Aunt Linda deeply, but our memories of her will live on forever, and her impact on this world will not soon be forgotten.”

Using the Praise-Lament-Console format for eulogies gives you a simple system where you can fill in the sections with 1) why was the person good, 2) why you will miss him or her, and 3) how you and the audience will get through this loss. It sometimes also helps to think of the three points in terms of Past-Present-Future: you will praise the deceased for what he did when he was alive (the past), lament the loss you are feeling now (the present), and console your audience by letting them know that things will be all right (the future).

With regard to a eulogy you might give in class, you generally have two options for how to proceed: you can eulogize a real person who has passed away, or you can eulogize a fictional character (if your instructor permits that). If you give a eulogy in class on someone in your life who has passed away, be aware that it is very common

for students to become emotional and have difficulty giving their speech. Even though you may have been fine practicing at home and feel good about giving it, the emotional impact of speaking about a deceased loved one in front of others can be surprisingly powerful.

## Speeches for Commencements

A **speech of commencement** (or commencement speech) is designed to recognize and celebrate the achievements of a graduating class or other group of people. These typically take place at graduation ceremonies. Nearly every one of us has sat through commencement speeches at some point in our lives. Numerous celebrities and politicians have been asked to deliver commencement speeches at colleges and universities.

If you're ever asked to deliver a commencement speech, there are some key points to think through when deciding on your speech's content.

- If there is a specific theme for the graduation, make sure that your commencement speech addresses that theme. If there is no specific theme, come up with one for your speech. Some common commencement speech themes are commitment, competitiveness, competence, confidence, decision making, discipline, ethics, failure (and overcoming failure), faith, generosity, integrity, involvement, leadership, learning, persistence, personal improvement, professionalism, reality, responsibility, and self-respect.
- Talk about your life and how graduates can learn from your experiences to avoid pitfalls or take advantage of life. How can your life inspire the graduates in their future endeavors?
- Make the speech humorous. Commencement speeches should be entertaining and make an audience laugh.
- Be brief! Nothing is more painful than a commencement speaker who drones on and on. Remember, the graduates are there to get their diplomas; their families are there to watch the graduates walk across the stage.
- Remember, while you may be the speaker, you've been asked to impart wisdom and advice for the people graduating and moving on with their lives, so keep it focused on them.
- Place the commencement speech into the broader context of the graduates' lives. Show the graduates how the advice and wisdom you are offering can be utilized to make their own lives better.

Overall, it's important to make sure that you have fun when delivering a commencement speech. Remember, it's a huge honor and responsibility to be asked to deliver a commencement speech, so take the time to really think through and prepare your speech.



## After-Dinner Speeches

**After-dinner speeches** are humorous speeches that make a serious point. These speeches get their name from the fact that they historically follow a meal of some kind. After-dinner speakers are generally asked to speak because they have the ability both to speak effectively and to make people laugh. All the basic conventions of public speaking previously discussed in this text apply to after-dinner speeches, but the overarching goal of these speeches is to be entertaining and to create an atmosphere of amusement. The speech should have a theme, such as celebrating the accomplishments of the last year, or connecting the audience to a special event that is important to the group.

When creating the speech, go back through and look for opportunities to insert humorous remarks. Once you've looked through your speech and examined places for verbal humor, think about any physical humor or props that would enhance your speech. The goal for a funny prop is that it adds to the humor of the speech without distracting from its message.

Just because you find something unbelievably funny in your head doesn't mean that it will make anyone else laugh. Often, humor that we have written down on paper just doesn't translate when orally presented. You may have a humorous story that you love reading on paper, but find that it just seems to be too long once you start telling it out loud. You also need to make sure the humor you choose will be appropriate for a specific audience. What one audience finds funny another may find offensive. Humor is the double-edged sword of public speaking. On one side, it is an amazing and powerful speaking tool, but on the other side, few things will alienate an audience more than offensive humor. If you're ever uncertain about whether a piece of humor will offend your audience, don't use it.

So you may now be asking, "What kind of topics are serious that I can joke about?" The answer to that, like the answer to most everything else in the book, is dependent on your audience and the speaking situation, which is to say any topic will work, while at the same time you need to be very careful about how you choose your topic.

Take, for example, the experience one of your authors had while he was attending a large university. One of the major problems that any large university faces is parking: the ratio of parking spaces to students at some of these schools can be 1:7 (one parking space for every seven students). In addressing this topic at a banquet, a student gave an after-dinner speech that addressed the problem of the lack of student parking. To do so, he camouflaged his speech as a faux-eulogy (fake eulogy) for the yellow and black board on the parking lot gates that was constantly and consistently driven through by students wanting to access restricted parking. The student personified the board by noting how well it had done its job and lamented that it would never get to see its little toothpick children grow up to guard the White House. But underneath the humor incorporated into the speech was a serious message: this wouldn't keep happening if adequate parking was provided for students on campus.

## Motivational Speeches

A **motivational speech** is designed not only to make an audience experience emotional arousal (fear, sadness, joy, excitement) but also to motivate the audience to do something with that emotional arousal. A motivational speech helps to inspire people in a broader fashion, often without a clearly articulated end result in mind. As such, motivational speaking is a highly specialized form of persuasive speaking commonly delivered in schools, businesses, religious houses of worship, and club or group contexts.

The **hero speech** is a motivational speech given by someone who is considered a hero in society (e.g., military speakers, political figures, and professional athletes).

The **survivor speech** is a speech given by someone who has survived a personal tragedy or who has faced and overcome serious adversity.

The **religious speech** is self-explanatory; it is designed to incorporate religious ideals into a motivational package to inspire an audience into thinking about or changing aspects of their religious lives. The final type of motivational speech is the success speech, which is given by someone who has succeeded in some aspect of life and is giving back by telling others how they too can be successful.

## Summary

As stated at the beginning of this section, you will almost certainly be limited by your professor with regards to which of these types of speeches you can give for your special occasion speech in class, but it is not unrealistic to think that you will be called upon at various points in your life to give one or more of these speeches. Knowing the types and basic structures will help when those moments arise.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/publicspeaking/?p=1203#h5p-21>

## 15.3 Special Occasion Language



Special occasion speaking is so firmly rooted in the use of good language that it makes sense to address it here. More than any other category of speech, the special occasion speech is arguably one where most of your preparation time will be specifically allocated towards the words you choose. This isn't to say you shouldn't have used good language in your informative and persuasive speeches, but that the emphasis shifts slightly in a special occasion speech.

For example, for your informative and persuasive speeches, you were required to conduct research and cite your sources in a bibliography or references / works cited page, which took you some time to look up and format. In most cases, that will not be necessary in a special occasion speech, although there may be reasons to consult sources or other persons for information in crafting your speech. So for special occasion speeches, there is a trade-off. The time you don't spend doing research is now going to be reallocated towards crafting emotional and evocative phrases that convey the sentiment your speech is meant to impart.

The important thing to remember about using language effectively is that we are not talking about using big words just to sound smart. Good language isn't about trying to impress us with fancy words. It's about taking the words you are already comfortable and familiar with and putting them in the best possible order.

The next thing to think about is how to evoke emotion and wonderment. Putting the words you know into the best possible order, when done well, will make your speech sound extremely eloquent and emotional. As the speaker for a ceremony, it is important to create the emotion behind the event, to share with the audience the importance of what is being celebrated.

## 15.4 Special Occasion Delivery

Just as the language for special occasion speaking is slightly different, so too are the ways in which you will want to deliver your speech. First and foremost, since you will be spending so much time crafting the perfect language to use and putting your words in the right order, it is imperative that you say exactly what you have practiced.

You will need to practice your special occasion speech as much as or even more than you did for your informative or persuasive speeches. You need to know what you are going to say and feel comfortable knowing what is coming next. This is not to say you should have your speech memorized, however it might be necessary in order to establish and maintain a rapport with your audience, a vital element in special occasion speaking because of the emotional component at the core of these speeches. Knowing your speech will also allow you to counteract the flow of adrenaline into your system, something particularly important given that special occasion speeches tend to be very emotional, not just for the audience, but for you as well.

Basically, knowing your speech well allows you to incorporate the emotion that a special occasion speech is meant to convey. In this way your audience will sense the pride you feel for a graduating class during a commencement speech, the sorrow you feel for the deceased during a eulogy, or the gratitude you have when accepting an award.

### Conclusion

Special occasion speaking is the most varied type of speaking to cover; however, there are some general rules to keep in mind regardless of what type you are engaged in. Remember that using good, evocative language is key, and that it is important that you deliver your speech in a way that both conveys the proper emotion for the occasion as well as allows you to give the speech exactly as you wrote it.

## 15.5 Sample Special Occasion Speech Outline

### Sample Outline: Commemorative (Tribute) Speech on Simone Biles

By Kellie Barnes

Specific Purpose: To inspire my audience with the story of Simone Biles.

Introduction: “I’m not the next Usain Bolt or Michael Phelps. I’m the first Simone Biles!” Said Simone, and boy did she earn that kind of recognition! Some of you might hear that name and think of a random gymnast, and some of you may hear that name and not know who it is at all, but today, before this class is over, I am going to make sure each and every one of you remember just how great she is and why she deserves to be recognized.

Thesis: A person whom I admire over all other athletes is Simone Biles.

Preview: Simone is special in my eyes because she has overcome some big challenges in her life to get to where she is today. Not only is she a 3-time gymnastics champion, but she made history while doing it.

I. Simone overcame an extremely rough childhood in Columbus, Ohio, as both her mother and father were struggling with substance abuse.

A. Simone’s grandparents took her and her siblings under their wings.

B. Soon her grandparents were able to adopt all of the grandchildren at a fairly young age.

C. Although Simone didn’t have the best relationship with her mom as a young child, she had plenty of women to step up in her life to fill that gap.

1. She had a grandmother who was basically “Mom” to her.

2. She has also had the same gymnastics coach since she was 11 years old.

Transition: Although Simone had a rather disheartening childhood, she has emerged to be one of the best in her sport.

II. In her teens and standing at 4 foot 8 inches, Simone made a tremendous name for herself in the gymnastics world. These are just a few of her accomplishments.

A. Simone was the first female ever to win three worldwide all-around titles.

1. She has the most World Championship gold medals won by a female gymnast in history with ten.

2. She is the most decorated World Championship American gymnast with 14 total medals (10 gold, two silver, two bronze).

B. She became the Olympic Gold medalist in vault, floor, Individual and Team all-around and bronze medalist on Beam at 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

C. At just 19 years old, she became the most decorated female gymnast in America.

1. Right behind her the whole time stood her amazing family and support system.
2. She is the first African American to become an all-around world champ.

D. Consequently, she has received many media awards and much attention.

1. She was named one of the Most Influential People in the World by TIME magazine.
2. She was named Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year 2016.

Transition: Simone was so incredibly grateful that she had people to take her in and support her through all of her success she tried her best to do the same for others who were in need.

III. Simone started an amazing charity for foster kids as a way for her to give back.

A. Founded in 2015, Mattress Firm Foster Kids is now effective in 40 states nationwide.

B. “This is such a personal cause for me because I know firsthand what it is like to be in foster care, the struggles and all,” says Simone.

C. This cause has given back more than 610,000 items, such as clothes and school supplies, to foster kids and their families.

Conclusion: As I sit back and look at the life of Simone Biles, I’m amazed with all that she has done in such a short amount of time. At 20 years old, she had given back to those in need, rose above many tough challenges in her life, and amongst all of that she is having the time of her life on the mat, and earning medals and honors while doing so.

# CHAPTER 16: ONLINE PUBLIC SPEAKING

## Learning Objectives

- Explore digital public speaking as an emerging medium
- Define synchronous and asynchronous communication
- Strategize best practices for online speaking





## 16.1 Online Public Speaking



Traditionally, public speaking has been understood as a face-to-face exchange between a designated speaker and an audience. In fact, when you imagine a public speaker, you likely picture a person standing on a stage with a podium and speaking in front of a live audience.

However, new media and digital technologies have begun expanding both our access to public speakers and our platforms to speak and reach new audiences. YouTube—a global video sharing service—has more than 1.8 billion monthly users (Gilbert, 2018), and these are just people who log in! If you’re like us, you’ve likely watched hours of content published on YouTube, from instructional videos to political commentary. You may even access videos on Instagram Live or Facebook. With access to these platforms, speakers are now able to broadcast their insights and advocacies to a global audience.

Businesses, too, have begun using online public speaking. Webinars, video conferences, and digital speakers have permeated professional industries, and it’s becoming increasingly important to consider best practices for creating speeches and being in the audience for online public speeches.

The Covid-19 pandemic made even more people familiar with online tools for public speaking. When it was too dangerous to gather in person, people began using technologies such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to host virtual classes, meetings, and gatherings. Even when it was possible to meet face-to-face again, many organizations and workplaces continued to use online platforms for meetings and presentations because it’s easier for people to join a Zoom call from their office or home than it is to physically meet in one location.

Like any approach toward public speaking, online public speaking offers a variety of opportunities and constraints. Below, we outline what digital public speaking is and how to prepare to speak online.

## Online Public Speaking

Online public speaking—also known as digital oratory—is a “thesis-driven, vocal, embodied public address that is housed within (online) new media platforms” (Lind, 2012, p. 164). Like all public speeches, an online speech should be well-prepared, organized, well-reasoned, and well-rehearsed. Purpose, synchronicity, and the audience all play key roles in online public speaking.

### Purpose

Online speaking opportunities are not created equally, and each speech will have a different general purpose—informing, persuading, or entertaining. Remember that just like other forms of public speaking, digital oratory requires a thesis statement, and the purpose of your speech will dictate how you craft the information that you’re going to present. With ready access to video technology that can be transmitted through our phones, it can be tempting to log in and let our followers into our lives through a stream-of-consciousness vlog, but that’s not the type of digital oratory that constitutes prepared public speaking. Instead, prepare by considering your purpose for speaking and your thesis, then organize your speech around the answer.

For example, you might be participating in—or leading—a live webinar via Zoom or recording an instructional video that explains how to use a new piece of technology and which you might upload to YouTube. Each speech will have a different purpose and, in turn, different expectations on what you should include. Once you’ve identified the goal, use earlier chapters to begin crafting content.

### Synchronicity

Synchronicity describes whether your digital oratory will be delivered live or recorded for people to use later; if you’re presenting a speech live, you’re speaking synchronously, meaning your audience is experiencing it in real-time. Some online public speeches occur synchronously. For example, if you’re speaking to a non-profit organization about a local food pantry project through Zoom and the members of the organization are tuning in live to watch and hear your presentation, the speech is synchronous. In synchronous online speaking, many of the same face-to-face speaking principles apply. Live presentations are ephemeral, meaning they happen once. In synchronous online speaking—unless it’s being recorded—you have one chance to create a clear message, so it’s imperative that your content and information are crafted for clear understanding.

Alternatively, you may speak asynchronously, meaning that the speech may be recorded and watched at a different time. YouTube, for example, houses many asynchronous videos, allowing audiences to tune in and

watch when their schedule allows it. With an asynchronous video, speakers may have additional time to record, watch, and re-do if necessary. Similarly, audiences also have the ability to re-watch your presentation or pause the speech, if needed.

Each option provides different opportunities and constraints.

In synchronous speaking, you may be more comfortable adopting and applying face-to-face public speaking strategies, including integrating live audience feedback. It's common in synchronous online speaking for audiences to post questions or provide live feedback, allowing you to adjust your content and fill in gaps. If there is a technological mishap, however, you can't correct it later. The mishap also happens in real time, and those barriers can influence your credibility as a speaker.

In asynchronous speaking, you can control the content more easily because you can re-record the material to fix any technological errors. However, in asynchronous speaking, you cannot get live feedback from your audience, so you may be unaware if there's a key question or issue they need answered.

## The Audience

New media has expanded the audience pool for public speaking. In traditional public speaking, the audience is often limited to those individuals who show up for the event—the audience is explicit (the people who are physically present in the audience) or discrete (or targeted audience). In online speaking, you may have a discrete or dispersed audience (an audience whose members hear the speech in different times and locations). These different audience types, along with synchronicity, alter how audience engagement can occur.

Consider our earlier example about presenting to a non-profit organization through Zoom. In this example, it's likely that you're aware of who the audience is, so you're able to link your content to the discrete (or defined) audience. However, in other instances, your audience may be dispersed and more difficult to determine. If you become passionate about a local policy, for example, and decide to post a speech on YouTube, the audience is dispersed because it's unclear who will click the link. With a dispersed audience, it can be difficult to make specific references or calls to action because geographic locations may alter what individuals are able to do.

With a dispersed audience, there's also an increased risk that audience members won't view your digital speech. Digital communication has led to information overload – we've all experienced it. If you're like us, you might scan through Instagram stories, clicking past images or videos that don't catch your attention. If you're posting a digital speech with a less-defined audience, the first few lines—the attention-getter—become crucial to hook them into watching. Spend a little extra time crafting and rehearsing your attention-getter.

***Being a Member of the Audience:*** You'll likely be an audience member for many online public speeches—synchronous and asynchronous. Remember to take your position as an audience member seriously and avoid negative comments or trolling behavior. Even if you don't know the speaker, how you contribute to the dialogue online (or how you communicate) still functions constitutively, so make sure the world-making that you're participating in is ethical.

As you can see, there are quite a few variations that define the context of a digital speech: an informative, asynchronous speech with a discrete audience; a persuasive synchronous speech with a dispersed audience. The more information you have about these variations, the more you can be prepared to digitally speak with confidence and clarity.

## Rehearsing to Speak Online

Rehearsing to speak online can feel a bit odd, especially when video software enters the mix. You'll be more effective in rehearsal if you're aware of the speaking context, including the categories mentioned in the previous section: purpose, synchronicity, and audience. Knowing the context will and should inform how you rehearse for a digital speech because you should always rehearse under the conditions that you'll speak.

**Pro-Tip:** Rehearse under the conditions that you'll speak.

Integrate the presentation strategies for an online speech as you would for other speeches—including the purposeful development of verbal, nonverbal delivery, and presentation aids. There are a few additional variables for delivering a speech digitally that we'll track below.

## Verbal Delivery

Verbal delivery is key in a digital speech—particularly webinars or web conferencing where your vocals overlay a slideshow and your body isn't visible to an audience. Verbal enunciation, punctuation, rate, and pauses become key to maintaining your audiences' attention. "Energy" becomes a key word—an energetic voice has variety and interest to it.

Audio-recording yourself during rehearsal on your smartphone or other device is a good first step, followed by thinking critically and honestly about whether your voice is listless, flat, or lacks energy. Since we tend to have a lower energy level when we sit, some experts suggest that web conference speakers stand to approximate the real speaking experience. As we have mentioned repeatedly throughout this book, preparing means practicing your speech orally and physically, many times.

Sound and projection are two variables that can affect your verbal delivery in digital contexts. It's important to rehearse with any technology—including a microphone—that will be present and in the physical context that you'll record the formal speech. If you have a microphone, you will need to alter your projection level. If you don't have a microphone, be aware of how the recording device will pick up sound—including your voice and other noise around you.

At the beginning of the pandemic, when many of us were just learning how to use Zoom, we learned the hard way about what can be heard on camera if we weren't careful when meetings were interrupted by barking dogs, passing traffic outside, the voices of others who were not on camera, or the sounds of toilets flushing or lawn crews working next door.

Remember that extra noise is distracting: it can influence your credibility and the likelihood that an audience will continue listening.

## Nonverbal Delivery

When rehearsing your nonverbal delivery, ask, “What’s visible in the video?”

If your body is visible, you should rehearse with Chapter 9 in mind. As you rehearse, be conscious of where the camera will be. Will there be just one? Will there be multiple cameras? How far away is the camera? In some instances, audiences may have the ability to view your speech from multiple vantage points. Being aware of where those cameras are—one or multiple—is key to rehearsing your eye contact and facial expressions.

Eye contact is still a key part of a digital speech. While you can avoid staring directly into the camera for an extended period of time, audiences still want some form of engagement, and eye contact allows you to make that connection. If you are recording the speech with or without a live audience, view the camera as your “audience substitute.”

## Background and Lighting

Your background is also part of your video’s nonverbal aesthetics. Make sure that you consider how the background might translate to your audience. Is it messy? Distracting? Is it a white background? If so, you should avoid wearing white and disappearing into the walls. Are there windows behind you with bright light streaming through, making you almost invisible? If so, can you close the blinds or curtains or move? Can you set up a ring light to offset the light coming through outside sources and enhance your appearance? Does your videoconferencing software have filters that blur out imperfections that might otherwise be heightened by visual photography?

## Camera Positioning

Because your facial expressions and body language are also visible in a digital speech, you will want to pay some attention to how the camera(s) is positioned. Don’t position the camera so closely that your head fills the frame, or so far away that you are a tiny object in the frame. To look your best, position the camera so that you are viewed from above from between 15° to 30° from eye level. Filming yourself at eye-level might make your facial features appear flat, while filming yourself from below eye level gives the impression that you are towering over your audience. If your camera is in your laptop computer, try balancing it on a small stack of books to achieve an optimal level.

## Wardrobe, Hair, and Makeup

Wear appropriate clothing on all parts of your body. By now, everyone has heard at least one story of someone

in a Zoom meeting who stood up to reveal that he was wearing pajamas or sweatpants below more formal clothing on top, or worse. Dress as if the audience might see your entire body to avoid such embarrassment. Also, make sure that your clothing looks good on camera in terms of color and lighting in your setting. Avoid noisy jewelry such as earrings or bangles that jingle if you move. Style your hair the way you would if you were meeting with this audience in person. Also, if you normally wear cosmetics when you meet with this type of audience in person, wear them on camera as well. Your goal is to look just as you would in the same setting if you were meeting face to face.

For more detailed information, check out “[Six Tips for Looking Great in a Zoom Meeting](#),” Jefferson Graham (2020).

## Dress Rehearsal

Rehearse under these conditions and record your facial expressions to see how they are translating to others. Is your body language clear? Do some gestures or facial expressions look exaggerated? Can you adjust the camera position or lighting? Are your clothing and accessories distracting or do they make you fade into the background? Do you look professional? A videoed rehearsal will provide you with answers to these questions.

Remember that effective rehearsal occurs under the conditions that you’ll speak. Your goal is to create an aesthetic experience that honors the purpose of your speech, so being accountable to all nonverbal factors will increase your ethos.

## Additional Preparation Tips:

Make sure you will not be interrupted during the web conference.

Have notes and anything else you need at hand. While you can use a computer to display them, be conscious of your audience’s ability to see you reading.

If you can be seen, be seen—use the technology to your advantage so that you are not an entirely disembodied voice talking over slides.

## Presentation Aids

In some cases, an online speech will include presentation aids. It’s important to determine a) if the presentation aid is necessary and b) if you’re able to provide that presentation aid in a different form.

First, are you certain you need a presentation aid? It can be tempting to use a presentation aid for a digital speech to avoid being visible to the audience. After all, it’s common for digital presentation software to display either a visual aid or your body. Don’t use a visual aid to avoid being seen because the audience will be much more interested in your embodied presentation. Second, do you know how to share your visual aid via the digital platform you will be speaking through? As with all other aspects of online public speaking, you need to

practice beforehand so that you know what your audience will see as well as how to quickly switch from your screen to the visual aid and back again.

If you deem that a presentation aid is absolutely necessary (or required) also, ask: do I need to provide it live or in the recording? If you're presenting to a discrete audience and want to provide a graph or some data, send the information in a report ahead of time. This will allow your audience to feel acquainted with the information and can spare you from having an additional technological component.

Like any public speech, when speaking online, you are responsible for crafting an effective advocacy that is composed of well-reasoned arguments that are delivered with purposeful aesthetic choices. Rehearse under the conditions that you'll speak. Be confident that you're aware of

- the technology you will need,
- where it will be placed,
- which technology that you are responsible for running, and
- how your embodiment of information translates.

## Sharing Audiovisual Recordings

If you are recording an asynchronous presentation to share with others, post it to a cloud first (such as SoundCloud or YouTube) and send your instructor the link. Audiovisual recording files are too large to be emailed easily.

## Conclusion

Digital public speaking is evolving. These tips and tactics should help not just avoid the major problems but also cross the finish line into an effective presentation.

## References

Gilbert, B. (2018). "YouTube now has over 1.8 billion users every month, within spitting distance of Facebook's 2 billion." Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/youtube-user-statistics-2018-5>.

Graham, J. (2020). "Six tips for looking great in a Zoom meeting." USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2020/04/11/zoom-meetings-go-better-these-6-tips-look-your-best/5125980002/>

Lind, S. (2012). "Teaching digital oratory: Public speaking 2.0." *Communication Teacher*, 26(3), 163-169.





# ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

---

## Authors

**Sara Kim (PhD)** is an Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Louisiana Monroe. Her research is in intercultural communication and online intergroup contact, and she is interested in examining communication strategies that can improve intergroup relationships, facilitate intercultural adjustment, and help individuals cope with life transitions. She teaches diverse communication classes such as intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, research methods, communication theory, and public speaking.

**Douglas Marshall (PhD)** is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies and Chair of the Department of Arts & Humanities at Southern University at New Orleans. After completing his Ph.D. in Rhetoric at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Douglas and his wife Kiley moved to New Orleans in the summer of 2013. Since that time he has volunteered for WWOZ, the Bywater Neighborhood Association, and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation. Doug has been granted two separate fellowships that support his research of New Orleans death rituals through the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Archive. He is also a member of the Krewe of the Rolling Elvi and sits on the organization's board of directors. Douglas has research interests rooted in how we communicate about death and how music and performance plays a part in death rituals.

**June Pulliam (PhD)** is a Distinguished Instructor of English, Screen Arts, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, where she teaches technical and legal writing, as well as courses about horror film and fiction and Young Adult fiction. She is the author of several books on the horror genre and punk rock and is an expert in the field of zombie studies.

**Victoria VanNest (EdD)** is a Professor of Communication Studies. With a professional background in business management with 15 years as a Project Manager in the automotive field, she brings that professional experience into the classroom. Victoria's education includes a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management and a Master of Arts in Organizational Communications, both from Michigan State University. Her doctoral work is in retention focusing on underserved populations, with a degree in Higher Education Leadership and Management from Walden University.

**James Yeargain (MFA)** is an Associate Professor of Speech and Dramatic Arts at University of Holy Cross in New Orleans. Nationally, he is a member of National Alliance of Acting Teachers as well as a union member of Actors Equity Association and Screen Actors Guild–American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. Locally he is an active member of the theater company The NOLA Project. While working with students in public speaking, he uses his experience to assist with performance techniques to improve student

communication with an audience as well as strategies for stress management. He received his BFA from New York University and his MFA from University of New Orleans.

## Editor

**KC Celestine (MSLS)** is a Technical Services Librarian at Fletcher Technical Community College. She is the librarian leader appointment to the Interactive OER for Dual Enrollment Public Speaking Cohort, from LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network and the Louisiana Board of Regents, funded through an Open Textbooks Pilot grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, 2021–2022. Throughout this project, KC provided project management services. She received her Master of Science in Library Science from Clarion University of Pennsylvania. Her professional interests include open educational resource development and technology in libraries and higher education.

# ADAPTATIONS

---

The following changes were made to this book as a whole:

- Old references were updated with current ones.
- Images were added and replaced to reflect a diverse and inclusive audience.
- Supplementary videos were added to some sections.
- H5P activities/multimedia were inserted into sections to reinforce concepts.
- The glossary section was expanded to include more vocabulary.
- Chapters were reordered.

The following additions or changes have been made to these chapters:

## *Chapter 1*

Section 1.1:

- Updated references replaced previous citations with new current citations and sources
- Added video and tip boxes

Section 1.2

- Changed public speaking to communication in models
- Updated references replaced previous citations with new current citations and sources
- Added video and definition boxes

## *Chapter 2*

Glossary Terms:

- Replaced Communication Anxiety (CA) with Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA)
- Added “Glossophobia” as a term for PSA.

### Other Changes:

- Added references and language from Gary Drevitch's "Why Are We Scared of Public Speaking?" in Psychology Today as well as Graham D. Bodie's "A Racing Heart, Rattling Knees, and Ruminative Thoughts: Defining, Explaining, and Treating Public Speaking Anxiety" in Communication Education to update references as well as replace the term "communication anxiety" with the term "public speaking anxiety." Used the Bodie source to also update references in original Chapter 2 regarding PSA.

## Chapter 3

Learning objectives revised.

### Section 3.1

- Replaced picture in the title page and the first paragraph on first amendment.

### Section 3.2

- Replaced picture in the title page.
- First three paragraphs were added.
- Subtitles in this section were changed throughout
- Added first sentence under Audience analysis allows to choose a worthwhile topic section
- Second paragraph of the same section, a few words were changed.
- Subsection on clarity moved to the last part of the chapter.
- Acknowledge the audience part was removed entirely.
- Exercises were added (from the book elements of public speaking)
- Citation was added.

### Section 3.3

- Change to 5.3 from 3.2
- Title page picture was replaced.
- Table of the three types of audience analysis was added.

### Section 3.4

- Picture was replaced

- Exercises were added (from Stand Up, Speak Out)

### Section 3.5

- Subtitle changed.
- Section on clarity was moved to this part from previous sections.
- Exercises added from stand up speak out book.

## Chapter 4

### Section 4.1

- Importance of listening was replaced.

### Section 4.2

- First paragraph, last line “hearing is also an innate ability...” sentence was added.
- Figure 4.1 (the table hearing vs. listening) replaced with a table because additional category “innate skill vs. learned skill” was added.
- Two sentences within the second paragraph was added “we do not always...accumulated experiences”
- Benefits of listening section changed
  - You become a better student section: first and last sentences added.
  - You can be a better friend subtitle changed to you can build strong personal relationships. This entire section was newly written.
  - You can build a successful career—also new added section.
  - You can become a better public speaker—changed subtitle
- References added.
- Exercise section added.

## Chapter 5

Examples added and updated. Fixed grammar issues.

## Chapter 6

Glossary Terms: Replaced “Academic Books” with “Scholarly Sources,” and “Generalizability” with “Representative Sample.” Added “Summary,” “Databases,” “Keywords,” “World Wide Web,” “Peer-Reviewed Sources,” “Topic Sentences,” “Headings,” “Subheadings,” “Journals,” “Popular Sources,” “CRAAP Method,” and “Drive-by Quoting” Removed “Project Life Cycle” “Textbooks,” “Backtracking,” “Theory,” “Facts,” and “Style.”

Changed the title of 6.1 from “Librarians Are Our Friends” to “Beginning the Research Process: Ask a Librarian.”

### Section 6.1

- Removed the lengthy list of anonymous advice from reference librarians—much of the advice had a negative tone to it, and the more useful information was fairly obvious so I felt comfortable just paraphrasing it. Some of the advice consisted of the same things I and the reference librarians tell to my students every semester.
- Broke 6.1 down into two segments: Ask a Librarian and Creating a Research Log. It makes more sense to tell students about making a research log before taking them on the journey of how to conduct research and explaining different sources.

### Section 6.3

- Removed speech preparation time since this is discussed at length in other chapters of the book. Chapter 6 is about research only. Removed everything under the heading “Books” because nothing actually described what a book is. Replaced with a shorter description of books. Added newsgathering organizations to Newspapers and Blogs.
- Removed Table 8.1 “Search Engines” because much of the information was obsolete. Added information about how to search for information on the internet and determine if it is written by a credible source. Added the segment “Reading Scholarly Sources.”
- Deleted Table 8.2 Scholarly Information on the Web because everything in it is obsolete. Students would be better served visiting with a research librarian to assist with research if they aren’t sure about what databases to use. Deleted “Computerized Databases” because this information is also obsolete. Deleted “Scholarly Information on the Web” because that segment did not contain adequate information to help students navigate the web. Deleted “Tips for Finding Information Sources” because it is obsolete. Removed textbooks from the category of Scholarly Books. Deleted “Search Your Library’s Computers” since this information is already covered in the segments explaining why students should first consult with a research librarian. The searching information in the deleted segment was too vague to be helpful, and students are better off asking a research

librarian for help learning how to search databases, since their interfaces change from year to year, as well as the selections available.

- Removed the six questions for evaluating sources and replaced it with the CRAAP Method.

#### Section 6.4

- Link to Purdue OWL Citation Chart added.

## Chapter 7

All sections have information that was revised, added, and expanded.

## Chapter 8

All sections have added examples; expanded the information.

## Chapter 9

#### Section 9.1

- Removed (5-8 minutes, generally, for classroom speeches) from paragraph 1 because it can set up false expectations. Let the instructor set expectations for time limits.
- Paragraph 2—changed Bob to Bobby to add more diversity. I also changed pronouns.

#### Section 9.2

- Old sentence: (5-8 minutes, generally, for classroom speeches)
- New: For the purposes of your public speaking class, you will likely not be allowed to read your speech. Instead, you will be assigned to give an extemporaneous presentation
- Old sentence: The disadvantage of extemporaneous speaking is that in some cases it does not allow for the verbal and the nonverbal preparation that are almost always required for a good speech.
- New: The primary disadvantage of extemporaneous speaking is that it sometimes does not allow for the coordination of verbal and nonverbal preparation that is almost always required for a successful speech.
- Words removed: seven-minute
- Memorized changed to memorization

### Section 9.3

- Old: By the way, this piece of furniture is often mistakenly called a podium, which is a raised platform or stage.
- New: Sometimes this piece of furniture is mistakenly called a podium, which is a raised platform or stage.

### Section 9.4

- Sometime to sometimes
- Sentence added: Additionally, one should be equally prepared for the event in which a lectern is missing or unavailable in the room in which the speech will be given. Flexible speakers are able to communicate their priorities with or without a lectern.

### Section 9.5

- 5-7 minutes changed to several
- Becoming to become
- Sometime to sometimes
- My just to just my

## Chapter 10

### Section 10.1

- Added example text to the sections on credibility and attention getting
- Added video

### Section 10.2

- Added the section on putting it together
- Added video and picture

## Chapter 11

All sections were edited for clarity, and examples were updated.



## Chapter 12

General updates to all sections for clarity.

## Chapter 13

Deleted key terms box.

### Section 13.1

- First sentence deleted
- Added subtitle: informative speech is not a persuasive speech and added the first sentence under that title. Revised some parts in that section (added/deleted a few words)
- Another subtitle added: why informative speech is important

### Section 13.2

- Revised the first two sentences (added/deleted a few words)
- “Places” section was revised, a few sentences deleted and some words replaced.
- First sentence under “Ideas” was revised.
- Type 4: Ideas and concepts—second sentence revised.

### Section 13.3

- Section title changed.
- Combined Section 13.3 and 13.4 because there was a major overlap on how speakers should be specific in speech topic and not too broad as they prepare the speech.
- First subtitle changed. This entire section under this first subtitle was revised, parts were deleted, added, parts from the original 14.4 section were moved here.
- “Keep in mind audience diversity” – some grammatical errors corrected, added last sentence.
- Video clip on tips for topic selection added.

Deleted 13.4+13.5 sections.

### Section 13.4

- New title
- This section (Sample informative speech) was originally numbered as 14.1 so renumbered.
- Major revisions to this outline—reorganized outline to sections, renumbered them, etc.

- Need to figure out indentation for main points, subpoints to be consistent (could not edit it for some reason)
- Second outline sample deleted
- Speech video (Tedtalk) link added.

## Chapter 14

All sections were edited for clarity, and examples were updated.

## Chapter 15

### Section 15.2

- Added sample speeches
- Edited wording to clarify or update

### Section 15.5

- Edited outline to clarify

## Chapter 16

Chapter was added and revised from *Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy*

# GLOSSARY

---

## “Breathe and Release”

a short-cut version of systematic de-sensitization appropriate for public speaking preparation

## Ableism

the system of beliefs and practices that produces a physical and mental standard that is projected as normal for a human being and labels deviations from it abnormal, resulting in unequal treatment and access to resources

## Abstract Language

language that evokes many different visual images in the minds of your audience

## Academic Books

books that are primarily written for other academics for informational and research purposes

## Acculturated

learning and using a code that other group members will be able to recognize

## Achievement-Oriented Leaders

strive for excellence and set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations

## Action-Oriented Listeners

primarily interested in finding out what the speaker wants

## Adjourning

this stage of group development occurs when a group dissolves because it has completed its purpose or goal, membership is declining and support for the group no longer exists, or it is dissolved because of some other internal or external cause

## After Dinner Speeches

a humorous speech that makes a serious point

## Ageism

prejudice or discrimination against a particular age-group and especially the elderly

## Alliteration

the repetition of initial consonant sounds in a sentence or passage

## Analysis

making the connection between your support and your argument

## Anaphora

the succession of sentences beginning with the same word or group of words

## Antithesis

the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced or parallel words, phrases, or grammatical structures

## APA Style

style scholars in the various social science fields (e.g., psychology, human communication, business) are more likely to use

## Appropriateness

how persons and groups should be referred to and addressed based on inclusiveness and context

## Argument

set of logical premises leading to a clear conclusion

## Ascribed Identity

personal, social, or cultural identities that are placed on us by others

## Assonance

the repetition of vowel sounds in a sentence or passage

## Assumptions

are gaps in a logical sequence that listeners passively fill with their own ideas and opinions and may or may not be accurate

## Attention-Getter

first sentence of a speech that is meant to pull the audience's attention to the speaker and topic at hand

## Audience Analysis

the process of gathering information about the people in your audience so that you can understand their needs, expectations, beliefs, values, attitudes, and likely opinions

## Avowed Identity

personal, social, or cultural identities that we claim for ourselves

## Backtracking

after you've finished reading useful sources, see who those sources cited on their bibliographies or reference pages

## Bar Graph

a graph designed to show the differences between quantities

## Best Example

demonstrates the "best" way someone should behave within a specific context

## Bias

predisposition or preconception of a topic that prevents impartiality

## Brakelight

transitional phrase that lets the audience know the speech is coming to a close

## Captive Audience

audiences that are required to be present or feel obligated to do so

## Causal Pattern

organizational pattern that reasons from cause to effect or from effect to cause

## Channel

the speaker's use of verbal and nonverbal communication

## Character

a person's reputation in regards to trustworthiness and goodness

## Chart

a graphical representation of data (often numerical) or a sketch representing an ordered process

## Chronocentrism

the assumption that people today are superior to people who lived in earlier eras (Russell, 1991)

## Chronological Pattern

main points are delivered according to when they happened and could be traced on a calendar or clock

## Claim

a statement that is supported with evidence

## Clichés

predictable and generally overused expressions; usually similes

## Code-Switching

changing from one way of speaking to another between or within interactions; happens most frequently in interracial communication

## Coercive Power

comes from the ability of a group member to provide a negative incentive

## Cognitive Dissonance

a psychological phenomenon where people confronted with conflicting information or viewpoints reach a state of dissonance (generally the disagreement between conflicting thoughts and/or actions), which can be very uncomfortable, and results in actions to get rid of the dissonance and maintain consonance

## Cognitive Restructuring (CR)

an internal process through which individuals can deliberately adjust how they perceive an action or experience

## Communication

attempts to reproduce what is in our minds in the minds of our audience

## Communication Apprehension

an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons

## Competence

demonstrated skill or knowledge in a particular area or topic

## Conclusion

statement that can be clearly drawn from the provided premises

## Connotative

the subjective or personal meaning the word evokes in people together or individually

## Consensus Rule

a decision-making technique in which all members of the group must agree on the same decision

## Console

to offer comfort in a time of grief

## Content

the stuff you add to the book

## Content-Oriented Listeners

are interested in the message itself, whether it makes sense, what it means, and whether it's accurate

## Context

considering the context of a public speech involves thinking about four dimensions: physical, temporal, social-psychological, and cultural (DeVito, 2009)

## Conversant

being conversant is the condition of being able to discuss an issue intelligently with others

## Coordination

all of the numbers or letters of points should represent the same idea

## CRAAP Method

CRAAP stands for “currency,” “relevance,” “authority,” “accuracy,” and “purpose,” or the five ways that you should evaluate each source to determine if it represents the best information available at the time

## Credibility

the perception the audience holds of you regarding your competence and character

## Critical Listening

using careful, systematic thinking and reasoning to see whether a message makes sense in light of factual evidence

## Cultural Dimension

final context dimension Joseph DeVito mentions; we interact with others from different cultures, misunderstandings can result from differing cultural beliefs, norms, and practices



## Cultural Identity

based on socially constructed categories that teach us a way of being and include expectations for social behavior or ways of acting

## Culture

the ongoing negotiation of learned and patterned beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors

## Databases

an online searchable collection of information

## Decoding

“sensing (for example, hearing or seeing) a source’s message, interpreting the source’s message, evaluating the source’s message, and responding to the source’s message” (Wrench, McCroskey & Richmond, 2008)

## Demographic Analysis

compiling information, such as the gender, age range, marital status, race, and ethnicity of the people in your audience

## Demographic Information

information such as the gender, age range, marital status, race, and ethnicity of the people in your audience

## Denotative

the objective or literal meaning shared by most people using the word

## Designated Leaders

officially recognized in their leadership role and may be appointed or elected by people inside or outside the group

## Diagram

drawings or sketches that outline and explain the parts of an object, process, or phenomenon that cannot be readily seen

## Dialectic

a relationship between two opposing concepts that constantly push and pull one another

## Dialogic Theory of Public Speaking

based on three overarching principles that dialogue is more natural than monologue, meanings are in people not words, and contexts and social situations impact perceived meanings

## Dialogue

communication between two or more persons

## Dichotomies

dualistic ways of thinking that highlight opposites, reducing the ability to see gradations that exist in between concepts

## Digital Divide

refers to the unequal access to technology and related skills that exists in much of the world

## Direct Quotation

when you cite the actual words from a source with no changes

## Directive Leaders

provide psychological structure for their group members by clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures

## Distortion

occurs when someone purposefully twists information in a way that detracts from its original meaning

## Diversity

a key dimension of audience membership and, therefore, of audience analysis; while the term “diversity” is often used to refer to racial and ethnic minorities, it is important to realize that audiences can be diverse in many other ways as well

## Division

if you have an A, then you need a B; if you have a 1, then you need a 2, and so on

## Dominant Identities

historically had and currently have more resources and influence

## Drive-by Quoting

a practice that disorients your audience by not giving them everything they need to understand how the source is relevant to your own claims

## Elitism

consciousness of being or belonging to an elite

## Encoding

what a source does when “creating a message, adapting it to the receiver, and transmitting it across some source-selected channel” (Wrench, McCroskey & Richmond, 2008)

## Encyclopedias

information sources that provide short, very general information about a topic and are available in both print and electronic formats

## Ends

those outcomes that you desire to achieve

## Entertaining Narratives

stories designed purely to delight an audience and transport them from their daily concerns

## Ethical Listening

rests heavily on honest intentions; we should extend to speakers the same respect we want to receive when it's our turn to speak

## Ethical Pyramid

developed by Elspeth Tilley; involved three basic concepts: intent, means and ends

## Ethnic Identity

a group an individual identifies with based on a common culture

## Ethnocentrism

the attitude that one's own group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others

## Ethos

the term Aristotle used to refer to what we now call credibility: the perception that the speaker is honest, knowledgeable, and rightly motivated

## Eulogy

a speech given in honor of someone who has died

## Euphemisms

language devices often used to make something unpleasant sound more tolerable

## Evaluating

fourth stage of the listening process; judging the value of the message

## Execution

involves actually reading a quotation, paraphrasing a speaker or author's words, summarizing a speaker or author's ideas, providing numerical support, or showing pictographic support

## Expert Testimony

expresses the attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors recommended by someone who is an acknowledged expert on a topic

## Expertise

someone having considerable knowledge on a topic or considerable skill in accomplishing something

## Extemporaneous Speaking

the presentation of a carefully planned and rehearsed speech, spoken in a conversational manner using brief notes

## Eyewitness Testimony

given by someone who has direct contact with the phenomenon of your speech topic

## Fact

a truth that is arrived at through the scientific process

## Feedback

when a receiver sends a message back to a source

## Figurative Analogies

compare two ideas or objects from two different classes, or a group that has common attributes, characteristics, qualities, or traits

## Figurative Language

language that does not use comparisons like similes and metaphors

## Focus Group

a small group of people who give you feedback about their perceptions

## Frame of Reference

the unique set of perspectives, experience, knowledge, and values belonging to every individual

## Free Speech

according to Merriam Webster's Dictionary of Law, free speech entails "the right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations (as the power of the government to avoid a clear and present danger) esp. as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution" (Freedom of speech)

## General-Interest Periodicals

magazines and newsletters published on a fairly systematic basis

## Globalization

a complex system of interconnecting structural and cultural forces that aid the spread of ideas and technologies and influence the social and economic organization of societies

## Glossophobia

a subset of social phobia, the fear of social situations

## Graph

a pictorial representation of the relationships of quantitative data using dots, lines, bars, pie slices, and the like

## Gustatory

of or relating to the sense of taste

## Headings

a title at the head of a page or section of a book

## Hearing

an accidental and automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort

## Hero Speech

a motivational speech given by someone who is considered a hero in society

## Heterosexism

a system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favor of female–male sexuality and relationships

## Hyperbole

intentional exaggeration for effect

## Idiom

a word or phrase where the meaning cannot be predicted from normal, dictionary definitions

## Imagery

language that makes the recipient smell, taste, see, hear, and feel a sensation; also known as sensory language

## Impromptu Speaking

the presentation of a short message without advance preparation

## Informative Narratives

provide information or explanations about a speaker's topic

## Informative Speaking

the primary purpose of informative presentations is to share one's knowledge of a subject with an audience

## Intent

to be an ethical listener or speaker, one must begin with ethical intentions; for example, if we agree that honesty is ethical, it follows that ethical speakers will prepare their remarks with the intention of telling the truth to their audiences

## Interactional Model of Public Speaking

a theory of public speaking that includes the source, channel, receiver, encoding, decoding, and feedback

## Interlibrary Loan

a process where librarians are able to search other libraries to locate the book a researcher is trying to find

## Interview

a one-on-one exchange in which you ask questions of a respondent

## Irony

the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect

## Jargon

language used in a specific field that may or may not be understood by others

## Journals

a scholarly publication containing articles written by researchers, professors and other experts

## Keywords

a word or concept of great significance

## Lament

to express grief or sorrow

## Language

any formal system of gestures, signs, sounds, and symbols used or conceived as a means of communicating thought, either through written, enacted, or spoken means

## Lectern

a small raised surface, usually with a slanted top, where a speaker can place notes during a speech

## Lexical Definition

specifically states how a word is used within a specific language

## Line Graph

a graph designed to show trends over time

## Linear Model of Public Speaking

a model of public speaking that includes the source, channel, and receiver

## Listening

at its best, is active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker



## Listening or Receiver Apprehension

the fear that you might be unable to understand the message or process the information correctly or be able to adapt your thinking to include the new information coherently

## Literal Analogies

compare two objects or ideas that clearly belong to the same class

## Literal Language

language that does not use comparisons like similes and metaphors

## Logos

logical and organized arguments and the credible evidence to support the arguments within a speech; arguments based on logic

## Main Points

the main ideas in the speech

## Manuscript Speaking

the word-for-word iteration of a written message

## Means

the tools or behaviors we employ to achieve a desired outcome

## Media Convergence

refers to the merging of technologies that were previously developed and used separately

## Media Imperialism

the domination of other countries through exported media and the values and ideologies they contain

## Media Literacy

involves our ability to critique and analyze the potential impact of the media

## Mediated

visual images or items to help the speaker communicate or clarify their message

## Memorized Speaking

the rote recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory

## Mental Dialogue

an imagined conversation the speaker has with a given audience in which the speaker tries to anticipate what questions, concerns, or issues the audience may have to the subject under discussion

## Message

the verbal and/or nonverbal communication conveyed by the speaker

## Metaphors

a figure of speech that identifies something as being the same as some unrelated thing for rhetorical effect, thus highlighting the similarities between the two

## MLA style

the style scholars in the various humanities fields (e.g., English, philosophy, rhetoric) are more likely to use

## Monologue

a prolonged speech by a single person

## Monotone

too little variation in pitch

## Monroe's Motivated Sequence

organizational pattern used for persuasive speeches involving five steps: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action

## Motivational Speech

a speech designed not only to make an audience experience emotional arousal (fear, sadness, joy, excitement) but also to motivate the audience to do something with that emotional arousal

## Narratives

stories that help an audience understand the speaker's message

## Negative Example

used to illustrate what not to do

## Noise

a wide range of distractions that can inhibit an audience member from accurately attending to a speaker's speech

## Nonexample

used to explain what something is not

## Nonverbal Communication

the transfer of information through the use of body language including eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and more

## Note of Finality

last statement that wraps up your entire presentation and lets the audience know the speech is finished

## Numerical Support

citing data and numbers within a speech

## Olfactory

of or relating to the sense of smell

## Opinions

a personal view, attitude, or belief about something

## Parallelism

the repetition of grammatical structures that correspond in sound, meter, or meaning

## Paraphrase

to take a source's basic idea and condense it using your own words

## Pathos

the use of emotions such as anger, joy, hate, desire for community, and love to persuade the audience of the rightness of a proposition; arguments based on emotion

## Peer-Reviewed Sources

an article that has been reviewed by a group of experts in the field, sometimes called a board of editors

## People-Oriented Listeners

interested in the speaker; listens to the message in order to learn how the speaker thinks and how they feel about their message

## Persuade

to convince, motivate, or otherwise persuade others to change their beliefs, take an action, or reconsider a decision

## Persuasion

symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice

## Persuasive Definitions

motivate an audience to think in a specific manner about the word or term

## Persuasive Narratives

stories used to persuade people to accept or reject a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior

## Persuasive Speaking

the primary purpose of persuasive speaking is to convince, motivate, or otherwise persuade others to change their beliefs, take an action, or reconsider a decision

## Physical Dimension

involves the real or touchable environment where communication occurs

## Physical Noise

consists of various sounds in an environment that interfere with a source's ability to hear

## Physiological Noise

consists of distractions to a speaker's message caused by a listener's own body

## Pictograph

a graph using iconic symbols to dramatize differences in amounts

## Pictographic Support

any drawn or visual representation of an object or process

## Pie Graph

a graph designed to show proportional relationships within sets of data

## Pitch

the relative highness or lowness of your voice

## Plagiarism

using someone else's words or ideas without giving credit

## Popular Sources

(also called non-scholarly) sources inform and entertain the public or allow practitioners to share industry, practice, and production information

## Positive Example

used to clarify or clearly illustrate a principle, method, or phenomenon

## Premise

statement that is designed to provide support or evidence

## Preparation Outline

used to work through the various components of your speech in an organized format

## Presentation Aids

the resources beyond the speech words and delivery that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience

## Preview

a sentence that provides a clear outline of the main points that will be discussed in the presentation

## Preview Statement

the part of the speech that literally tells the audience exactly what main points you will cover

## Primary Research

carried out to discover or revise facts, theories, and applications and is reported by the person conducting the research

## Proposition

central idea statement in a persuasive speech; a statement made advancing a judgment or opinion

## Psychographic Analysis

compiling information on the beliefs, attitudes, and values that your audience members embrace

## Psychographic Information

involves the beliefs, attitudes, and values that your audience members embrace

## Psychological Noise

consists of distractions to a speaker's message caused by a receiver's internal thoughts

## Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA)

one of the most commonly reported social fears

## Purpose Statement

clearly states what it is you would like to achieve

## Racism

a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race

## Rate

how quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech

## Receiver

the audience members listening to the speech

## Receiver Biases

can refer to two things: biases with reference to the speaker and preconceived ideas and opinions about the topic or message

## Receiving

first stage of the listening process; the intentional focus on hearing a speaker's message, which happens when we filter out other sources so that we can isolate the message and avoid the confusing mixture of incoming stimuli

## Religious Speech

a speech designed to incorporate religious ideals into a motivational package to inspire an audience into thinking about or changing aspects of their religious lives

## Remembering

third stage of the listening process; begins with listening; if you can't remember something that was said, you might not have been listening effectively

## Representative Sample

a group or set chosen from a larger statistical population or group of factors or instances that adequately replicates the larger group according to whatever characteristic or quality is under study

## Research

scholarly investigation into a topic in order to discover, revise, or report facts, theories, and applications

## Research Log

step-by-step account of the process of identifying, obtaining, and evaluating sources for a specific project, similar to a lab note-book in an experimental setting

## Responding

fifth and final stage of the listening process; also referred to as “feedback”; the stage at which you indicate your involvement; almost anything you do at this stage can be interpreted as feedback

## Reverse Outline

tool you can use to determine the adequacy of your speech's support by starting with your conclusion and logically working backward through your speech to determine if the support you provided is appropriate and comprehensive

## Roast

a humorous speech designed to both praise and good-naturedly insult a person being honored

## Scholarly Sources

are written by experts in their field, usually professors in a specific discipline

## Scrutiny Fear

anxiety resulting from being in a situation where one is being watched or observed, or where one perceives themselves as being watched



## Secondary Research

research carried out to discover or revise facts, theories, and applications—similar to primary research—but it is reported by someone not involved in conducting the actual research

## Selective Exposure

the decision to expose ourselves to messages that we already agree with, rather than those that confront or challenge us

## Semantic Noise

occurs when a receiver experiences confusion over the meaning of a source's word choice

## Setup

sentence or phrase in which you explain to your audience where the information you are using came from

## Sexism

prejudice or discrimination based on sex

## Sign Post

transition using just a word or short phrase

## Similes

a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind (specifically using the terms “like” or “as”), used to make a description more emphatic or vivid

## Situational Analysis

compiling information on characteristics related to the specific speaking situation

## Slang

a type of language that consists of words and phrases that are specific to a subculture or group that others may not understand

## Social Learning Theory

claims that media portrayals influence our development of schemata or scripts, especially as children, about different groups of people

## Social-Psychological Dimension

refers to “status relationships among participants, roles and games that people play, norms of the society or group, and the friendliness, formality, or gravity of the situation” (DeVito, 2009)

## Socioeconomic Status

refers to a combination of characteristics including income, wealth, level of education, and occupational prestige

## Source

the person who is giving the speech

## Spatial Pattern

useful organization pattern when the main point's importance is derived from its location or directional focus

## Speaking Outline

much more succinct than the preparation outline and includes brief phrases or words that remind the speakers of the points they need to make, plus supporting material and signposts

## Special Occasion Speech

a speech designed to address and engage the context and audience's emotions on a specific occasion

## Special-Interest Periodicals

magazines and newsletters that are published for a narrower audience

## Specific Purpose Statement

“expresses both the topic and the general speech purpose in action form and in terms of the specific objectives you hope to achieve” (O'Hair, Stewart, & Rubenstein, 2004)

## Speech of Acceptance

a speech given by the recipient of a prize or honor

## Speech of Commencement

a speech designed to recognize and celebrate the achievements of a graduating class or other group of people

## Speech of Dedication

a speech delivered to mark the unveiling, opening, or acknowledging of some landmark or structure

## Speech of Farewell

a speech allowing someone to say goodbye to one part of his or her life as he or she is moving on to the next part of life

## Speech of Introduction

a mini-speech given by the host of a ceremony that introduces another speaker and his or her speech

## Speech of Presentation

a brief speech given to accompany a prize or honor

## Speeches to Entertain

involves an array of speaking occasions ranging from introductions to wedding toasts, to presenting and accepting awards, to delivering eulogies at funerals and memorial services in addition to after-dinner speeches and motivational speeches

## State-Anxiety

derived from the external situation within which individuals find themselves

## Statistics

mathematical subfield that gathers, analyzes, and makes inferences about collected data

## Stereotyping

taking for granted that people with a certain characteristic in common have the same likes, dislikes, values, and beliefs

## Stipulative Definition

assigned to a word or term by the person who coins that word or term for the first time

## Subheadings

a heading given to a subsection of a piece of writing

## Subordination

a hierarchy to the order of the points of a speech

## Success Speech

a speech given by someone who has succeeded in some aspect of life and is giving back by telling others how they too can be successful

## Summary

clear sentence that restates the preview statement in past tense, outlining the main points that were addressed in the speech

## Summary of Support

involves condensing or encapsulating the entire text as a form of support

## Support

range of strategies that are used to develop the central idea and specific purpose by providing corroborating evidence

## Support-Manipulation

when speakers attempt to find support that says exactly what they want it to say despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of evidence says the exact opposite

## Survey

a set of questions administered to several—or, preferably, many—respondents

## Survivor Speech

a speech given by someone who has survived a personal tragedy or who has faced and overcome serious adversity

## Target Audience

the members of an audience the speaker most wants to persuade and who are likely to be receptive to persuasive messages

## Temporal Dimension

“has to do not only with the time of day and moment in history but also with where a particular message fits into the sequence of communication events” (DeVito, 2009)

## Theoretical Definitions

used to describe all parts related to a particular type of idea or object

## Thesis

single, declarative sentence that captures the essence or main point of your entire presentation

## Thought Leader

individuals who contribute new ideas; to achieve thought leader status, individuals must communicate their ideas to others through both writing and public speaking

## Time-Oriented Listeners

prefer a message that gets to the point quickly

## Toast

a speech designed to congratulate, appreciate, or remember

## Tone

the attitude of a given artifact (humorous, serious, light-hearted, etc.)

## Topic Sentence

The first sentence of each paragraph is the topic sentence, which is basically a paragraph's thesis statement: well-written topic sentences tell the reader what the entire paragraph is about.

## Topical Pattern

main points are developed according to the different aspects, subtopics or topics within an overall topic

## Trait-Anxiety

anxiety that is aligned with, or a manifestation of, an individual's personality

## Transactional Model of Public Speaking

basic premise of the transactional model is that individuals are sending and receiving messages at the same time

## Transitional Statements

phrases or sentences that lead from one distinct-but-connected idea to another

## Two-Tailed Arguments

persuasive technique in which a speaker brings up a counter-argument to their own topic and then directly refutes the claim

## Understanding

second stage of the listening process; we attempt to learn the meaning of the message, which is not always easy

## Verbal Communication

refers to the production of spoken language to send an intentional message to a listener

## Vividness

speaker's ability to present information in a striking, exciting manner

## Vocal Cue

the subtle but meaningful variations in speech delivery, which can include the use of pitch, tone, volume, and pace

## Vocalized Pauses

sounds in pauses to make it appear that we haven't actually paused. Another term for them is "fillers" or "nonfluencies"

## Volume

the relative softness or loudness of your voice

## Voluntary Audience

gathers because they want to hear the speech, attend the event, or participate in an event

## Warrant

the inference that can be drawn from the claim and evidence

## World Wide Web

an interconnected system of public webpages accessible through the Internet

# APPENDIX A: CHECKLIST FOR ACCESSIBILITY

---

This title has been reviewed to meet these accessibility practices:

## Organizing Content

- Content is organized under headings and subheadings.
- Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2).

## Images

- Images that convey information include alternative text (alt text) descriptions of the image's content or function.
- Graphs, charts, and maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image.
- Images do not rely on color to convey information.
- Images that are purely decorative do not have alt text descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information).

## Links

- The link text describes the destination of the link and does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more."
- If a link will open or download a file (like a PDF or Excel file), a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g., [PDF]).
- Links do not open in new windows or tabs.
- If a link must open in a new window or tab, a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g., [NewTab]).
- For citations and references, the title of the resource is hyperlinked, and the full URL is not hyperlinked.



## Tables

- Tables are used to structure information and not for layout.
- Tables include row and column headers.
- Row and column headers have the correct scope assigned.
- Tables include a caption.
- Tables avoid merged or split cells.
- Tables have adequate cell padding.

## Multimedia

- All audio content includes a transcript. The transcript includes all speech content and relevant descriptions of non-speech audio and speaker names/headings where necessary.
- Videos have captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content that has been edited by a human for accuracy.
- All videos with contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) are described audibly in the video.

## Formulas

- Equations written in plain text use proper symbols (i.e.,  $-$ ,  $\times$ ,  $\div$ ).<sup>1</sup>
- For complex equations, one of the following is true:
  - They were written using LaTeX and are rendered with MathJax (Pressbooks).
  - They were written using Microsoft Word's equation editor.
  - They are presented as images with alternative text descriptions.
- Written equations are properly interpreted by text-to-speech tools.<sup>2</sup>

## Font Size

- Font size is 12 point or higher for body text in Word and PDF documents.
- Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes in Word and PDF documents.

---

1. For example, a hyphen (-) may look like a minus sign ( $-$ ), but it will not be read out correctly by text-to-speech tools.

2. Written equations should prioritize semantic markup over visual markup so text-to-speech tools will read out an equation in a way that makes sense to auditory learners. This applies to both equations written in LaTeX and equations written in Microsoft Word's equation editor.

- Font size can be enlarged by 200 percent in webbook or ebook formats without needing to scroll side to side.

Learn more about [Pressbooks' commitment to Accessibility](#).

“Checklist for Accessibility” by BCcampus is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).