

## 4.9.14: Audience Expectations

### Learning Objectives

- Identify various audience needs and expectations that can be addressed by a speech



One of the finest, and rarest, gifts a person can give is their attention. When it comes to audience attention, that gift comes with an expectation. Audience expectations are simply an extension of the three speaker motivations. Specifically, audience members expect to learn from an informational speech, to be moved by a persuasive speech, or to be inspired by an inspirational speech.

Perhaps your first and most important test as a prospective speaker is to make sure you clearly communicate the purpose and benefits of attending your speech. A disconnect between what audience members thought they signed on for and what they're hearing can trigger a range of undesirable audience behaviors from zoning out to walking out. As a speaker, you also have an obligation to factor your audience into the design and development of your speech, from relevant examples to appropriate language and subject matter depth. Whatever your stated intent (benefit), the minimum audience expectation is that you fulfill it in a clear and coherent manner.

One additional point to consider is the medium. Public speeches are live events. Why would you purchase a ticket and go to see a concert or comedian or other event live rather than buying a DVD or tuning in to podcast or TV broadcast for a fraction of the price? There's a difference in the level of energy and engagement in a live "performance"—whether it's a speech, dance recital, political rally, or musical event. Keep in mind that those attending a public speech expect an experience that transcends a one-dimensional transfer of information.

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