PUBLIC SPEAKING



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Public Speaking

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Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Introduction to Public Speaking

1.1: Why A Public Speaking Course?

1.2: History of Public Speaking

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1.1: Why A Public Speaking Course?



Image 1.1 Graduating Student

Welcome to Communication Studies 101 here at Cal Poly SLO!

Have you ever wondered why a public speaking course is required for university students all over the nation? There are plenty of reasons why public speaking is desireable and required.

What is a General Education Course?

As described in an article by Kate Knapp, 2022, general education courses at US universities are designed to promote critical thinking across multiple subjects. By learning about subjects that differ from their chosen major, students gain a broader understanding of a range of topics. This equips them with highly desirable skills — communications, teamwork, ethics, time management, problem-solving, and more — while also providing necessary tools to positively impact the future.

So Why COMS 101?

Each of us needs the ability to communicate within our culture to other members of society and this need arises is many forms:

Career Skills

Skills learned in this course are among the top career each of us needs as we move forward in our academic and professional careers. As we learn to communicate we become better listeners, flexible and creative thinkers who come from a place of vulnerability and authenticity. Gone are the days of blundering through the workplace relying on privilege and sheer force of will in order to find success. *Forbes* lists verbal communication as the 5th most important skill. In addition to being able to clearly write our ideas, employers want us to be able to clearly verbalize our ideas.

Freedom of Speech



Democracies throughout time have had a long tradition of oral communication as a way to express the ideas and desires of a country's population. Collectively, here in the United States, we believe in that democratic tradition and that tradition is guaranteed to us in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. In order to participate effectively in a democracy that provides space for freedom of expression, it is necessary to build our communication tool kit to include the skills associated with public speaking. (Image 1.2 Bill of Rights)

Public Advocacy

As part of our democratic freedom of expression, you may find yourself in a situation that requires you to advocate - speak for - yourself or others. Maybe the college parking fees are too expensive, but no one has shared that opinion with the campus president. Through this course, you will develop the skills to advocate in front of the administration - given the opportunity - to lower the parking fees.

University GE Requirement

You can read more about the specific requirements of the Cal State system here: California State Universities GE Requirements.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, public speaking has a long tradition within the context of our democratic society and we cover the history of public speaking in the next section.

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1.2: History of Public Speaking

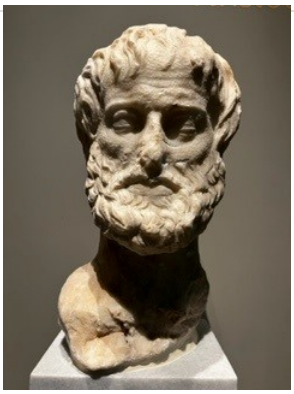


Figure 1.1: Aristotle Bust - Nat'l Archaeological Museum

As you read through this book and participate in class, you will notice that there is a pretty clear formula for writing a speech. This formula is based on the tradition of Greek and Roman rhetorical practices. On the previous page we discussed how public speaking is an important skill because we live in a democratic society, thereby providing us the opportunity to express our ideas and ideals through public discourse (public speaking); verbally expressing ideas publicly is a Greek tradition. However, only adhering to the Greek tradition excludes other cultures' public speaking traditions, which are just as important. In this section, we explore the Greek tradition as well as other public speaking traditions.

Greek Tradition

Aristotle, a student of Plato, formalized the tradition of public speaking with his work *Rhetoric*. In Rhetoric, Aristotle claimed that there were three types of situations requiring speeches: deliberative, epideictic, and judicial (i.e. policy changes, memorializing/celebrating an individual, arguing for a guilty or innocent verdict). Aristotle also stated that there are three important factors that must be addressed when delivering a speech: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is the audience's perception of a speaker's credibility. Pathos is "the emotional constitution of the audience" (Shields, 2022, sec. 13). Logos is the entirety of the speech. We continue to utilize and apply all three aspects of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* today. In the table below, we see how to apply Aristotle's *Rhetoric:*

Table 1.1 - Aristotle's *Rhetoric* Explained

Ethos	trustworthiness of speaker	knowledge of speaker	concern for well-being of audience
Pathos	audience's feeling towards speaker	audience's feeling toward situation	audience's change in feeling through speech
Logos	language choices	evidence in speech (examples, data, stories)	arrangement of ideas (main points) in speech

Your speeches will be evaluated in part on the application of ethos, pathos, and logos, and we will explore together how these ideas can be incorporated into each of your speeches.

Since women were not allowed in public spaces in ancient Greece, they were not allowed to participate in public speaking. Therefore women's voices were often not heard or minimized. Yet we cannot assume that Greek women did not influence public speaking. For example, one of the most important eulogies - a speech given at a funeral - was Pericles' Funeral Oration. However, a few important Greek philosophers and/or historians suggest that Pericles was an unskilled writer and, therefore, would not have been able to craft such an effective speech. Thus they attributed the creation of the Funeral Oration to his wife Aspasia (Dangour, 2021). There is no way to be sure; however, Socrates, by way of Plato, suggests that Aspasia wrote the speech. Socrates also attributes Aspasia with helping him improve his own communication skills.



Figure 1.2: Image - Aspasia

Roman Tradition

Cicero (106 - 43 BC), who was born a couple hundred years after Aristotle added to the European tradition of public speaking with his manuscript *De Republica*, *De Oratore*, *and De Inventione*. All of these books contributed to the discipline of public speaking. Where Aristotle identified the three factors necessary to be an effective speaker, Cicero identified the five aspects in the speech-making process (see Table 1.2): invention, arrangement, style, delivery, memory (Valenzano & Braden, 2015).

Table 1.2 - Cicero's Canon's Explained

Invention	Creating the arguments or main points
Arrangement	Organization of the arguments or main points
Style	Language choices (formal vs. informal)
Delivery	Way in which a speech is verbally presented
Memory	Ability to recall information without having to use notes

As the popularity of Christianity grew in Europe, priests adopted, deleted, or expanded on many of the Greek and Roman rhetorical traditions. St. Augustine's manuscripts demonstrate a shift in rhetorical traditions. Augustine, born in 354 in northern Africa, traveled to Rome and Milan to teach rhetoric; however, while in Milan, he converted to Christianity. At this point he began focusing on how effective public speaking - or preaching - was necessary for teaching the scriptures to Christians (Golden, Berquist, Coleman, Sproule, 2004). Augustine continued to expand on the tradition of public speaking, but adapted an approach that focused less on style. Much of what we learn in this course is based on the Greco-Roman tradition of public speaking, which is a Euro-centric understanding of public speaking, but other cultures throughout World history have privileged different aspects of public speaking.

Differences in Public Speaking Traditions

Since public speaking is the performance of one person speaking in front of a group of people, it implies that ideas of the individual are more important than the ideas of the group. While this is not necessarily the case, cultures in which the ideas and will of the group are more important than the individual tend to have fewer public situations and their criteria for effective speeches is different (Power & Galvin, 1997).

Muslim

While Christianity was growing in Europe and various converts were building upon the work of the Greek and Roman traditions, a Muslim rhetorical tradition was growing and flourishing in the Middle Ages. Medieval Muslim preachers had a formula for a well-delivered speech; delivery criteria was explicitly stated (Jones, 2012). "There is a corporeal component of rhetorical eloquence, which the *khatib* displays through the control of his body: calmness of limbs, steady gaze, and so on" (p. 87). In addition to the importance of body movement - or lack thereof - and eye contact, "clarity, concision, and appropriate style and register were essential for the effective preaching of jihad" (p. 107).

New Guinea

In New Guinea, public speaking serves many purposes. Contemporaries believed that New Guinean speech was derivative of those found in Africa (Rumsey, 1986). Yet Harris (2007) stated that New Guinean public speaking functions as art, political agency, and

social agency. Harris further quoted Bob Connolly's description of New Guineans, "I don't think any culture anywhere has produced such a concentration of people with quite extraordinary oratorical ability" (para. 12). It seems that public speaking events were often places in which group relationships were tested (Rumsey).

Native North Americans

We have so far read about how European traditions of public speaking inform our current public speaking curriculum. Yet prior to Europeans arriving in the Americas, Native Americans had their own public speaking traditions. Unfortunately, our understanding of Native Americans' oratory is incomplete due to the fact that most of their speeches were performed within in the context of negotiations between whites and these speeches were recorded by whites (Yagelski, 1995). When one culture writes about another culture, they write about that "other" culture from their own perspective, which is then filtered through their own worldviews. However, we can gain some insight into Native American public speaking traditions.

Yagelski notes Strickland's research with, "public speaking figured into Cherokee life in several vital ways: storytelling provided a means for transmission of myths and cultural knowledge; persuasive speeches were delivered in open meetings during which important tribal decisions were made; sarcasm was sometimes used as a means of public punishment" (p. 69). Furthermore, indigenous people of the plains were socially required to belong to smaller "clubs" or groups within their tribes and both men and women were required to utilize public speaking while participating in activities. According to Monroe (2014), the plateau Indians of the Pacific Northwest employed several rhetorical devices: personal experience as evidence, "high affect techniques in retelling that experience" (p. 22), arranging the story in a way to create the most suspense, and concluding with the thesis. Again, keep in mind, that the Native Americans primarily used oratory to convey all information; therefore, there are limited indigenous written documents detailing their rhetorical traditions.

Moving Forward

Now that you know about the traditions associated with public speaking, you will apply the following information throughout the course of your semester:

Chapter	Chapter Title	Chapter Overview
1	Introduction to Public Speaking	Explains why public speaking is important and the history of public speaking.
2	Communication Apprehension	We will cover why so many people experience anxiety around public speaking and communicating and how we can develop coping skills.
3	Audience Analysis	This chapter covers the first step to writing your speech: figuring out who your audience is!
4	Listening	Covers styles of listening and how to become a better listener.
5	Finding a Purpose & Selecting a Topic	Before writing your speech, you will learn how to choose a topic and decide whether you are informing or persuading your audience or marking a special occasion.
6	Research and Evidence	Your speeches should be based off logic and sound reasoning. In this chapter you will learn how to research and find credible and reliable evidence.
7	Organization and Outlining	Explains various ways to arrange the main points of a speech and how to write out the parts of a speech in an outline.

Chapter	Chapter Title	Chapter Overview
8	Introductions and Conclusions Matter	Explores the various criteria of an effective introduction and effective conclusion and how to craft introductions and conclusions.
9	Delivering the Speech	In this chapter you will learn what to do with your hands (and the rest of your body) while you're at the front of the room speaking; as well as how to verbally present your speech.
10	Presentation Aids-Design and Usage	Want to use a PowerPoint or object in your speech? This chapter will cover how to incorporate those presentation aids successfully in your speech.
11	Informative Speaking	In this chapter you will learn how to write an unbiased speech purely to inform an audience.
12	Persuasive Speaking	Covers how to use appeals and evidence to change your audience's attitudes, beleifs, or behaviors.
13	Special Occasion Speaking	In the event you ever have to give a wedding toast, eulogy, or any other special occasion speech, this chapter will cover how to put together a short speech for any occasion.
14	Mediated Communication	It is no secret that technology is a big part of how we communicate now. In this chapter you will learn how to give a successful speech/presentation through technology such as Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.
15	Public Speaking Ethics	Addresses the cultural reasoning behind ethical communication, types of credibility, as well as plagiarism.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2 Communication Apprehension: What is it and What Can We Do?

In this chapter, you will learn about speaking confidently by exploring what communication apprehension is, examining the different types and causes of communication apprehension, suggesting strategies you can use to manage your fears of public speaking, and exploring tactics you can use to deal with a variety of unexpected events you might encounter while speaking.

2.1: Prelude to Speaking Confidently
2.2: What Is Communication Apprehension?
2.3: All Anxiety Is Not the Same- Sources of Communication Apprehension
2.4: Reducing Communication Apprehension
2.5: Coping with the Unexpected
2.6: Chapter Exercises

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2.1: Prelude to Speaking Confidently

Managing Nerves and the Unexpected

One of your biggest concerns about public speaking might be how to deal with nervousness or unexpected events. If that's the case, you're not alone—fear of speaking in public consistently ranks at the top of lists of people's common fears. Some people are not joking when they say they would rather die than stand up and speak in front of a live audience. The fear of public speaking ranks right up there with the fear of flying, death, and spiders (Wallechinsky, Wallace, & Wallace, 1977). Even if you are one of the fortunate few who don't typically get nervous when speaking in public, it's important to recognize things that can go wrong and be mentally prepared for them. On occasion, everyone misplaces speaking notes, has technical difficulties with a presentation aid, or gets distracted by an audience member. Speaking confidently involves knowing how to deal with these and other unexpected events.



Figure 2.1.1: Ron Bulovs – Speech! – CC BY 2.0

In this chapter, we will help you with speaking confidently by exploring what communication apprehension is, examining the different types and causes of communication apprehension, suggesting strategies you can use to manage your fear of public speaking, and providing tactics you can use to deal with a variety of unexpected events you might encounter while speaking.

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2.2: What Is Communication Apprehension?

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the nature of communication apprehension.
2. List the physiological symptoms of communication apprehension.
3. Identify different misconceptions about communication anxiety.

“Speech is a mirror of the soul,” commented Publilius Syrus, a popular writer in 42 BCE (Bartlett, 1919). Other people come to know who we are through our words. Many different social situations, ranging from job interviews to dating to public speaking, can make us feel uncomfortable as we anticipate that we will be evaluated and judged by others. How well we communicate is intimately connected to our self-image, and the process of revealing ourselves to the evaluation of others can be threatening whether we are meeting new acquaintances, participating in group discussions, or speaking in front of an audience.

Definition of Communication Apprehension

According to James McCroskey (2001), communication apprehension is the broad term that refers to an individual’s “fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." At its heart, communication apprehension is a psychological response to evaluation. This psychological response, however, quickly becomes physical as our body responds to the threat the mind perceives. Our bodies cannot distinguish between psychological and physical threats, so we react as though we were facing a Mack truck barreling in our direction. The body’s circulatory and adrenal systems shift into overdrive, preparing us to function at maximum physical efficiency—the “flight or fight” response (Sapolsky, 2004). Yet instead of running away or fighting, all we need to do is stand and talk. When it comes to communication apprehension, our physical responses are often not well adapted to the nature of the threat we face, as the excess energy created by our body can make it harder for us to be effective public speakers. But because communication apprehension is rooted in our minds, if we understand more about the nature of the body’s responses to stress, we can better develop mechanisms for managing the body’s misguided attempts to help us cope with our fear of social judgment.

Physiological Symptoms of Communication Apprehension

There are a number of physical sensations associated with communication apprehension. We might notice our heart pounding or our hands feeling clammy. We may break out in a sweat. We may have “stomach butterflies” or even feel nauseated. Our hands and legs might start to shake, or we may begin to pace nervously. Our voices may quiver, and we may have a “dry mouth” sensation that makes it difficult to articulate even simple words. Breathing becomes more rapid and, in extreme cases, we might feel dizzy or light-headed. Anxiety about communicating is profoundly disconcerting because we feel powerless to control our bodies. Furthermore, we may become so anxious that we fear we will forget our name, much less remember the main points of the speech we are about to deliver.

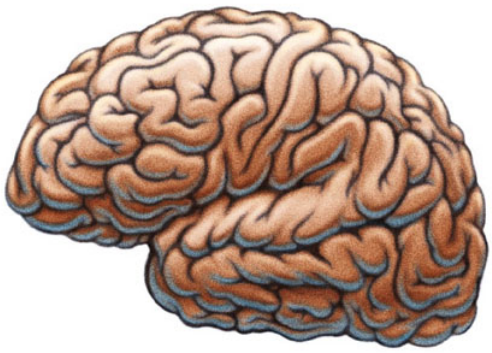


Figure 2.2.1: Isaac Mao – Brain – CC BY 2.0.

The physiological changes produced in the body at critical moments are designed to contribute to the efficient use of muscles and expand available energy. Circulation and breathing become more rapid so that additional oxygen can reach the muscles. Increased circulation causes us to sweat. Adrenaline rushes through our body, instructing the body to speed up its movements. If we stay

immobile behind a lectern, this hormonal urge to speed up may produce shaking and trembling. Additionally, digestive processes are inhibited so we will not lapse into the relaxed, sleepy state that is typical after eating. Instead of feeling sleepy, we feel butterflies in the pit of our stomach. By understanding what is happening to our bodies in response to the stress of public speaking, we can better cope with these reactions and channel them in constructive directions.

Any conscious emotional state such as anxiety or excitement consists of two components: a primary reaction of the central nervous system and an intellectual interpretation of these physiological responses. The physiological state we label as communication anxiety does not differ from ones we label rage or excitement. Even experienced, effective speakers and performers experience some communication apprehension. What differs is the mental label that we put on the experience. Effective speakers have learned to channel their body's reactions, using the energy released by these physiological reactions to create animation and stage presence.

Below is a short TedTalk that discusses the science behind these physiological changes due to stage fright and some helpful tips on how to manage them.



Myths about Communication Apprehension

A wealth of conventional wisdom surrounds the discomfort of speaking anxiety, as it surrounds almost any phenomenon that makes us uncomfortable. Most of this "folk" knowledge misleads us, directing our attention away from effective strategies for thinking about and coping with anxiety reactions.



Figure 2.2.1: Speaker at Podium – CC BY 2.0.

Before we look in more detail at the types of communication apprehension, let's dispel some of the myths about it.

1. **People who suffer from speaking anxiety are neurotic.** As we have explained, speaking anxiety is a normal reaction. Good speakers can get nervous just as poor speakers do. Winston Churchill, for example, would get physically ill before major speeches in Parliament. Yet he rallied the British people in a time of crisis. Many people, even the most professional performers, experience anxiety about communicating. Such a widespread problem, Dr. Joyce Brothers (2008) contends, "cannot be attributed to deep-seated neuroses."

2. **Telling a joke or two is always a good way to begin a speech.** Humor is some of the toughest material to deliver effectively because it requires an exquisite sense of timing. Nothing is worse than waiting for a laugh that does not come. Moreover, one person's joke is another person's slander. It is extremely easy to offend when using humor. The same material can play very differently with different audiences. For these reasons, it is not a good idea to start with a joke, particularly if it is not well related to your topic. Humor is just too unpredictable and difficult for many novice speakers. If you insist on using humor, make sure the "joke" is on you, not on someone else. Another tip is never to pause and wait for a laugh that may not come. If the audience catches the joke, fine. If not, you're not left standing in awkward silence waiting for a reaction.
3. **Imagine the audience is naked.** This tip just plain doesn't work because imagining the audience naked will do nothing to calm your nerves. The audience is not some abstract image in your mind. It consists of real individuals who you can connect with through your material. To "imagine" the audience is to misdirect your focus from the real people in front of you to an "imagined" group. What we imagine is usually more threatening than the reality that we face.
4. **Any mistake means that you have "blown it."** We all make mistakes. What matters is not whether we make a mistake but how well we recover. One of the authors of this book was giving a speech and wanted to thank a former student in the audience. Instead of saying "former student," she said, "former friend." After the audience stopped laughing, the speaker remarked, "Well, I guess she'll be a *former* friend now!"—which got more laughter from the audience. A speech does not have to be perfect. You just have to make an effort to relate to the audience naturally and be willing to accept your mistakes.
5. **Avoid speaking anxiety by writing your speech out word for word and memorizing it.** Memorizing your speech word for word will likely make your apprehension worse rather than better. Instead of remembering three to five main points and subpoints, you will try to commit to memory more than a thousand bits of data. If you forget a point, the only way to get back on track is to start from the beginning. You are inviting your mind to go blank by overloading it with details. In addition, audiences do not like to listen to "canned," or memorized, material. Your delivery is likely to suffer if you memorize. Audiences appreciate speakers who talk naturally to them rather than recite a written script.
6. **Audiences are out to get you.** With only a few exceptions, which we will talk about in Section 3.2 "All Anxiety Is Not the Same: Sources of Communication Apprehension", the natural state of audiences is empathy, not antipathy. Most face-to-face audiences are interested in your material, not in your image. Watching someone who is anxious tends to make audience members anxious themselves. Particularly in public speaking classes, audiences want to see you succeed. They know that they will soon be in your shoes and they identify with you, most likely hoping you'll succeed and give them ideas for how to make their own speeches better. If you establish direct eye contact with real individuals in your audience, you will see them respond to what you are saying, and this response lets you know that you are succeeding.
7. **You will look to the audience as nervous as you feel.** Empirical research has shown that audiences do not perceive the level of nervousness that speakers report feeling (Clevenger, 1959). Most listeners judge speakers as less anxious than the speakers rate themselves. In other words, the audience is not likely to perceive accurately the level of anxiety you might be experiencing. Some of the most effective speakers will return to their seats after their speech and exclaim they were **so** nervous. Listeners will respond, "You didn't look nervous." Audiences do not necessarily perceive our fears. Consequently, don't apologize for your nerves. There is a good chance the audience will not notice if you do not point it out to them.
8. **A little nervousness helps you give a better speech.** This "myth" is true! Professional speakers, actors, and other performers consistently rely on the heightened arousal of nervousness to channel extra energy into their performance. People would much rather listen to a speaker who is alert and enthusiastic than one who is relaxed to the point of boredom. Many professional speakers say that the day they stop feeling nervous is the day they should stop speaking in public. The goal is to control those nerves and channel them into your presentation.

Key Takeaways

- Communication apprehension refers to the fear or anxiety people experience at the thought of being evaluated by others. Some anxiety is a normal part of the communication process.
- The psychological threat individuals perceive in the communication situation prompts physiological changes designed to help the body respond. These physical reactions to stress create the uncomfortable feelings of unease called speech anxiety and may include sweaty palms, shaking, butterflies in the stomach, and dry mouth.
- A great deal of conventional advice for managing stage fright is misleading, including suggestions that speech anxiety is neurotic, that telling a joke is a good opening, that imagining the audience naked is helpful, that any mistake is fatal to an effective speech, that memorizing a script is useful, that audiences are out to get you, and that your audience sees how nervous you really are.

Exercises

1. Create an inventory of the physiological symptoms of communication apprehension you experience when engaged in public speaking. Which ones are you most interested in learning to manage?
2. With a partner or in a small group, discuss which myths create the biggest problems for public speakers. Why do people believe in these myths?

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2.3: All Anxiety Is Not the Same- Sources of Communication Apprehension

Learning Objectives

1. Distinguish among the four different types of communication apprehension.
2. Identify various factors that cause communication apprehension.

We have said that experiencing some form of anxiety is a normal part of the communication process. Most people are anxious about being evaluated by an audience. Interestingly, many people assume that their nervousness is an experience unique to them. They assume that other people do not feel anxious when confronting the threat of public speaking (McCroskey, 2001). Although anxiety is a widely shared response to the stress of public speaking, not all anxiety is the same. Many researchers have investigated the differences between apprehension grounded in personality characteristics and anxiety prompted by a particular situation at a particular time (Witt, et. al., 2006). McCroskey argues there are four types of communication apprehension: anxiety related to trait, context, audience, and situation (McCroskey, 2001). If you understand these different types of apprehension, you can gain insight into the varied communication factors that contribute to speaking anxiety.

Trait Anxiety

Some people are just more disposed to communication apprehension than others. As Witt et al. (2006) explain, "**Trait anxiety** measures how people *generally* feel across situations and time periods." This means that some people feel more uncomfortable than the average person regardless of the context, audience, or situation. It doesn't matter whether you are raising your hand in a group discussion, talking with people you meet at a party, or giving speeches in a class, you're likely to be uncomfortable in all these settings if you experience trait anxiety. While trait anxiety is not the same as shyness, those with high trait anxiety are more likely to avoid exposure to public speaking situations, so their nervousness might be compounded by lack of experience or skill (Witt, et. al., 2006). People who experience trait anxiety may never like public speaking, but through preparation and practice, they can learn to give effective public speeches when they need to do so.

Context Anxiety

Context anxiety refers to anxiety prompted by specific communication contexts. Some of the major context factors that can heighten this form of anxiety are formality, uncertainty, and novelty.



Figure 2.3.1: MTEA – Michelle Alexander at Podium – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Formality

Some individuals can be perfectly composed when talking at a meeting or in a small group; yet when faced with a more formal public speaking setting, they become intimidated and nervous. As the formality of the communication context increases, the stakes are raised, sometimes prompting more apprehension. Certain communication contexts, such as a press conference or a courtroom, can make even the most confident individuals nervous. One reason is that these communication contexts presuppose an adversarial relationship between the speaker and some audience members.

Uncertainty

In addition, it is hard to predict and control the flow of information in such contexts, so the level of uncertainty is high. The feelings of context anxiety might be similar to those you experience on the first day of class with a new instructor: you don't know what to expect, so you are more nervous than you might be later in the semester when you know the instructor and the class routine better.

Novelty

Additionally, most of us are not experienced in high-tension communication settings. The novelty of the communication context we encounter is another factor contributing to apprehension. Anxiety becomes more of an issue in communication environments that are new to us, even for those who are normally comfortable with speaking in public.

Most people can learn through practice to cope with their anxiety prompted by formal, uncertain, and novel communication contexts. Fortunately, most public speaking classroom contexts are not adversarial. The opportunities you have to practice giving speeches reduces the novelty and uncertainty of the public speaking context, enabling most students to learn how to cope with anxiety prompted by the communication context.

Audience Anxiety

For some individuals, it is not the communication context that prompts anxiety; it is the people in the audience they face. **Audience anxiety** describes communication apprehension prompted by specific audience characteristics. These characteristics include similarity, subordinate status, audience size, and familiarity.

You might have no difficulty talking to an audience of your peers in student government meetings, but an audience composed of parents and students on a campus visit might make you nervous because of the presence of parents in the audience. The degree of perceived similarity between you and your audience can influence your level of speech anxiety. We all prefer to talk to an audience that we believe shares our values more than to one that does not. The more dissimilar we are compared to our audience members, the more likely we are to be nervous. Studies have shown that subordinate status can also contribute to speaking anxiety (Witt, et. al., 2006). Talking in front of your boss or teacher may be intimidating, especially if you are being evaluated. The size of the audience can also play a role: the larger the audience, the more threatening it may seem. Finally, familiarity can be a factor. Some of us prefer talking to strangers rather than to people we know well. Others feel more nervous in front of an audience of friends and family because there is more pressure to perform well.

Situational Anxiety

Situational anxiety, McCroskey explains, is the communication apprehension created by "the unique combination of influences generated by audience, time and context" (McCroskey, 2001). Each communication event involves several dimensions: physical, temporal, social-psychological, and cultural. These dimensions combine to create a unique communication situation that is different from any previous communication event. The situation created by a given audience, in a given time, and in a given context can coalesce into situational anxiety.

For example, I once had to give a presentation at a general faculty meeting on general education assessment. To my surprise, I found myself particularly nervous about this speech. The audience was familiar to me but was relatively large compared to most classroom settings. I knew the audience well enough to know that my topic was controversial for some faculty members who resented the mandate for assessment coming from top administration. The meeting occurred late on a Friday afternoon, and my presentation was scheduled more than an hour into the two-hour meeting. All these factors combined to produce situational anxiety for me. While I successfully applied the principles that we will discuss in Section 3.3 for managing stage fright, this speaking situation stands out in my mind as one of the most nerve-wracking speaking challenges I have ever faced.

Key Takeaways

- Communication apprehension stems from many sources, including the speaker's personality characteristics, communication context, nature of the audience, or situation.
- Many factors exaggerate communication apprehension. Formality, familiarity, novelty, perceived similarity, and subordinate status are a few of the factors that influence our tendency to feel anxious while speaking.

Exercise

1. Make a list of sources of your communication apprehension. What factors contribute most to your anxiety about public speaking?

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2.4: Reducing Communication Apprehension

Learning Objectives

1. Explain steps for managing anxiety in the speech preparation process.
2. Identify effective techniques for coping with anxiety during delivery.
3. Recognize the general options available for stress reduction and anxiety management.

Experiencing some nervousness about public speaking is normal. The energy created by this physiological response can be functional if you harness it as a resource for more effective public speaking. In this section, we suggest a number of steps that you can take to channel your stage fright into excitement and animation. We will begin with specific speech-related considerations and then briefly examine some of the more general anxiety management options available.



Figure 2.4.1: Freddie Pena – Nervous? – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Speech-Related Considerations

Communication apprehension does not necessarily remain constant throughout all the stages of speech preparation and delivery. One group of researchers studied the ebb and flow of anxiety levels at four stages in the delivery of a speech. They compared indicators of physiological stress at different milestones in the process (Witt, et. al., 2006):

- anticipation (the minute prior to starting the speech),
- confrontation (the first minute of the speech),
- adaptation (the last minute of the speech), and
- release (the minute immediately following the end of the speech)

These researchers found that anxiety typically peaked at the anticipatory stage. In other words, we are likely to be most anxious right before we get up to speak. As we progress through our speech, our level of anxiety is likely to decline. Planning your speech to incorporate techniques for managing your nervousness at different times will help you decrease the overall level of stress you experience. We also offer a number of suggestions for managing your reactions while you are delivering your speech.

Think Positively

As we mentioned earlier, communication apprehension begins in the mind as a psychological response. This underscores the importance of a speaker's psychological attitude toward speaking. To prepare yourself mentally for a successful speaking experience, we recommend using a technique called **cognitive restructuring**. Cognitive restructuring is simply changing how you label the physiological responses you will experience. Rather than thinking of public speaking as a dreaded obligation, make a conscious decision to consider it an exciting opportunity. The first audience member that you have to convince is yourself, by deliberately replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. If you say something to yourself often enough, you will gradually come to believe it.

We also suggest practicing what communication scholars call **positive self-talk** rather than **negative self-talk** (Metcalfe, 1994; Beebe & Beebe, 2000). If you find yourself thinking, "I'm going to forget everything when I get to the front of the room," turn that negative message around to a positive one. Tell yourself, "I have notes to remind me what comes next, and the audience won't know if I don't cover everything in the order I planned." The idea is to dispute your negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones, even if you think you are "conning" yourself. By monitoring how you talk about yourself, you can unlearn old patterns and change the ways you think about things that produce anxiety.

Reducing Anxiety through Preparation

As we have said earlier in this chapter, uncertainty makes for greater anxiety. Nothing is more frightening than facing the unknown. Although no one can see into the future and predict everything that will happen during a speech, every speaker can and should prepare so that the "unknowns" of the speech event are kept to a minimum. You can do this by gaining as much knowledge as possible about whom you will be addressing, what you will say, how you will say it, and where the speech will take place.

Analyze Your Audience

The audience that we imagine in our minds is almost always more threatening than the reality of the people sitting in front of us. The more information you have about the characteristics of your audience, the more you will be able to craft an effective message. Since your stage fright is likely to be at its highest in the beginning of your speech, it is helpful to open the speech with a technique to prompt an audience response. You might try posing a question, asking for a show of hands, or sharing a story that you know is relevant to your listeners' experience. When you see the audience responding to you by nodding, smiling, or answering questions, you will have directed the focus of attention from yourself to the audience. Such responses indicate success; they are positively reinforcing, and thus reduce your nervousness.

Clearly Organize Your Ideas

Being prepared as a speaker means knowing the main points of your message so well that you can remember them even when you are feeling highly anxious, and the best way to learn those points is to create an outline for your speech. With a clear outline to follow, you will find it much easier to move from one point to the next without stumbling or getting lost.

A note of caution is in order: you do not want to react to the stress of speaking by writing and memorizing a manuscript. Your audience will usually be able to tell that you wrote your speech out verbatim, and they will tune out very quickly. You are setting yourself up for disaster if you try to memorize a written text because the pressure of having to remember all those particulars will be tremendous. Moreover, if you have a momentary memory lapse during a memorized speech, you may have a lot of trouble continuing without starting over at the beginning.

What you do want to prepare is a simple outline that reminds you of the progression of ideas in your speech. What is important is the order of your points, not the specifics of each sentence. It is perfectly fine if your speech varies in terms of specific language or examples each time you practice it.

Adapt Your Language to the Oral Mode

Another reason not to write out your speech as a manuscript is that to speak effectively you want your language to be adapted to the oral, not the written, mode. You will find your speaking anxiety more manageable if you speak in the oral mode because it will help you to feel like you are having a conversation with friends rather than delivering a formal proclamation.

Appropriate oral style is more concrete and vivid than written style. Effective speaking relies on verbs rather than nouns, and the language is less complex. Long sentences may work well for novelists such as William Faulkner or James Joyce, where readers can go back and reread passages two, three, or even seven or eight times. Your listeners, though, cannot "rewind" you in order to catch ideas they miss the first time through.

Don't be afraid to use personal pronouns freely, frequently saying "I" and "me"—or better yet, "us" and "we." Personal pronouns are much more effective in speaking than language constructions, such as the following "this author," because they help you to build a connection with your audience. Another oral technique is to build audience questions into your speech. Rhetorical questions, questions that do not require a verbal answer, invite the audience to participate with your material by thinking about the implications of the question and how it might be answered. If you are graphic and concrete in your language selection, your audience is more likely to listen attentively. You will be able to see the audience listening, and this feedback will help to reduce your anxiety.

Practice in Conditions Similar to Those You Will Face When Speaking

It is not enough to practice your speech silently in your head. To reduce anxiety and increase the likelihood of a successful performance, you need to practice out loud in a situation similar to the one you will face when actually performing your speech. Practice delivering your speech out loud while standing on your feet. If you make a mistake, do not stop to correct it but continue all the way through your speech; that is what you will have to do when you are in front of the audience.

If possible, practice in the actual room where you will be giving your speech. Not only will you have a better sense of what it will feel like to actually speak, but you may also have the chance to practice using presentation aids and potentially avoid distractions and glitches like incompatible computers, blown projector bulbs, or sunlight glaring in your eyes.

Two very useful tools for anxiety-reducing practice are a clock and a mirror. Use the clock to time your speech, being aware that most novice speakers speak too fast, not too slowly. By ensuring that you are within the time guidelines, you will eliminate the embarrassment of having to cut your remarks short because you've run out of time or of not having enough to say to fulfill the assignment. Use the mirror to gauge how well you are maintaining eye contact with your audience; it will allow you to check that you are looking up from your notes. It will also help you build the habit of using appropriate facial expressions to convey the emotions in your speech. While you might feel a little absurd practicing your speech out loud in front of a mirror, the practice that you do before your speech can make you much less anxious when it comes time to face the audience.

Watch What You Eat

A final tip about preparation is to watch what you eat immediately before speaking. The butterflies in your stomach are likely to be more noticeable if you skip normal meals. While you should eat normally, you should avoid caffeinated drinks because they can make your shaking hands worse. Carbohydrates operate as natural sedatives, so you may want to eat carbohydrates to help slow down your metabolism and to avoid fried or very spicy foods that may upset your stomach. Especially if you are speaking in the morning, be sure to have breakfast. If you haven't had anything to eat or drink since dinner the night before, dizziness and light-headedness are very real possibilities.

Reducing Nervousness during Delivery

Anticipate the Reactions of Your Body

There are a number of steps you can take to counteract the negative physiological effects of stress on the body. **Deep breathing** will help to counteract the effects of excess adrenaline. You can place symbols in your notes, like "slow down" or ☺, that remind you to pause and breathe during points in your speech. It is also a good idea to pause a moment before you get started to set an appropriate pace from the onset. Look at your audience and smile. It is a reflex for some of your audience members to smile back. Those smiles will reassure you that your audience members are friendly.

Physical movement helps to channel some of the excess energy that your body produces in response to anxiety. If at all possible, move around the front of the room rather than remaining imprisoned behind the lectern or gripping it for dear life (avoid pacing nervously from side to side, however). Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the lectern will reveal your shaking hands, use note cards rather than a sheet of paper for your outline. Note cards do not quiver like paper, and they provide you with something to do with your hands.

Vocal warm-ups are also important before speaking. Just as athletes warm up before practice or competition and musicians warm up before playing, speakers need to get their voices ready to speak. Talking with others before your speech or quietly humming to yourself can get your voice ready for your presentation. You can even sing or practice a bit of your speech out loud while you're in the shower (just don't wake the neighbors), where the warm, moist air is beneficial for your vocal mechanism. Gently yawning a few times is also an excellent way to stretch the key muscle groups involved in speaking.

Immediately before you speak, you can relax the muscles of your neck and shoulders, rolling your head gently from side to side. Allow your arms to hang down your sides and stretch out your shoulders. **Isometric exercises** that involve momentarily tensing and then relaxing specific muscle groups are an effective way to keep your muscles from becoming stiff.

Focus on the Audience, Not on Yourself

During your speech, make a point of establishing direct eye contact with your audience members. By looking at individuals, you establish a series of one-to-one contacts similar to interpersonal communication. An audience becomes much less threatening when you think of them not as an anonymous mass but as a collection of individuals.

A colleague once shared his worst speaking experience when he reached the front of the room and forgot everything he was supposed to say. When I asked what he saw when he was in the front of the room, he looked at me like I was crazy. He responded, “I didn’t see anything. All I remember is a mental image of me up there in the front of the room blowing it.” Speaking anxiety becomes more intense if you focus on yourself rather than concentrating on your audience and your material.

Maintain Your Sense of Humor

No matter how well we plan, unexpected things happen. That fact is what makes the public speaking situation so interesting. When the unexpected happens to you, do not let it rattle you. At the end of a class period late in the afternoon of a long day, a student raised her hand and asked me if I knew that I was wearing two different colored shoes, one black and one blue. I looked down and saw that she was right; my shoes did not match. I laughed at myself, complimented the student on her observational abilities and moved on with the important thing, the material I had to deliver.

Stress Management Techniques

Even when we employ positive thinking and are well prepared, some of us still feel a great deal of anxiety about public speaking. When that is the case, it can be more helpful to use stress management than to try to make the anxiety go away.

One general technique for managing stress is **positive visualization**. Visualization is the process of seeing something in your mind’s eye; essentially it is a form of self-hypnosis. Frequently used in sports training, positive visualization involves using the imagination to create images of relaxation or ultimate success. Essentially, you imagine in great detail the goal for which you are striving, say, a rousing round of applause after you give your speech. You mentally picture yourself standing at the front of the room, delivering your introduction, moving through the body of your speech, highlighting your presentation aids, and sharing a memorable conclusion. If you imagine a positive outcome, your body will respond to it as through it were real. Such mind-body techniques create the psychological grounds for us to achieve the goals we have imagined. As we discussed earlier, communication apprehension has a psychological basis, so mind-body techniques such as visualization can be important to reducing anxiety. It’s important to keep in mind, though, that visualization does not mean you can skip practicing your speech out loud. Just as an athlete still needs to work out and practice the sport, you need to practice your speech in order to achieve the positive results you visualize.

Systematic desensitization is a behavioral modification technique that helps individuals overcome anxiety disorders. People with phobias, or irrational fears, tend to avoid the object of their fear. For example, people with a phobia of elevators avoid riding in elevators—and this only adds to their fear because they never “learn” that riding in elevators is usually perfectly safe. Systematic desensitization changes this avoidance pattern by gradually exposing the individual to the object of fear until it can be tolerated.

First, the individual is trained in specific muscle relaxation techniques. Next, the individual learns to respond with conscious relaxation even when confronted with the situation that previously caused them fear. James McCroskey used this technique to treat students who suffered from severe, trait-based communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1972). He found that “the technique was eighty to ninety percent effective” for the people who received the training (McCroskey, 2001). If you’re highly anxious about public speaking, you might begin a program of systematic desensitization by watching someone else give a speech. Once you are able to do this without discomfort, you would then move to talking about giving a speech yourself, practicing, and, eventually, delivering your speech.

The success of techniques such as these clearly indicates that increased exposure to public speaking reduces overall anxiety. Consequently, you should seek out opportunities to speak in public rather than avoid them. As the famous political orator William Jennings Bryan once noted, “The ability to speak effectively is an acquirement rather than a gift” (Carnegie, 1955).

Key Takeaways

- There are many steps you can take during the speech preparation process to manage your communication apprehension, including thinking positively, analyzing your audience, clearly organizing your ideas, adapting your language to the oral mode, and practicing.
- You can employ a variety of techniques while you are speaking to reduce your apprehension, such as anticipating your body’s reactions, focusing on the audience, and maintaining your sense of humor.
- Stress management techniques, including cognitive restructuring and systematic desensitization, can also be helpful.

Exercises

1. Go to http://www.hypknowsis.com and practice a few of the simple beginning visualization exercises presented there.

2. Make a plan for managing your anxiety before and during your speech that includes specific techniques you want to try before your next public speaking assignment.

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2.5: Coping with the Unexpected

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common difficulties that may fluster even experienced speakers.
2. Describe some basic strategies for dealing with unexpected events during a public speech.

Even the most prepared, confident public speaker may encounter unexpected challenges during the speech. This section discusses some common unexpected events and addresses some general strategies for combating the unexpected when you encounter it in your own speaking.



Figure 2.5.1: Des Morris – I H8 PC – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Speech Content Issues

Nearly every experienced speaker has gotten to the middle of a presentation and realized that a key notecard is missing or that he or she skipped important information from the beginning of the speech. When encountering these difficulties, a good strategy is to pause for a moment to think through what you want to do next. Is it important to include the missing information, or can it be omitted without hurting the audience's ability to understand the rest of your speech? If it needs to be included, do you want to add the information now, or will it fit better later in the speech? It is often difficult to remain silent when you encounter this situation, but pausing for a few seconds will help you to figure out what to do and may be less distracting to the audience than sputtering through a few "ums" and "uhs."

Technical Difficulties

Technology has become a very useful aid in public speaking, allowing us to use audio or video clips, presentation software, or direct links to websites. However, one of the best known truisms about technology is that it does break down. Web servers go offline, files will not download in a timely manner, and media are incompatible with the computer in the presentation room. It is important to always have a backup plan, developed in advance, in case of technical difficulties with your presentation materials. As you develop your speech and visual aids, think through what you will do if you cannot show a particular graph or if your presentation slides are hopelessly garbled. Although your beautifully prepared chart may be superior to the oral description you can provide, your ability to provide a succinct oral description when technology fails can give your audience the information they need.

External Distractions

Although many public speaking instructors directly address audience etiquette during speeches, you're still likely to encounter an audience member who walks in late, a ringing cell phone, or even a car alarm going off outside your classroom. If you are distracted by external events like these, it is often useful, and sometimes necessary (as in the case of the loud car alarm), to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention and be heard.

Whatever the unexpected event, your most important job as a speaker is to maintain your composure. It is important not to get upset or angry because of these types of glitches—and, once again, the key to this is being fully prepared. If you keep your cool and quickly implement a “plan B” for moving forward with your speech, your audience is likely to be impressed and may listen even more attentively to the rest of your presentation.

Key Takeaways

1. Plan ahead for how to cope with unexpected difficulties such as forgetting part of your speech content, having technical trouble with visual aids, or being interrupted by external distractions.

Exercises

1. Talk to people who engage in public speaking regularly (e.g., teachers and professionals) and find out what unexpected events have happened when they were giving speeches. What did they do to deal with these unexpected happenings?
2. Fill out the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA24). The measure can be found at http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/prca24.htm.

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2.6: Chapter Exercises

Test Your Knowledge of Communication Apprehension

Table 3.1 Myths or Facts about Communication Apprehension

Instructions: For each of the following questions, check either "myth" or "fact."		Myth	Fact
1.	Audiences will be able to tell how nervous you feel.		
2.	Some stage fright might be a good thing, as you can channel it to make your delivery more energetic.		
3.	Most audiences are basically hostile, looking to see you make a fool of yourself.		
4.	Experienced speakers don't feel any stage fright.		
5.	Most speakers tend to relax as they progress through their speeches.		
6.	Moving around the front of the room during your speech will make you less nervous.		
7.	Most audiences would rather see a speaker do well.		
8.	Focusing on yourself rather than the audience is an effective way to reduce your stage fright.		
9.	The positive or negative label you ascribe to the public speaking situation will influence how nervous you feel.		
10.	Telling a joke in your introduction is guaranteed to get the audience on your side.		
Scoring: Myths: 1, 3, 4, 8, and 10; Facts: 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9			

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Audience Analysis

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.

3.1: Prelude to Audience Analysis
3.2: Why Conduct an Audience Analysis
3.3: Three Types of Audience Analysis
3.4: Conducting Audience Analysis
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3.1: Prelude to Audience Analysis

What Is an Audience Analysis?

One of the consequences of the First Amendment to the Constitution, which protects our right to speak freely, is that we focus so much on what we want to say that we often overlook the question of who our audience is. Does your audience care what you as a speaker think? Can they see how your speech applies to their lives and interests? 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.



Figure 3.1.1: Kim Davies – US Constitution – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

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.

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

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3.2: Why Conduct an Audience Analysis

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the value of acknowledging your audience.
2. Understand how to choose a worthwhile topic.
3. Explain how to adapt your speech to your audience's needs.
4. Explain the value of speaking with credibility.

Acknowledge the Audience

Picture yourself in front of the audience, about to deliver your speech. This is the moment when your relationship with your audience begins, and the quality of this relationship will influence how receptive they will be to your ideas, or at least how willing they'll be to listen to what you have to say. One of the best ways to initiate this relationship is by finding a way to acknowledge your audience. This can be as simple as establishing eye contact and thanking them for coming to hear your presentation. If they've braved bad weather, are missing a world-class sports event, or are putting up with an inconvenience such as a stuffy conference room, tell them how much you appreciate their presence in spite of the circumstances. This can go a long way toward getting them "on board" with your message.



Figure 3.2.1: Valerie Everett – Questions? – CC BY-SA 2.0.

For a political candidate who is traveling from town to town giving what may be perceived as the same campaign speech time and time again, a statement like "It's great to be here in Springfield, and I want to thank the West Valley League of Women Voters and our hosts, the Downtown Senior Center, for the opportunity to be with you today" lets the audience know that the candidate has at least taken the trouble to tailor the speech to the present audience. Stephanie Coopman and James Lull tell us that Microsoft chairman Bill Gates often adapts to his audiences by thanking them for their participation in the computer industry or for their preparation to participate in an electronic world. The authors say, "Even those brief acknowledgments let audience members know that Gates had prepared his speech with them in mind" (Coopman & Lull, 2009). We will cover audience acknowledgment further in Chapter 10.

Choose a Worthwhile Topic

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 behooves you to seek a topic that will be novel and interesting both for you and for your audience. It will also be important to do some credible research in order to ensure that 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.

Clarity

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 from 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.

Controversial Topics Are Important and Risky

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 trust the completeness or the accuracy of their beliefs about your topic.

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, experience, 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. 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 "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.

Consider 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 each other, we undermine our credibility when we create our message as though members of these cultures are carbon copies of each other.

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 opinion exists.

This is where the *frame of reference* we mentioned earlier 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.

Avoid Offending Your Audience

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. If you were an Anglo-American elected official addressing a Latino audience, would you make a joke about a Mexican American person's name sounding similar to the name of a popular brand of tequila? In fact, a state governor did just that in June 2011. Not suprisingly, news organizations covering the event reported that the joke fell flat (Shahid, 2011). People are members of groups they didn't choose and can't change. 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.

Ethical Speaking Is Sincere Speaking

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.

Key Takeaways

- Audience analysis should be conducted so you can acknowledge your audience and their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes.
- Audience analysis should guide your choice of a topic so that you select a topic that is relevant and useful to them. Controversial topics can be excellent topics, but be sure to consider your audience when selecting your topic and deciding how to approach it.
- Audience analysis requires that you adapt to the needs of your audience; this includes considering cultural diversity, making your message clear, avoiding offensive remarks, and speaking with sincerity.

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?

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3.3: Three Types of Audience Analysis

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how to gather and use demographic information.
2. Understand how to gather and use psychographic information.
3. Understand how to gather and use situational information.

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.



Figure 3.3.1: Thinkmedialabs – Audience – CC BY-NC 2.0.

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 how many students are male and female, their 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 to gather demographics, 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 cocultures 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 white 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 taking 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. We insist that you not assume that nurses are merely doctors "lite." Their skills, concerns, and responsibilities are almost entirely different, and both are crucially necessary to effective health care.

Psychographic Analysis

Whereas demographic characteristics describe the "facts" about the people in your audience and are focused on the external, psychographic characteristics explain the inner qualities. Although there are many ways to think about this topic, here the ones relevant to a speech will be explored: beliefs, attitudes, needs, and values.



Beliefs

Daryl Bem (1970) defined beliefs as "statements we hold to be true." Notice this definition does not say the beliefs are true, only that we hold them to be true and as such they determine how we respond to the world around us. Stereotypes are a kind of belief: we believe all the people in a certain group are "like that" or share a trait. Beliefs are not confined to the religious realm but touch

all aspects of our experience. Sports fans believe certain things about their favorite teams. Republicans and Democrats believe certain, usually different, principles about how the government should be run.

Beliefs, according to Bem, come essentially from our experience and from sources we trust.For example, a person may believe everyone should take public speaking because in their own experience the course helped them be successful in college and a career. Another person may believe that corporal punishment is good for children because their own parents–whom they love and trust–spanked them after their misbehavior.

Therefore, beliefs are hard to change—not impossible, just difficult. Beliefs are harder to change based on their level of each of these characteristics of belief:

- stability—the longer we hold them, the more stable or entrenched they are;
- centrality—they are in the middle of our identity, self-concept, or "who we are";
- saliency—we think about them a great deal; and
- strength—we have a great deal of intellectual or experiential support for the belief or we engage in activities that strengthen the beliefs.

Beliefs can have varying levels of stability, centrality, salience, and strength. An educator's beliefs about the educational process and importance of education would be strong (support from everyday experience and reading sources of information), central (how he makes his living and defines his work), salient (he spends every day thinking about it), and stable (especially if he has been an educator a long time). Beliefs can be changed, and we will examine how in Chapter 13 under persuasion, but it is not a quick process.

Attitudes

The next psychographic characteristic, attitude, is sometimes a direct effect of belief. Attitude is defined as a stable positive or negative response to a person, idea, object, or policy (Bem 1970). More specifically, Myers (2012) defines it as "a favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction toward someone or something, exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings, or intended behavior" (p. 36). How do you respond when you hear the name of a certain singer, movie star, political leader, sports team, or law in your state? Your response will be either positive or negative, or maybe neutral if you are not familiar with the object of the attitude. Where did that attitude come from? Psychologists and communication scholars study attitude formation and change probably as much as any other subject, and have found that attitude comes from experiences, peer groups, beliefs, rewards, and punishments.

Do not confuse attitude with "mood." Attitudes are stable; if you respond negatively to Brussels sprouts today, you probably will a week from now. That does not mean they are unchangeable, only that, like beliefs, they change slowly and in response to certain experiences, information, or strategies. As with beliefs, we will examine how to change attitudes in the chapter on persuasion. Changing attitudes is a primary task of public speakers because attitudes are the most determining factor in what people actually do. In other words, attitudes lead to actions, and interestingly, actions leads to and strengthen attitudes. Think back to the TedTalk video by Dr. Amy Cuddy that you watched in Chapter 1. She explains that acting powerful and confident can strengthen your attitude of confidence.

We may hold a belief that regular daily exercise is a healthy activity, but that does not mean we will have a positive attitude toward it. There may be other attitudes that compete with the belief, such as "I do not like to sweat," or "I don't like exercising alone." Also, we may not act upon a belief because we do not feel there is a direct, immediate benefit from it or we may not believe we have time right now in college. If we have a positive attitude toward exercise, we will more likely engage in it than if we only believe it is generally healthy

Values

As you can see, attitude and belief are somewhat complex "constructs," but fortunately the next two are more straightforward. (A construct is "a tool used in psychology to facilitate understanding of human behavior; a label for a cluster of related but co-varying behaviors" [Rogelberg, 2007].) Values are goals we strive for and what we consider important and desirable. However, values are not just basic wants. A person may want a vintage sports car from the 1960s, and may value it because of the amount of money it costs, but the vintage sports car is not a value; it represents a value of either

- nostalgia (the person's parents owned one in the 1960s and it reminds him of good times),
- display (the person wants to show it off and get "oohs" and "ahs"),
- materialism (the person believes the adage that the one who dies with the most toys wins),

- aesthetics and beauty (the person admires the look of the car and enjoys maintaining the sleek appearance),
- prestige (the person has earned enough money to enjoy and show off this kind of vehicle), or
- physical pleasure (the driver likes the feel of driving a sports car on the open road).

Therefore we can engage in the same behavior but for different values; one person may participate in a river cleanup because she values the future of the planet; another may value the appearance of the community in which she lives; another just because friends are involved and she values relationships. A few years ago political pundits coined the term "values voters," usually referring to social conservatives, but this is a misnomer because almost everyone votes and otherwise acts upon their values—what is important to the individual.

Needs

The fourth psychographic characteristic is needs, which are important deficiencies that we are motivated to fulfill. You may already be familiar with the well-known diagram known as Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). It is commonly discussed in the fields of management, psychology, and health professions. A version of it is shown in Figure 2.1. Some recent versions show it with 8 levels.) It is one way to think about needs. In trying to understand human motivation, Maslow theorized that as our needs represented at the base of the pyramid are fulfilled, we move up the hierarchy to fulfill other types of need (McLeod, 2014).

According to Maslow's theory, our most basic physiological or survival needs must be met before we move to the second level, which is safety and security. When our needs for safety and security are met, we move up to relationship or connection needs, often called "love and belongingness." The fourth level up is esteem needs, which could be thought of as achievement, accomplishment, or self-confidence. The highest level, self-actualization, is achieved by those who are satisfied and secure enough in the lower four that they can make sacrifices for others. Self-actualized persons are usually thought of as altruistic or charitable. Maslow also believed that studying motivation was best done by understanding psychologically healthy individuals, and he also used child development to construct his model. (Maslow is not without his critics; see Neher, 1991).

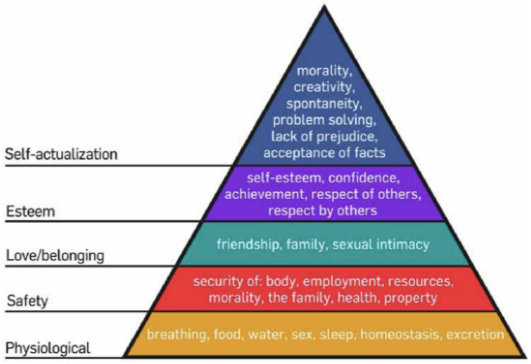


Figure 2.1 - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In another course you might go into more depth about Maslow's philosophy and theory, but the key point to remember here is that your audience members are experiencing both "felt" and "real" needs. They may not even be aware of their needs. In a persuasive speech one of your tasks is to show the audience that needs exist that they might not know about. For example, gasoline sold in most of the U.S. has ethanol, a plant-based product, added to it, usually about 10%. Is this beneficial or detrimental for the planet, the engine of the car, or consumers' wallets? Your audience may not even be aware of the ethanol, its benefits, and the problems it can cause.

A "felt" need is another way to think about strong "wants" that the person believes will fulfill or satisfy them even if the item is not necessary for survival. For example, one humorous depiction of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (seen on Facebook) has the words "wifi" scribbled at the bottom of the pyramid. Another meme has "coffee" scribbled at the bottom of the hierarchy. As great as wifi and coffee are, they are not crucial to human survival, either individually or collectively, but we do want them so strongly that they operate like needs.

So, how do these psychographic characteristics operate in preparing a speech? They are most applicable to a persuasive speech, but they do apply to other types of speeches as well. What are your audience's informational needs? What beliefs or attitudes do they have that could influence your choice of topic, sources, or examples? How can you make them interested in the speech by appealing to their values? The classroom speeches you give will allow you a place to practice audience analysis based on

demographic and psychographic characteristics, and that practice will aid you in future presentations in the work place and community.

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Preexisting Notions about Your Topic

Many things 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 from 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 in 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 condomium 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 opporutunity 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.

Key Takeaways

- Demographic audience analysis focuses on group memberships of audience members.
- Another element of audience is psychographic information, which focuses on audience attitudes, beliefs, and values.
- Situational analysis of the occasion, physical setting, and other factors are also critical to effective audience analysis.

Exercises

1. List the voluntary (political party, campus organization, etc.) and involuntary (age, race, sex, etc.) groups to which you belong. After each group, write a sentence or phrase about how that group influences your experience as a student.
2. Visit www.claritas.com/MyBestSegments/Default.jsp and homes.point2.com and report on the demographic information found for several different towns or zip codes. How would this information be useful in preparing an audience analysis?
3. In a short paragraph, define the term "fairness." Compare your definition with someone else's definition. What factors do you think contributed to differences in definition?
4. With a partner, identify an instance when you observed a speaker give a poor speech due to failing to analyze the situation. What steps could the speaker have taken to more effectively analyze the situation?

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3.4: Conducting Audience Analysis

Learning Objectives

1. Learn several tools for gathering audience information.
2. Create effective tools for gathering audience information.

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?



Figure 3.4.1: Penn State – MLK speaking to a crowd at Rec Hall – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

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 Survey Monkey 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.

Using 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 an 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 (www.claritas.com/MyBestSegments/Default.jsp?ID=20&SubID=&pageName=ZIP%2BCode%2BLook-up), Sperling’s Best Places (www.bestplaces.net), and Point2Homes (homes.point2.com). Sales and marketing professionals use this data, and you may find it useful for your audience analysis as well.

Key Takeaways

- Several options exist for learning about your audience, including direct observation, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and using existing research about your audience.
- In order to create effective tools for audience analysis, interview and survey questions must be clear and to the point, focus groups must be facilitated carefully, and you must be aware of multiple interpretations of direct observations or existing research about your audience.

Exercises

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.

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3.5: Using Your Audience Analysis

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how you can use your audience analysis when you prepare a speech.
2. Recognize how your audience analysis can help you alter your speech while speaking.

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."



Figure 3.5.1: Michigan Municipal League – Michigan Freedom of Information Act – CC BY-ND 2.0.

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 a 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 naysayers 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 sure 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.

Adjusting Your Speech Based on Your Analysis

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 that 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. We will discuss the physical setting further in Chapter 14.

Key Takeaways

- You can use your audience analysis to provide you further information about what types of content would be appropriate and meaningful for your specific audience.
- You can use your audience analysis to help you make adjustments to your speech in terms of both how you present the speech within a given environment and also how you adapt your content and delivery based on audience feedback during the 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?

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3.6: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

You've got to be kidding me, Fatima thought to herself as she received the e-mail from her boss. She reread the e-mail hoping that something would change on the screen: "Fatima, I need you to prepare a presentation on what our company has done in the past year for Mrs. Jorgensen. She's old, keep it simple. Leave out any of the complex material because it will probably just bore her anyways.—John."

Fatima joined R & R Consulting right after Anthony Jorgensen, the founder and CEO, had passed away. While Penelope Jorgensen inherited the major stake in the firm and was still listed as the firm's CEO, the day-to-day running of operations was given to John Preston, the chief operating officer.

Fatima stared at her screen and wondered to what extent she should follow John's advice and "keep it simple." She'd only met Mrs. Jorgensen twice, but she'd always seemed to be pretty knowledgeable about the inner workings of the firm. Sure Mrs. Jorgensen wasn't an expert in the field, but should she be treated like a helpless little old lady? *Not only is that sexist, it's completely ageist! On the other hand, John's words may have been chosen poorly, but maybe all Mrs. Jorgensen really wanted was a quick snapshot of what's going on here*?

Fatima sat in silence for a few minutes, opened up PowerPoint, and just stared at her monitor trying to figure out the best way to proceed.

1. Do you think John's e-mail to Fatima expressed unethical audience analysis? Why or why not?
2. How do you think Fatima should proceed?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. George wants to persuade his audience to purchase more locally produced foods. He decides he needs to know how his audience members already feel about this topic and whether they know about locally produced options. George's audience analysis focuses on gathering
   a. demographic information
   b. psychographic information
   c. situational information
   d. statistical information
   e. religious information
2. Freya wants to give her classroom an informative speech on the dangers of drunk driving. You suggest that this might not be a good topic because the audience of college students probably
   a. will not understand the topic
   b. will not be interested in drinking
   c. are not culturally diverse
   d. do not believe in drinking because of their religious background
   e. already know a lot about the topic
3. Yukhi will be giving a speech at the local Elks Lodge in a few weeks and wants to know more about her audience. She decides to attend one of the group's meetings so she gets a sense of what the group does and who its members are. Yukhi is engaging in which method of audience analysis?
   a. interviews
   b. focus group
   c. survey
   d. experiment
   e. direct observation

Answer Key

1. b
2. e
3. e

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Listening

4.1: Prelude to the Importance of Listening
4.2: Listening vs. Hearing
4.3: Listening Styles
4.4: Why Listening Is Difficult
4.5: Stages of Listening
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4.1: Prelude to the 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. More recently, *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).



Figure 4.1.1: Zach Graves – The Importance of Listening – CC BY-SA 2.0.

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. College students spend more than half of their daily communication listening (Emanuel et. a., 2008). 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.

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4.2: Listening vs. Hearing

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the differences between listening and hearing.
2. Explain the benefits of listening.



Figure 4.2.1: Kimba Howard – megaphone – CC BY 2.0.

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.



Figure 4.2.1: Hearing vs. Listening

Listening, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. **Listening** is active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker. We do not always listen at our best, however, and 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, we gain information and entertainment through reading and electronic recordings rather than through real-time listening. If we become distracted and let our attention wander, we can go back and replay a recording. Despite that fact, we can still gain at least four compelling benefits by becoming more active and competent at real-time listening.

Become a Better Student

When we focus on the material presented in a classroom, we will be able to identify not only the words used in a lecture but their emphasis and their more complex meanings. We will take better notes, and 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.

Become a Better Friend

When we give our best attention to people expressing thoughts and experiences that are important to them, those individuals are likely to see us as someone who cares about their well-being. This fact is especially true when we give our attention only and refrain from interjecting opinions, judgments, and advice.

Others Will View Thoughtful Listener as Intelligent & Perceptive

When we listen well to others, we reveal ourselves as being curious and interested in people and events. In addition, our ability to understand the meanings of what we hear will make us more knowledgeable and thoughtful people.

Good Listening Can Help Public Speaking

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

Key Takeaways

- Hearing is the physiological process of attending to sound within one's environment; listening, however, is a focused, concentrated approach to understanding the message a source is sending.
- Learning how to be an effective listener has numerous advantages. First, effective listening can help us become better students. Second, effective listening can help us become more effective in our interpersonal relationships. Third, effective listening can lead others to perceive us as more intelligent. Lastly, effective listening can help us become a stronger public speaker.

Exercise

1. With a partner, discuss how you find out when you haven't been listening carefully. What are some of the consequences of poor listening?

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4.3: Listening Styles

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the nature of listening styles.
2. Explain the people listening style.
3. Explain the action listening style.
4. Explain the content listening style.
5. Explain the time listening style.



Figure 4.3.1: John Benson – Listening Styles – CC BY 2.0.

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, over 2,000 years ago, 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 diverse. Think about the classroom audience that will listen to our speeches in this course. Our classmates come from many different religious, ethnic, ability, and socio-economic backgrounds. Some of them may speak English as a second language. Some might be survivors of war-torn parts of the world such as Afghanistan, Yemen, or Ethiopia. Being mindful of such differences will help us prepare a speech in which we 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. While there are several different approaches to understanding listening styles and preferences, the following four listening styles are utilized most often across disciplines:

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 an audience member (receiver) is a people-oriented listener, she, he, or they might have certain expectations about questions that will be answered, such as: 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. People-oriented listeners 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 hopes to accomplish through the message. 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, her, or their 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 we are passengers 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, her, or their 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 we give speeches, many members of our classroom audience will be content-oriented listeners who will be interested in learning from us. We therefore have an obligation to represent the truth as accurately as possible. We can emphasize an idea, but if we exaggerate, we could lose credibility in the minds of our content-oriented audience members. We can advocate ideas that are important to us, but if we omit important limitations, we are withholding part of the truth and could leave our audience with an inaccurate view.

Imagine delivering a speech on the plight of orphans in Syria. If we just talk about the fact that there are over forty-five million orphaned Syrians, but don't explain why, we will sound like an infomercial. In such an instance, our audience's response is likely to be less enthusiastic than we 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 asked to speak to a group of middle-school students, the speaker needs 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.

Let's consider a professional situation, some audience members will have real time constraints, not merely perceived ones. Imagine being 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 the speech is long and filled with overly detailed information, time-oriented listeners will simply start to tune the speaker out. Obviously, if time-oriented listeners start tuning out, they will not be listening to the 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.

Key Takeaways

- A listening style is a general manner in which an individual attends to the messages of another person.
- People-oriented listeners pay attention to the personal details of a speaker and not to the speaker's actual message.
- Action-oriented listeners pay attention to the physical actions a speaker wants the listener to engage in.
- Content-oriented listeners pay attention to the meaning and credibility of a speaker's message.
- Time-oriented listeners pay attention to messages that are short and concise as a result of limited attention spans or limited time commitments.

Exercises

1. In a small group, discuss what each person's usual listening style is. Under what circumstances might you practice a different listening style?
2. Make a list of benefits and drawbacks to each of the listening styles discussed in this section.
3. As you prepare for your next speech, identify ways that you can adapt your message to each of the listening styles noted in this section.

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4.4: Why Listening Is Difficult

Learning Objectives

- Understand the types of noise that can affect a listener's ability to attend to a message.
- Explain 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.

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.

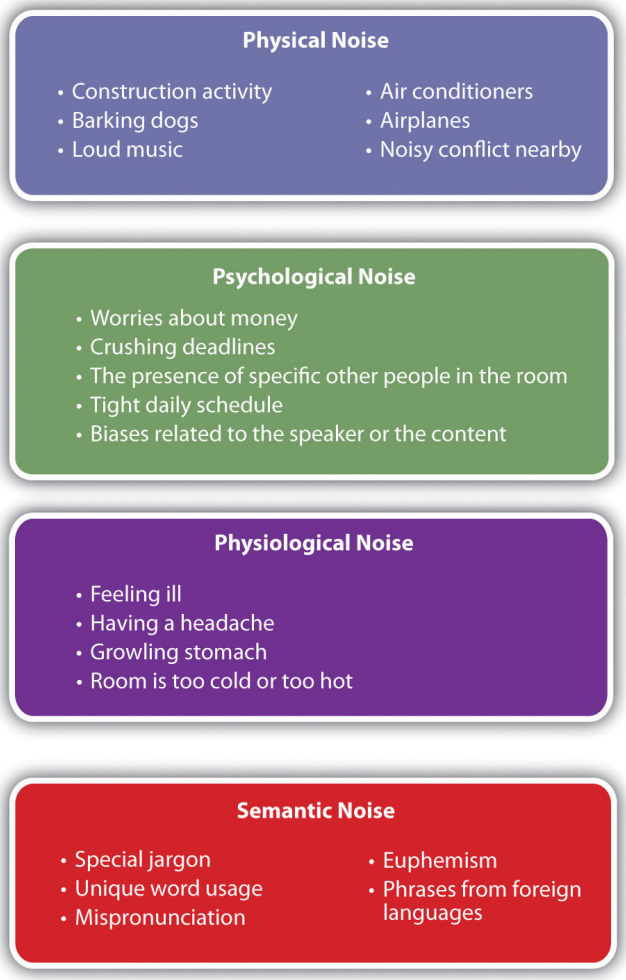


Figure 4.4.2: Figure 4.2 Types of Noise

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

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).

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.

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 there is annoying classmate, or maybe we 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. If the speech topic is one we've heard a thousand times, then we might tune out. Or maybe the speaker is presenting a topic or position we 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 we might be unable to understand the message or process the information correctly or be able to adapt our thinking to include the new information coherently (Wheeless, 1975). In some situations, we might worry that the information presented will be "over our heads"—too complex, technical, or advanced for us 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, we can reduce listener apprehension by defining terms clearly and using simple visual aids to hold the audience's attention. We don't want to underestimate or overestimate our audience's knowledge on a subject, so good audience analysis is always important. For example, if we know our audience doesn't have special knowledge on a given topic, we 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 we are listening to a speech about chemistry and the speaker begins talking about "colligative properties." We may start questioning whether we are 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, we 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. We could also give an example that they might readily understand, such as saying that it doesn't matter what kind of salt to use in the winter to melt ice on a driveway, what is important is how much salt to use.

Key Takeaways

- Listeners are often unable to accurately attend to messages because of four types of noise. Physical noise is caused by the physical setting a listener is in. Psychological noise exists within a listener's own mind and prevents him or her from attending to a speaker's message. Physiological noise exists because a listener's body is feeling some sensation that prevents him or her

from attending to a speaker's message. Semantic noise is caused by a listener's confusion over the meanings of words used by a speaker.

- All audiences have a limited attention span. As a speaker, we must realize how long we can reasonably expect an audience to listen to our messages.
- Listeners must be aware of the biases they have for speakers and the topics speakers choose. Biases can often prevent a listener from accurately and competently listening to a speaker's actual message.
- Receiver apprehension is the fear that a listener might be unable to understand the message, process the information correctly, or adapt thinking to include new information coherently. Speakers need to make sure their messages are appropriate to the audience's knowledge level and clearly define and explain all terms that could lead to increased anxiety.

Exercises

1. In a group, discuss what distracts you most from listening attentively to a speaker. Have you found ways to filter out or manage the distraction?
2. This chapter refers to psychological noise as one of the distractions you might experience. Identify strategies you have successfully used to minimize the impact of the specific psychological noises you have experienced.
3. Make a list of biases you might have as a listener. You can think about how you'd answer such questions as, With whom would I refuse to be seen socially or in public? Who would I reject as a trustworthy person to help if I were in danger? What topics do I refuse to discuss? The answers to these questions might provide useful insights into your biases as a listener.

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4.5: Stages of Listening

Learning Objectives

- Explain the receiving stage of listening.
- Explain the understanding stage of listening.
- Explain the remembering stage of listening.
- Explain the evaluating stage of listening.
- Explain the responding stage of listening.
- Understand the two types of feedback listeners give to speakers.

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 (2000) has divided the listening process into five stages: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding.

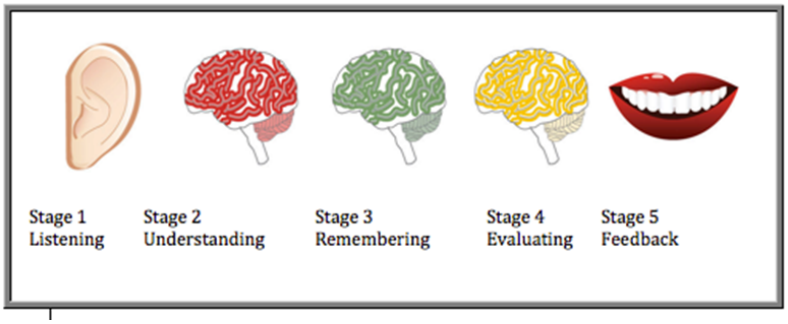


Figure 4.5.1: Stages of Feedback

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 Feedback" 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 was 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 we must hear the message before we 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 Feedback" 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 the professor advises students to get an "early start" on your speech, he, she, or they probably hopes students will begin research right away and move on to developing a thesis statement and outlining the speech as soon as possible. However, students 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 we can't remember something that was said, we might not have been listening effectively. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) 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. However, even when we 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 our attention even for a moment, we could miss out on information that explains other new concepts we hear when we begin to listen fully again.

It's also important to know that we can improve our memory of a message by processing it meaningfully—that is, by applying it in ways that are meaningful to our own lives (Gluck, et al., 2008). Instead of simply repeating a new acquaintance's name over and over, for example, we might remember it by associating it with something in our own lives. For example, "Emily," we might say, "reminds me of the Emily we knew in middle school," or "Mr. Impiari's name reminds us of the Prius our friend 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 listening to a speech given by someone from another country and this person has an accent that is hard to understand. We 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 we mistrust a speaker because of an accent, we 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 we indicate our involvement. Almost anything we do at this stage can be interpreted as feedback. For example, students are giving positive feedback to their instructors if at the end of class they stay behind to finish a sentence in their 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 Feedback" that this stage is represented by the lips because we often give feedback in the form of verbal feedback; however, we can just as easily respond nonverbally.

Formative Feedback

Not all response occurs 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 we attend a political rally, a presentation given by a speaker we admire, or even a class, there are verbal and nonverbal ways of indicating our appreciation for or our disagreement with the

messages or the speakers at the end of the message. Maybe we stand up and applaud a speaker we agreed with or just sit staring in silence after listening to a speaker we didn't like. In other cases, a speaker may be attempting to persuade us to donate to a charity, so if the speaker passes a bucket and we make a donation, we 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 our feedback is limited to something like, "I just love your voice," we might be indicating that we did not listen carefully to the content of the message.

There is little doubt that by now, listening is complex and there is great potential for errors. By becoming aware of what is involved with active listening and where difficulties might lie, we can prepare ourselves both as listeners and as speakers to minimize listening errors with our own public speeches.

Key Takeaways

- The receiving stage of listening is the basic stage where an individual hears a message being sent by a speaker.
- The understanding stage of listening occurs when a receiver of a message attempts to figure out the meaning of the message.
- The remembering stage of listening is when a listener either places information into long-term memory or forgets the information presented.
- The evaluating stage of listening occurs when a listener judges the content of the message or the character of the speaker.
- The responding stage of listening occurs when a listener provides verbal or nonverbal feedback about the speaker or message.
- During the responding stage of listening, listeners can provide speakers with two types of feedback designed to help a speaker know whether a listener is understanding and what the listener thinks of a message. Formative feedback is given while the speaker is engaged in the act of speech making. Summative feedback is given at the conclusion of a speech.

Exercises

1. Make a list of some of the abstract words you have misunderstood. What were the consequences of the misunderstanding?
2. Reflect on your listening in class or in other settings where remembering information is important. What keeps you from remembering important information accurately?
3. Give an example of a time when you felt that your message was misunderstood or treated with shallow attention. How did you know your message had been misunderstood or rejected? What does this mean you must do as a student of public speaking?

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4.6: Listening Critically

Learning Objectives

1. Define and explain critical listening and its importance in the public speaking context.
2. Understand six distinct ways to improve ability to critically listen to speeches.
3. Evaluate what it means to be an ethical listener.

Students are exposed to many kinds of messages: messages conveying academic information, institutional rules, instructions, and warnings. Students also receive messages through political discourse, advertisements, gossip, jokes, song lyrics, text messages, invitations, web links, and all other manner of communication. 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.



Figure 4.6.1: Amanda Mills, USCDCP – Good Listener – CCO

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 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 & 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, and throughout the world, COVID became highly politicized, and the politicization was fueled by difficulty in sorting through opinions and facts. A clash of fact versus opinion happened multiple times at the beginning of the Pandemic and continued throughout the Pandemic. On Monday, July 6th,2020 former President Donald Trump stated, "We now have the lowest fatality (mortality) rate in the world." However, this was false information. "At the time, it had the world's ninth-worst mortality rate, with 41.33 deaths per 100,000 people, according to Johns Hopkins University" (Paz, 2020, para. 10).

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, we may find ourselves being asked to assume something is a fact when in reality many people question that fact. For example, suppose we are 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. We may think to ourselves, though, what about genetics? By listening critically, we will be more likely to notice unwarranted assumptions in a speech, which may prompt questions to the speaker or to do further research to examine the validity of the speaker's assumptions. If, however, we sit passively by and let the speaker's assumptions go unchallenged, we may find ourselves persuaded by information that is not factual.

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

Table 4.6.1: Facts vs. Assumptions

Facts	Assumptions
Facts are verified by clear, unambiguous evidence.	Assumptions are not supported by evidence.
Most facts can be tested.	Assumptions about the future cannot be tested in the present.

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, something we have seen during the Pandemic.

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 & Common Sense

If we are listening to a speech and **common sense** tells us that the message is illogical, we might be right. However, we should be thinking about whether the speech seems credible and coherent. In this way, our use of common sense can act as a warning system.

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 a message is inconsistent with things already known to be true, if the argument is illogical, or if the language is exaggerated, investigate the issues before accepting or rejecting the message. Often, we are unable to take this step during the presentation of the message; it may take longer to collect enough knowledge to determine whether or not a message was true.

As speakers, we 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 a 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 caused 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.

It is important not to assume that our audience shares the beliefs that are, for us, common sense, as common sense is often created in community and often bound by cultural beliefs. Likewise, if the message of a speech is complex or controversial, consider the needs of the audience and 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 we can do to understand a message is to relate new ideas to previously held ideas. Imagine giving a speech about biological systems and using the term "homeostasis," which refers to the ability of an organism to maintain stability by making constant adjustments. To help the audience understand homeostasis, we could show how homeostasis is similar to adjustments made by the thermostats that keep our homes at a more or less even temperature. If we set our thermostats for seventy degrees and it gets hotter, the central cooling will kick in and cool our houses down. If our houses gets below seventy degrees, our heater will kick in and heat our houses up. Notice that in both cases our thermostats are 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 listeners and will likely help them both understand and remember the idea, as it links to something they have already experienced.

Making effective comparisons while listening can deepen the understanding of a message. Providing those comparisons for listeners makes it easier for them to give consideration to the new ideas.

Take Notes

Note-taking is a skill that improves with practice. As we already know, it nearly impossible to write down everything a speaker says. In fact, in our attempt to record everything, we might fall behind and wish we had divided our 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 we might concentrate on the notes, we could inadvertently leave out an important word, such as *not*, and undermine the reliability of our otherwise carefully written notes. Instead, if we give the same care and attention to listening, we 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 we try to write down only key phrases instead of full sentences, we might find that we 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 critical listening skills, continue developing an ability to identify the central issues in messages so that notes 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.



Figure 4.6.1: Ben Smith – String telephone – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Scholars Stephanie Coopman and James Lull (2008) emphasize the creation of a climate of caring and mutual understanding, observing that "respecting others' perspectives is one hallmark of the effective listener" (p. 60). Respect, or unconditional positive regard for others, means that you treat others with consideration and decency whether we agree with them or not. Professors Sprague, Stuart, and Bodary (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), 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 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 each other'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.

Key Takeaways

- Critical listening is the process a listener goes through using careful, systematic thinking and reasoning to see whether a speaker's message makes sense in light of factual evidence. When listeners are not critical of the messages they are attending to, they are more likely to be persuaded by illogical arguments based on opinions and not facts.
- Critical listening can be improved by employing one or more strategies to help the listener analyze the message: recognize the difference between facts and opinions, uncover assumptions given by the speaker, be open to new ideas, use both reason and common sense when analyzing messages, relate new ideas to old ones, and take useful notes.
- Being an ethical listener means giving respectful attention to the ideas of a speaker, even though you may not agree with or accept those ideas.

Exercises

1. Think of a time when you were too tired or distracted to give your full attention to the ideas in a speech. What did you do? What should you have done?
2. Give an example of a mistake in reasoning that involved the speaker mistaking an assumption for fact.

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4.7: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Imagine that you're in the audience when the main speaker proposes an action that is so offensive to you that you earnestly want to stand up and walk right out of the room. You are sitting near the end of a row, so it would be possible to do so. You notice that other people are listening intently. You hope others will not assume that by your presence, you show that you agree. What is the most ethical choice?

1. Continue listening to be sure your understanding is accurate and to see whether the speaker explains the point of view in a way that makes it more acceptable.
2. Interrupt the speaker so other listeners won't be "taken in" by the message.
3. Walk out as a symbolic gesture of disagreement.

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. The difference between hearing and listening is
    a. very small; the two processes amount to about the same thing
    b. hearing is mindful and intentional, but listening is effortless
    c. hearing is effortless, but listening is mindful and intentional
    d. hearing requires strong motivation and attention, but listening is an automatic human response to speech
    e. hearing depends on listening, but listening does not depend on hearing
2. Although you are a strong advocate of First Amendment rights, especially the protection of religious freedom, you find an exception to your beliefs when a speaker defends the rights of separatist religious sects to practice polygamy. Which of these responses is most ethical?
    a. Wait until the end of the presentation, then stand up and insist that the speaker listen to your rebuttal, just as you have listened to him or her.
    b. Seek a way to infiltrate the sect in order to investigate the truth of what's really going on.
    c. Go home to look up passages in the Bible that either support or refute the speakers claims, then write an anonymous letter to a newspaper opinion page.
    d. Sit quietly and listen to the speech to decide whether the message contains elements of value or whether to leave your original opinion unmodified.
    e. Have a sense of humor; lighten the mood with a little laughter.
3. Which of the following statements is best?
    a. A fact is carefully reasoned.
    b. A fact is verifiable by authoritative evidence.
    c. A carefully considered opinion is as good as factual evidence.
    d. Assumptions are always wrong.
    e. Opinions, even expert opinions, never belong in human discourse.
4. What is critical listening?
    a. negative judgments listeners develop during a speech
    b. the practice of detecting flaws in a speech
    c. a listener's use of his or her opinions in order to mentally refute factual details in the speech
    d. the rejection of a message
    e. careful scrutiny of the ideas and logical elements of a speech
5. Listening to a speech with an open mind means
    a. accepting the claims and conclusions of the speech
    b. listening in order to learn
    c. listening in order to quote the speaker later
    d. replacing your outdated knowledge with the newer information in the speech
    e. you must allow the speaker his or her First Amendment rights

Answer Key

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. e
5. b

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Finding a Purpose and Selecting a Topic

Finding a speech's purpose and topic isn't as complex or difficult as you might believe. This may be hard to accept right now, but trust us. After you read this chapter, you'll understand how to go about finding interesting topics for a variety of different types of speeches. In this chapter, we are going to explain how to identify the general purpose of a speech. We will also discuss how to select a topic, what to do if you're just drawing a blank, and four basic questions you should ask yourself about the speech topic you ultimately select. Finally, we will explain how to use your general purpose and your chosen topic to develop the specific purpose of your speech.

5.1: Prelude to Finding a Purpose and Selecting a Topic
5.2: General Purposes of Speaking
5.3: Selecting a Topic
5.4: What If You Draw a Blank?
5.5: Specific Purposes
5.6: Conclusion
5.7: Chapter Exercises

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5.1: Prelude to Finding a Purpose and Selecting a Topic

Finding Your Purpose

In the 2004 Tony Award–winning musical *Avenue Q*, the lead character sings a song about finding his purpose in life: “I don’t know how I know / But I’m gonna find my purpose / I don’t know where I’m gonna look / But I’m gonna find my purpose.” Although the song is about life in general, the lyrics are also appropriate when thinking about the purpose of your speech. You may know that you have been assigned to deliver a speech, but finding a purpose and topic seems like a formidable task. You may be asking yourself questions like, “What if the topic I pick is too common?”; “What if no one is interested in my topic?”; “What if my topic is too huge to cover in a three- to five-minute speech?”; or many others.



Figure 5.1.1: Theatre Company – Avenue Q Puppets & Monsters – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Finding a speech’s purpose and topic isn’t as complex or difficult as you might believe. This may be hard to accept right now, but trust us. After you read this chapter, you’ll understand how to go about finding interesting topics for a variety of different types of speeches. In this chapter, we are going to explain how to identify the general purpose of a speech. We will also discuss how to select a topic, what to do if you’re just drawing a blank, and four basic questions you should ask yourself about the speech topic you ultimately select. Finally, we will explain how to use your general purpose and your chosen topic to develop the specific purpose of your speech.

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5.2: General Purposes of Speaking

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among the three types of general speech purposes.
2. Examine the basics of informative speech topics and some common forms of informative speeches.
3. Examine the basics of persuasive speech topics and some common forms of persuasive speeches.
4. Examine the basics of entertaining speech topics and some common forms of entertaining speeches.

What do you think of when you hear the word “purpose”? Technically speaking, a purpose can be defined as why something exists, how we use an object, or why we make something. For the purposes of public speaking, all three can be applicable. For example, when we talk about a speech’s purpose, we can question why a specific speech was given; we can question how we are supposed to use the information within a speech; and we can question why we are personally creating a speech. For this specific chapter, we are more interested in that last aspect of the definition of the word “purpose”: why we give speeches.



Figure 5.2.1: Jeffrey Beall – Search! – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Ever since scholars started writing about public speaking as a distinct phenomenon, there have been a range of different systems created to classify the types of speeches people may give. Aristotle talked about three speech purposes: deliberative (political speech), forensic (courtroom speech), and epideictic (speech of praise or blame). Cicero also talked about three purposes: judicial (courtroom speech), deliberative (political speech), and demonstrative (ceremonial speech—similar to Aristotle’s epideictic). A little more recently, St. Augustine of Hippo also wrote about three specific speech purposes: to teach (provide people with information), to delight (entertain people or show people false ideas), and to sway (persuade people to a religious ideology). All these systems of identifying public speeches have been attempts at helping people determine the general purpose of their speech. A **general purpose** refers to the broad goal in creating and delivering a speech.

These typologies or classification systems of public speeches serve to demonstrate that general speech purposes have remained pretty consistent throughout the history of public speaking. Modern public speaking scholars typically use a classification system of three general purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain.

To Inform

The first general purpose that some people have for giving speeches is to **inform**. Simply put, this is about helping audience members acquire information that they do not already possess. Audience members can then use this information to understand something (e.g., speech on a new technology, speech on a new virus) or to perform a new task or improve their skills (e.g., how to swing a golf club, how to assemble a layer cake). The most important characteristic of informative topics is that the goal is to gain knowledge. Notice that the goal is not to encourage people to use that knowledge in any specific way. When a speaker starts encouraging people to use knowledge in a specific way, he or she is no longer informing but is persuading.

Let’s look at a real example of how an individual can accidentally go from informing to persuading. Let’s say you are assigned to inform an audience about a new vaccination program. In an informative speech, the purpose of the speech is to explain to your audience what the program is and how it works. If, however, you start encouraging your audience to participate in the vaccination program, you are no longer informing them about the program but rather persuading them to become involved in the program. One of the most common mistakes new public speaking students make is to blur the line between informing and persuading.

Why We Share Knowledge

Knowledge sharing is the process of delivering information, skills, or expertise in some form to people who could benefit from it. In fact, understanding and exchanging knowledge is so important that an entire field of study, called *knowledge management*, has been created to help people (especially businesses) become more effective at harnessing and exchanging knowledge. In the professional world, sharing knowledge is becoming increasingly important. Every year, millions of people attend some kind of knowledge sharing conference or convention in hopes of learning new information or skills that will help them in their personal or professional lives (Atwood, 2009).

People are motivated to share their knowledge with other people for a variety of reasons (Hendriks, 1999). For some, the personal sense of achievement or of responsibility drives them to share their knowledge (internal motivational factors). Others are driven to share knowledge because of the desire for recognition or the possibility of job enhancement (external motivational factors). Knowledge sharing is an important part of every society, so learning how to deliver informative speeches is a valuable skill.

Common Types of Informative Topics

O'Hair, Stewart, and Rubenstein identified six general types of informative speech topics: objects, people, events, concepts, processes, and issues (O'Hair, et al., 2007). The first type of informative speech relates to objects, which can include how objects are designed, how they function, and what they mean. For example, a student of one of our coauthors gave a speech on the design of corsets, using a mannequin to demonstrate how corsets were placed on women and the amount of force necessary to lace one up.

The second type of informative speech focuses on people. People-based speeches tend to be biography-oriented. Such topics could include recounting an individual's achievements and explaining why he or she is important in history. Some speakers, who are famous themselves, will focus on their own lives and how various events shaped who they ultimately became. Dottie Walters is most noted as being the first female in the United States to run an advertising agency. In addition to her work in advertising, Dottie also spent a great deal of time as a professional speaker. She often would tell the story about her early years in advertising when she would push around a stroller with her daughter inside as she went from business to business trying to generate interest in her copywriting abilities. You don't have to be famous, however, to give a people-based speech. Instead, you could inform your audience about a historical or contemporary hero whose achievements are not widely known.

The third type of informative speech involves explaining the significance of specific events, either historical or contemporary. For example, you could deliver a speech on a specific battle of World War II or a specific presidential administration. If you're a history buff, event-oriented speeches may be right up your alley. There are countless historical events that many people aren't familiar with and would find interesting. You could also inform your audience about a more recent or contemporary event. Some examples include concerts, plays, and arts festivals; athletic competitions; and natural phenomena, such as storms, eclipses, and earthquakes. The point is to make sure that an informative speech is talking about the event (who, what, when, where, and why) and not attempting to persuade people to pass judgment upon the event or its effects.

The fourth type of informative speech involves concepts, or "abstract and difficult ideas or theories" (O'Hair, et al., 2007). For example, if you want to explain a specific communication theory, E. M. Griffin provides an excellent list of communication theories on his website, http://www.afirstlook.com/main.cfm/theory_list. Whether you want to discuss theories related to business, sociology, psychology, religion, politics, art, or any other major area of study, this type of speech can be very useful in helping people to understand complex ideas.

The fifth type of informative speech involves processes. The process speech can be divided into two unique types: how-it-functions and how-to-do. The first type of process speech helps audience members understand how a specific object or system works. For example, you could explain how a bill becomes a law in the United States. There is a very specific set of steps that a bill must go through before it becomes a law, so there is a very clear process that could be explained to an audience. The how-to-do speech, on the other hand, is designed to help people come to an end result of some kind. For example, you could give a speech on how to quilt, how to change a tire, how to write a résumé, and millions of other how-to oriented topics. In our experience, the how-to speech is probably the most commonly delivered informative speech in public speaking classes.

The final type of informative speech involves issues, or "problems or matters of dispute" (O'Hair, et al., 2007). This informative speech topic is probably the most difficult for novice public speakers because it requires walking a fine line between informing and persuading. If you attempt to deliver this type of speech, remember the goal is to be balanced when discussing both sides of the issue. To see an example of how you can take a very divisive topic and make it informative, check out the series

Point/Counterpoint published by Chelsea House (http://chelseahouse.infobasepublishing.com). This series of books covers everything from the pros and cons of blogging to whether the United States should have mandatory military service.

Sample: Jessy Ohl's Informative Speech

The following text represents an informative speech prepared and delivered by an undergraduate student named Jessy Ohl. While this speech is written out as a text for purposes of analysis, in your public speaking course, you will most likely be assigned to speak from an outline or notes, not a fully written script. As you read through this sample speech, notice how Ms. Ohl uses informative strategies to present the information without trying to persuade her audience.

> *In 1977, a young missionary named Daniel Everett traveled deep into the jungles of Brazil to spread the word of God. However, he soon found himself working to translate the language of a remote tribe that would ultimately change his faith, lead to a new profession, and pit him in an intellectual fistfight with the world-famous linguist Noam Chomsky. As New Scientist Magazine of January 2008 explains, Everett's research on a small group of 350 people called the Pirahã tribe has revealed a language that has experts and intellectuals deeply disturbed.*
>
> *While all languages are unique, experts like Noam Chomsky have argued that they all have universal similarities, such as counting, that are hard-wired into the human brain. So as National Public Radio reported on April 8, 2007, without the ability to count, conceptualize time or abstraction, or create syntax, the Pirahã have a language that by all accounts shouldn't exist.*
>
> *Daniel Everett is now a professor of linguistics at Illinois State University, and he has created controversy by calling for a complete reevaluation of all linguistic theory in light of the Pirahã. Exploration of the Pirahã could bring further insight into the understanding of how people communicate and even, perhaps, what it means to be human. Which is why we must: first, examine the unique culture of the Pirahã; second, explore what makes their language so surprising; and finally, discover the implications the Pirahã have for the way we look at language and humanity.*
>
> *Taking a closer look at the tribe's culture, we can identify two key components of Pirahã culture that help mold language: first, isolation; and second, emphasis on reality.*
>
> *First, while globalization has reached nearly every corner of the earth, it has not been able to penetrate the Pirahã natives in the slightest. As Dr. Everett told the New Yorker of April 16, 2007, no group in history has resisted change like the Pirahã. "They reject everything from outside their world" as unnecessary and silly. Distaste for all things foreign is the reason why the people have rejected technology, farming, religion, and even artwork.*
>
> *The lack of artwork illustrates the second vital part of Pirahã culture: an emphasis on reality. According to the India Statesman of May 22, 2006, all Pirahã understanding is based around the concept of personal experience. If something cannot be felt, touched, or experienced directly then to them, it doesn't exist, essentially eliminating the existence of abstract thought. Since art is often a representation of reality, it has no value among the people. During his work as a missionary, Everett was amazed to find that the natives had*

no interest in the story of Jesus once they found out that he was dead. The Pirahã psyche is so focused on the present that the people have no collective memory, history, written documents, or creation myths. They are unable to even remember the names of dead grandparents because once something or someone cannot be experienced, they are no longer important.

Since his days as a missionary, Everett remains the only Western professor able to translate Pirahã. His research has discovered many things missing with the language: words for time, direction, and color. But more importantly, Pirahã also lacks three characteristics previously thought to be essential to all languages: complexity, counting, and recursion.

First, the Pirahã language seems incredibly simple. Now, this isn't meant to imply that the people are uncivilized or stupid, but instead, they are minimalist. As I mentioned earlier, they only talk in terms of direct experience. The London Times of January 13, 2007, notes that with only eight consonants and three vowels, speakers rely on the use of tone, pitch, and humming to communicate. In fact, Pirahã almost sounds more like song than speech.

Second, Noam Chomsky's famous universal grammar theory includes the observation that every language has a means of counting. However, as reported in the June 2007 issue of Prospect Magazine, the Pirahã only have words for "one, two, and MANY." This demonstrates the Pirahã's inability to conceptualize a difference between three and five or three and a thousand. Dr. Everett spent six months attempting to teach even a single Pirahã person to count to ten, but his efforts were in vain, as tribal members considered the new numbers and attempts at math "childish."

Third, and the biggest surprise for researchers, is the Pirahã's apparent lack of recursion. Recursion is the ability to link several thoughts together. It is characterized in Christine Kenneally's 2007 book, The Search for the Origins of Language, as the fundamental principle of all language and the source of limitless expression. Pirahã is unique since the language does not have any conjunctions or linking words. Recursion is so vital for expression that the Chicago Tribune of June 11, 2007, reports that a language without recursion is like disproving gravity.

Although the Pirahã don't care what the outside world thinks of them, their language and world view has certainly ruffled feathers. And while civilization hasn't been able to infiltrate the Pirahã, it may ultimately be the Pirahã that teaches civilization a thing or two, which brings us to implications on the communicative, philosophical, and cultural levels. By examining the culture, language, and implications of the Pirahã tribe we are able to see how this small Brazilian village could shift the way that we think and talk about the world. Daniel Everett's research hasn't made him more popular with his colleagues. But his findings do show that more critical research is needed to make sure that our understanding of language is not lost in translation.

To Persuade

The second general purpose people can have for speaking is to **persuade**. When we speak to persuade, we attempt to get listeners to embrace a point of view or to adopt a behavior that they would not have done otherwise. A persuasive speech can be distinguished from an informative speech by the fact that it includes a call for action for the audience to make some change in their behavior or thinking.

Why We Persuade

The reasons behind persuasive speech fall into two main categories, which we will call "pure persuasion" and "manipulative persuasion." **Pure persuasion** occurs when a speaker urges listeners to engage in a specific behavior or change a point of view because the speaker truly believes that the change is in the best interest of the audience members. For example, you may decide to give a speech on the importance of practicing good oral hygiene because you truly believe that oral hygiene is important and that bad oral hygiene can lead to a range of physical, social, and psychological problems. In this case, the speaker has no ulterior or hidden motive (e.g., you are not a toothpaste salesperson).

Manipulative persuasion, on the other hand, occurs when a speaker urges listeners to engage in a specific behavior or change a point of view by misleading them, often to fulfill an ulterior motive beyond the face value of the persuasive attempt. We call this form of persuasion manipulative because the speaker is not being honest about the real purpose for attempting to persuade the audience. Ultimately, this form of persuasion is perceived as highly dishonest when audience members discover the ulterior motive. For example, suppose a physician who also owns a large amount of stock in a pharmaceutical company is asked to speak before a group of other physicians about a specific disease. Instead of informing the group about the disease, the doctor spends the bulk of his time attempting to persuade the audience that the drug his company manufactures is the best treatment for that specific disease.

Obviously, the key question for persuasion is the speaker's intent. Is the speaker attempting to persuade the audience because of a sincere belief in the benefits of a certain behavior or point of view? Or is the speaker using all possible means—including distorting the truth—to persuade the audience because he or she will derive personal benefits from their adopting a certain behavior or point of view? Unless your speech assignment specifically calls for a speech of manipulative persuasion, the usual (and ethical) understanding of a "persuasive speech" assignment is that you should use the pure form of persuasion.

Persuasion: Behavior versus Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

As we've mentioned in the preceding sections, persuasion can address behaviors—observable actions on the part of listeners—and it can also address intangible thought processes in the form of attitudes, values, and beliefs.

When the speaker attempts to persuade an audience to change behavior, we can often observe and even measure how successful the persuasion was. For example, after a speech attempting to persuade the audience to donate money to a charity, the charity can measure how many donations were received. The following is a short list of various behavior-oriented persuasive speeches we've seen in our own classes: washing one's hands frequently and using hand sanitizer, adapting one's driving habits to improve gas mileage, using open-source software, or drinking one soft drink or soda over another. In all these cases, the goal is to make a change in the basic behavior of audience members.

The second type of persuasive topic involves a change in attitudes, values, or beliefs. An **attitude** is defined as an individual's general predisposition toward something as being good or bad, right or wrong, negative or positive. If you believe that dress codes on college campuses are a good idea, you want to give a speech persuading others to adopt a positive attitude toward campus dress codes.

A speaker can also attempt to persuade listeners to change some value they hold. **Value** refers to an individual's perception of the usefulness, importance, or worth of something. We can value a college education, we can value technology, and we can value freedom. Values, as a general concept, are fairly ambiguous and tend to be very lofty ideas. Ultimately, what we value in life actually motivates us to engage in a range of behaviors. For example, if you value protecting the environment, you may recycle more of your trash than someone who does not hold this value. If you value family history and heritage, you may be more motivated to spend time with your older relatives and ask them about their early lives than someone who does not hold this value.

Lastly, a speaker can attempt to persuade people to change their personal beliefs. **Beliefs** are propositions or positions that an individual holds as true or false without positive knowledge or proof. Typically, beliefs are divided into two basic categories: core and dispositional. **Core beliefs** are beliefs that people have actively engaged in and created over the course of their lives (e.g., belief in a higher power, belief in extraterrestrial life forms). **Dispositional beliefs**, on the other hand, are beliefs that people have

not actively engaged in; they are judgments based on related subjects, which people make when they encounter a proposition. Imagine, for example, that you were asked the question, “Can gorillas speak English?” While you may never have met a gorilla or even seen one in person, you can make instant judgments about your understanding of gorillas and fairly certainly say whether you believe that gorillas can speak English.

When it comes to persuading people to alter beliefs, persuading audiences to change core beliefs is more difficult than persuading audiences to change dispositional beliefs. If you find a topic related to dispositional beliefs, using your speech to help listeners alter their processing of the belief is a realistic possibility. But as a novice public speaker, you are probably best advised to avoid core beliefs. Although core beliefs often appear to be more exciting and interesting than dispositional ones, you are very unlikely to alter anyone’s core beliefs in a five- to ten-minute classroom speech.

Sample: Jessy Ohl’s Persuasive Speech

The following speech was written and delivered by an undergraduate student named Jessy Ohl. As with our earlier example, while this speech is written out as a text for purposes of analysis, in your public speaking course, you will most likely be assigned to speak from an outline or notes, not a fully written script.

Take a few minutes and compare this persuasive speech to the informative speech Ms. Ohl presented earlier in this chapter. What similarities do you see? What differences do you see? Does this speech seek to change the audience’s behavior? Attitudes? Values? Dispositional or core beliefs? Where in the speech do you see one or more calls for action?

> With a declining population of around 6,000, my home town of Denison, Iowa, was on the brink of extinction when a new industry rolled in bringing jobs and revenue. However, as the *Canadian Globe and Mail* of July 23, 2007, reports, the industry that saved Denison may ultimately lead to its demise.
>
> Denison is one of 110 communities across the country to be revolutionized by the production of corn ethanol. Ethanol is a high-powered alcohol, derived from plant matter, that can be used like gasoline. According to the *Omaha World Herald* of January 8, 2008, our reliance on foreign oil combined with global warming concerns have many holding corn ethanol as our best energy solution. But despite the good intentions of helping farmers and lowering oil consumption, corn ethanol is filled with empty promises. In fact, *The Des Moines Register* of March 1, 2008, concludes that when ethanol is made from corn, all of its environmental and economic benefits disappear. With oil prices at 100 dollars per barrel, our nation is in an energy crisis, and luckily, the production of ethanol can be a major help for both farmers and consumers, if done correctly. Unfortunately, the way we make ethanol—over 95% from corn—is anything but correct. Although hailed as a magic bullet, corn ethanol could be the worst agricultural catastrophe since the Dust Bowl.
>
> The serious political, environmental, and even moral implications demand that we critically rethink this so-called yellow miracle by: first, examining the problems created by corn ethanol; second, exploring why corn ethanol has gained such power; and finally, discovering solutions to prevent a corn ethanol disaster.
>
> Now, if you have heard anything about the problems of corn ethanol, it probably dealt with efficiency. As the *Christian Science Monitor* of November 15, 2007, notes, it takes a gallon of gasoline or more to make a gallon of ethanol. And while this is an important concern, efficiency is the least of our worries. Turning this crop into fuel creates two major problems for our society: first, environmental degradation; and second, acceleration of global famine.
>
> First, corn ethanol damages the environment as much as, if not more than, fossil fuels. The journal *Ethanol and Biodiesel News* of September 2007 asserts that the production of corn ethanol is pushing natural resources to the breaking point. Since the Dust Bowl, traditional farming practices have required farmers to “rotate” crops. But with corn ethanol being so profitable, understandably, farmers have stopped rotating crops, leading to soil erosion, deforestation, and fertilizer runoff—making our soil less fertile and more toxic. And the story only gets worse once the ethanol is manufactured. According to National Public Radio’s *Talk of the Nation* of February 10, 2008, corn ethanol emits more carbon monoxide and twice the amount of carcinogens into the air as traditional gasoline.
>
> The second problem created from corn ethanol is the acceleration of global famine. According to the US Grains Council, last year, 27 million tons of corn, traditionally used as food, was turned into ethanol, drastically increasing food prices. The March 7, 2007, issue of *The Wall Street Journal* explains that lower supplies of corn needed for necessities such as farm feed, corn oil, and corn syrup have increased our food costs in everything from milk to bread, eggs, and even beer as much as 25 percent. *The St. Louis Post Dispatch* of April 12, 2007, reports that the amount of corn used to fill one

tank of gas could feed one person for an entire year. In October, Global protests over corn ethanol lead the United Nations to call its production “a crime against humanity.”

If you weren’t aware of the environmental or moral impacts of corn ethanol, you’re not alone. The *Financial Times* of May 27, 2007, reports that the narrative surrounding corn ethanol as a homegrown fuel is so desirable that critical thinking is understandably almost nonexistent. To start thinking critically about corn ethanol, we need to examine solutions on both the federal and personal levels.

First, at the federal level, our government must end the ridiculously high subsidies surrounding corn ethanol. On June 24, 2007, *The Washington Post* predicted that subsidies on corn ethanol would cost the federal government an extra 131 billion dollars by 2010.

This isn’t to say that the federal government should abandon small farmers. Instead, let’s take the excitement around alternative fuels and direct it toward the right kinds of ethanol. *The Economist* of June 2, 2007, reports that other materials such as switch grass and wood chips can be used instead of corn. And on July 6, 2011, *The New York Times* reported on ethanol made from corn cobs, leaves, and husks, which leaves the corn kernels to be used as food. The government could use the money paid in subsidies to support this kind of responsible production of ethanol. The point is that ethanol done right can honestly help with energy independence.

On the personal level, we have all participated in the most important step, which is being knowledgeable about the true face of corn ethanol. However, with big business and Washington proclaiming corn ethanol’s greatness, we need to spread the word. So please, talk to friends and family about corn ethanol while there is still time. To make this easier, visit my website, at www.responsibleethanol.com. Here you will find informational materials, links to your congressional representatives, and ways to invest in switch grass and wood ethanol.

Today, we examined the problems of corn ethanol in America and discovered solutions to make sure that our need for energy reform doesn’t sacrifice our morality. Iowa is turning so much corn into ethanol that soon the state will have to import corn to eat. And while my hometown of Denison has gained much from corn ethanol, we all have much more to lose from it.

To Entertain

The final general purpose people can have for public speaking is to entertain. Whereas informative and persuasive speech making is focused on the end result of the speech process, entertainment speaking is focused on the theme and occasion of the speech. An entertaining speech can be either informative or persuasive at its root, but the context or theme of the speech requires speakers to think about the speech primarily in terms of audience enjoyment.

Why We Entertain

Entertaining speeches are very common in everyday life. The fundamental goal of an entertaining speech is audience enjoyment, which can come in a variety of forms. Entertaining speeches can be funny or serious. Overall, entertaining speeches are not designed to give an audience a deep understanding of life but instead to function as a way to divert an audience from their day-to-day lives for a short period of time. This is not to say that an entertaining speech cannot have real content that is highly informative or persuasive, but its goal is primarily about the entertaining aspects of the speech and not focused on the informative or persuasive quality of the speech.

Common Forms of Entertainment Topics

There are three basic types of entertaining speeches: the after-dinner speech, the ceremonial speech, and the inspirational speech. The after-dinner speech is a form of speaking where a speaker takes a serious speech topic (either informative or persuasive) and injects a level of humor into the speech to make it entertaining. Some novice speakers will attempt to turn an after-dinner speech into a stand-up comedy routine, which doesn’t have the same focus (Roye, 2010). After-dinner speeches are first and foremost speeches.

A ceremonial speech is a type of entertaining speech where the specific context of the speech is the driving force of the speech. Common types of ceremonial speeches include introductions, toasts, and eulogies. In each of these cases, there are specific events that drive the speech. Maybe you’re introducing an individual who is about to receive an award, giving a toast at your best friend’s

wedding, or delivering the eulogy at a relative's funeral. In each of these cases, the speech and the purpose of the speech is determined by the context of the event and not by the desire to inform or persuade.

The final type of entertaining speech is one where the speaker's primary goal is to inspire her or his audience. Inspirational speeches are based in emotion with the goal to motivate listeners to alter their lives in some significant way. Florence Littauer, a famous professional speaker, delivers an emotionally charged speech titled "Silver Boxes." In the speech, Mrs. Littauer demonstrates how people can use positive comments to encourage others in their daily lives. The title comes from a story she tells at the beginning of the speech where she was teaching a group of children about using positive speech, and one of the children defined positive speech as giving people little silver boxes with bows on top (http://server.firefighters.org/catalog/2009/45699.mp3).

Sample: Adam Fink's Entertainment Speech

The following speech, by an undergraduate student named Adam Fink, is an entertainment speech. Specifically, this speech is a ceremonial speech given at Mr. Fink's graduation. As with our earlier examples, while this speech is written out as a text for purposes of analysis, in your public speaking course you will most likely be assigned to speak from an outline or notes, not a fully written script. Notice that the tenor of this speech is persuasive but that it persuades in a more inspiring way than just building and proving an argument.

> *Good evening! I've spent the last few months looking over commencement speeches on YouTube. The most notable ones had eight things in common. They reflected on the past, pondered about the future. They encouraged the honorees. They all included some sort of personal story and application. They made people laugh at least fifteen times. They referred to the university as the finest university in the nation or world, and last but not least they all greeted the people in attendance. I'll begin by doing so now.*
>
> *President Holst, thank you for coming. Faculty members and staff, salutations to you all. Distinguished guests, we are happy to have you. Family members and friends, we could not be here without you. Finally, ladies and gentlemen of the class of 2009, welcome to your commencement day here at Concordia University, Saint Paul, this, the finest university in the galaxy, nay, universe. Really, it's right up there with South Harlem Institute of Technology, the School of Hard Knocks, and Harvard. Check and check!*
>
> *Graduates, we are not here to watch as our siblings, our parents, friends, or other family walk across this stage. We are here because today is our graduation day. I am going to go off on a tangent for a little bit. Over the past umpteen years, I have seen my fair share of graduations and ceremonies. In fact, I remember getting dragged along to my older brothers' and sisters' graduations, all 8,000 of them—at least it seems like there were that many now. Seriously, I have more family members than friends. I remember sitting here in these very seats, intently listening to the president and other distinguished guests speak, again saying welcome and thank you for coming. Each year, I got a little bit better at staying awake throughout the entire ceremony. Every time I would come up with something new to keep myself awake, daydreams, pinching my arms, or pulling leg hair; I was a very creative individual. I am proud to say that I have been awake for the entirety of this ceremony. I would like to personally thank my classmates and colleagues sitting around me for slapping me every time I even thought about dozing off. Personal story, check—and now, application!*

Graduates, don't sleep through life. If you need a close friend or colleague to keep you awake, ask. Don't get bored with life. In the words of one of my mentors, the Australian film director, screen writer, and producer Baz Luhrman, "Do one thing every day that scares you." Keep yourself on your toes. Stay occupied but leave room for relaxation; embrace your hobbies. Don't get stuck in a job you hate. I am sure many of you have seen the "Did You Know?" film on YouTube. The film montages hundreds of statistics together, laying down the ground work to tell viewers that we are approaching a crossroad. The way we live is about to change dramatically. We are living in exponential times. It's a good thing that we are exponential people.

We are at a crossing point here, now. Each of us is graduating; we are preparing to leave this place we have called home for the past few years. It's time to move on and flourish. But let's not leave this place for good. Let us walk away with happy memories. We have been fortunate enough to see more change in our time here than most alumni see at their alma mater in a lifetime. We have seen the destruction of Centennial, Minnesota, and Walther. Ladies, it might not mean a lot to you, but gentlemen, we had some good times there. We have seen the building and completion of the new Residence Life Center. We now see the beginnings of our very own stadium. We have seen enough offices and departments move to last any business a lifetime. Let us remember these things, the flooding of the knoll, Ultimate Frisbee beginning at ten o'clock at night, and two back-to-back Volleyball National Championship teams, with one of those championship games held where you are sitting now. I encourage all of you to walk out of this place with flashes of the old times flickering through your brains. Reflection, check!

Honorees, in the words of Michael Scott, only slightly altered, "They have no idea how high [we] can fly." Right now you are surrounded by future politicians, film critics, producers, directors, actors, actresses, church workers, artists, the teachers of tomorrow, musicians, people who will change the world. We are all held together right here and now, by a common bond of unity. We are one graduating class.

In one of his speeches this year, President Barack Obama said, "Generations of Americans have connected their stories to the larger American story through service and helped move our country forward. We need that service now." He is right. America needs selfless acts of service.

Hebrews 10:23–25 reads, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Let us not leave this place as enemies but rather as friends and companions. Let us come back next fall for our first reunion, the Zero Class Reunion hosted by the wonderful and amazing workers in the alumni department. Let us go and make disciples of all nations, guided by His Word. Let us spread God's peace, joy, and love through service to others. Congratulations, graduates! I hope to see you next homecoming. Encouragement, check!

Key Takeaways

- There are three general purposes that all speeches fall into: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. Depending on what your ultimate goal is, you will start by picking one of these general purposes and then selecting an appropriate speech pattern that goes along with that general purpose.
- Informative speeches can focus on objects, people, events, concepts, processes, or issues. It is important to remember that your purpose in an informative speech is to share information with an audience, not to persuade them to do or believe something.
- There are two basic types of persuasion: pure and manipulative. Speakers who attempt to persuade others for pure reasons do so because they actually believe in what they are persuading an audience to do or think. Speakers who persuade others for manipulative reasons do so often by distorting the support for their arguments because they have an ulterior motive in persuading an audience to do or think something. If an audience finds out that you've been attempting to manipulate them, they will lose trust in you.
- Entertainment speeches can be after-dinner, ceremonial, or inspirational. Although there may be informative or persuasive elements to your speech, your primary reason for giving the speech is to entertain the audience.

Exercises

1. Imagine you're giving a speech related to aardvarks to a group of fifth graders. Which type of informative speech do you think would be the most useful (objects, people, events, concepts, processes, and issues)? Why?
2. Imagine you're giving a speech to a group of prospective voters supporting a specific political candidate. Which type of persuasive speech do you think would be the most useful (change of behavior, change of attitude, change of value, or change of belief)? Why?
3. Imagine that you've been asked to speak at a business luncheon and the host has asked you to keep it serious but lighthearted. Which type of entertainment speech do you think would be the most useful (the after-dinner speech, the ceremonial speech, or the inspirational speech)? Why?

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5.3: Selecting a Topic

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the four primary constraints of topic selection.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of how a topic is narrowed from a broad subject area to a manageable specific purpose.

One of the most common stumbling blocks for novice public speakers is selecting their first speech topic. Generally, your public speaking instructor will provide you with some fairly specific parameters to make this a little easier. You may be assigned to tell about an event that has shaped your life or to demonstrate how to do something. Whatever your basic parameters, at some point you as the speaker will need to settle on a specific topic. In this section, we're going to look at some common constraints of public speaking, picking a broad topic area, and narrowing your topic.



Figure 5.3.1: Wonderlane – Fork in the road, decision tree – CC BY 2.0.

Common Constraints of Public Speaking

When we use the word "constraint" with regard to public speaking, we are referring to any limitation or restriction you may have as a speaker. Whether in a classroom situation or in the boardroom, speakers are typically given specific instructions that they must follow. These instructions constrain the speaker and limit what the speaker can say. For example, in the professional world of public speaking, speakers are often hired to speak about a specific topic (e.g., time management, customer satisfaction, entrepreneurship). In the workplace, a supervisor may assign a subordinate to present certain information in a meeting. In these kinds of situations, when a speaker is hired or assigned to talk about a specific topic, he or she cannot decide to talk about something else.

Furthermore, the speaker may have been asked to speak for an hour, only to show up and find out that the event is running behind schedule, so the speech must now be made in only thirty minutes. Having prepared sixty minutes of material, the speaker now has to determine what stays in the speech and what must go. In both of these instances, the speaker is constrained as to what he or she can say during a speech. Typically, we refer to four primary constraints: purpose, audience, context, and time frame.

Purpose

The first major constraint someone can have involves the general purpose of the speech. As mentioned earlier, there are three general purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. If you've been told that you will be delivering an informative speech, you are automatically constrained from delivering a speech with the purpose of persuading or entertaining. In most public speaking classes, this is the first constraint students will come in contact with because generally teachers will tell you the exact purpose for each speech in the class.

Audience

The second major constraint that you need to consider as a speaker is the type of audience you will have. As discussed in the chapter on audience analysis, different audiences have different political, religious, and ideological leanings. As such, choosing a speech topic for an audience that has a specific mindset can be very tricky. Unfortunately, choosing what topics may or may not be appropriate for a given audience is based on generalizations about specific audiences. For example, maybe you're going to give a speech at a local meeting of Democratic leaders. You may think that all Democrats are liberal or progressive, but there are many conservative Democrats as well. If you assume that all Democrats are liberal or progressive, you may end up offending your audience by making such a generalization without knowing better. Obviously, the best way to prevent yourself from picking a topic that is inappropriate for a specific audience is to really know your audience, which is why we recommend conducting an audience analysis, as described in Chapter 5.

Context

The third major constraint relates to the context. For speaking purposes, the context of a speech is the set of circumstances surrounding a particular speech. There are countless different contexts in which we can find ourselves speaking: a classroom in college, a religious congregation, a corporate boardroom, a retirement village, or a political convention. In each of these different contexts, the expectations for a speaker are going to be unique and different. The topics that may be appropriate in front of a religious group may not be appropriate in the corporate boardroom. Topics appropriate for the corporate boardroom may not be appropriate at a political convention.

Time Frame

The last—but by no means least important—major constraint that you will face is the time frame of your speech. In speeches that are under ten minutes in length, you must narrowly focus a topic to one major idea. For example, in a ten-minute speech, you could not realistically hope to discuss the entire topic of the US Social Security program. There are countless books, research articles, websites, and other forms of media on the topic of Social Security, so trying to crystallize all that information into ten minutes is just not realistic.

Instead, narrow your topic to something that is more realistically manageable within your allotted time. You might choose to inform your audience about Social Security disability benefits, using one individual disabled person as an example. Or perhaps you could speak about the career of Robert J. Myers, one of the original architects of Social Security[1]. By focusing on information that can be covered within your time frame, you are more likely to accomplish your goal at the end of the speech.

Selecting a Broad Subject Area

Once you know what the basic constraints are for your speech, you can then start thinking about picking a topic. The first aspect to consider is what subject area you are interested in examining. A **subject area** is a broad area of knowledge. Art, business, history, physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, and education are all examples of subject areas. When selecting a topic, start by casting a broad net because it will help you limit and weed out topics quickly.

Furthermore, each of these broad subject areas has a range of subject areas beneath it. For example, if we take the subject area "art," we can break it down further into broad categories like art history, art galleries, and how to create art. We can further break down these broad areas into even narrower subject areas (e.g., art history includes prehistoric art, Egyptian art, Grecian art, Roman art, Middle Eastern art, medieval art, Asian art, Renaissance art, modern art). As you can see, topic selection is a narrowing process.

Narrowing Your Topic

Narrowing your topic to something manageable for the constraints of your speech is something that takes time, patience, and experience. One of the biggest mistakes that new public speakers make is not narrowing their topics sufficiently given the constraints. In the previous section, we started demonstrating how the narrowing process works, but even in those examples, we narrowed subject areas down to fairly broad areas of knowledge.

Think of narrowing as a funnel. At the top of the funnel are the broad subject areas, and your goal is to narrow your topic further and further down until just one topic can come out the other end of the funnel. The more focused your topic is, the easier your speech is to research, write, and deliver. So let's take one of the broad areas from the art subject area and keep narrowing it down to a manageable speech topic. For this example, let's say that your general purpose is to inform, you are delivering the speech in class

to your peers, and you have five to seven minutes. Now that we have the basic constraints, let's start narrowing our topic. The broad area we are going to narrow in this example is Middle Eastern art. When examining the category of Middle Eastern art, the first thing you'll find is that Middle Eastern art is generally grouped into four distinct categories: Anatolian, Arabian, Mesopotamian, and Syro-Palestinian. Again, if you're like us, until we started doing some research on the topic, we had no idea that the historic art of the Middle East was grouped into these specific categories. We'll select Anatolian art, or the art of what is now modern Turkey.

You may think that your topic is now sufficiently narrow, but even within the topic of Anatolian art, there are smaller categories: pre-Hittite, Hittite, Uratu, and Phrygian periods of art. So let's narrow our topic again to the Phrygian period of art (1200–700 BCE). Although we have now selected a specific period of art history in Anatolia, we are still looking at a five-hundred-year period in which a great deal of art was created. One famous Phrygian king was King Midas, who according to myth was given the ears of a donkey and the power of a golden touch by the Greek gods. As such, there is an interesting array of art from the period of Midas and its Greek counterparts representing Midas. At this point, we could create a topic about how Phrygian and Grecian art differed in their portrayals of King Midas. We now have a topic that is unique, interesting, and definitely manageable in five to seven minutes. You may be wondering how we narrowed the topic down; we just started doing a little research using the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website (http://www.metmuseum.org).

Overall, when narrowing your topic, you should start by asking yourself four basic questions based on the constraints discussed earlier in this section:

1. Does the topic match my intended general purpose?
2. Is the topic appropriate for my audience?
3. Is the topic appropriate for the given speaking context?
4. Can I reasonably hope to inform or persuade my audience in the time frame I have for the speech?

Key Takeaways

- Selecting a topic is a process. We often start by selecting a broad area of knowledge and then narrowing the topic to one that is manageable for a given rhetorical situation.
- When finalizing a specific purpose for your speech, always ask yourself four basic questions: (1) Does the topic match my intended general purpose?; (2) Is the topic appropriate for my audience?; (3) Is the topic appropriate for the given speaking context?; and (4) Can I reasonably hope to inform or persuade my audience in the time frame I have for the speech?

Exercises

1. Imagine you've been asked to present on a new technology to a local business. You've been given ten minutes to speak on the topic. Given these parameters, take yourself through the narrowing process from subject area (business) to a manageable specific purpose.
2. Think about the next speech you'll be giving in class. Show how you've gone from a large subject area to a manageable specific purpose based on the constraints given to you by your professor.

[1]See, for example, Social Security Administration (1996). Robert J. Myers oral history interview. Retrieved from http://www.ssa.gov/history/myersorl.html

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5.4: What If You Draw a Blank?

Learning Objectives

1. Understand and conduct a basic personal inventory.
2. Explain how to identify and use finding aids for topic selection.
3. Examine the importance of polling one's audience to determine speech topics.



Figure 5.4.1: Head scratcher (CC BY-NC 2.0; Babak Fakhamzadeh)

Uh-oh, what if you have no clue what to speak about at all? Thankfully, there are many places where you can get help finding a good topic for you. In this section, we're going to talk about a range of ways to find the best topic.

Conduct a Personal Inventory

The first way to find a good topic is to conduct what we call a personal inventory. A **personal inventory** is a detailed and descriptive list about an individual. In this case, we want you to think about you. Here are some basic questions to get you started:

- What's your major?
- What are your hobbies?
- What jobs have you had?
- What extracurricular activities have you engaged in?
- What clubs or groups do you belong to?
- What political issues interest you?
- Where have you traveled in life?
- What type of volunteer work have you done?
- What goals do you have in life?
- What social problems interest you?
- What books do you read?
- What movies do you watch?
- What games do you play?
- What unique skills do you possess?

After responding to these questions, you now have a range of areas that are unique to you that you could realistically develop into a speech. Here are some unique inventory items that could be turned into speeches for some of the authors of this textbook:

Richard A. Welter

1. Grew up as an air force dependent and lived on the island of Crete
2. Is a puppeteer
3. Has two puggles (half pug/half beagle) named Daikin and Teddy

Edith D. Cates

1. Worked as a teacher for the Medicine Chief of the Bear Tribe Medicine Society in Spokane, Washington
2. Was codirector of Bear Tribe Publishing Company
3. Specializes in storytelling

Bess E. Rigsby

1. Is an avid fan of the Baltimore Orioles
2. Spent a month in South Korea as part of a study/travel group
3. Is a history buff who likes visiting historic sites and national parks

Carl N. Cundiff

1. Briefly lived in the Dominican Republic with his family as a young boy
2. Is a DJ
3. Occasionally practices yoga

We wanted to note these interesting facts about our personal lives to illustrate the fact that each and every one of us has done unique and interesting things in our lives that could make really interesting and informative, persuasive, or entertaining speeches.

Use Finding Aids

If you're still just stumped after conducting a personal inventory, the next recommendation we have for helping you find a good topic is to use a finding aid. A **finding aid** is a tool that will help you find lists of possible topics. Let's look at four of them: best-seller lists, organizations that tally information, media outlets, and the Internet.

Best-Seller Lists

A best-seller list is a list of books that people are currently buying. These lists often contain various subdivisions including fiction, nonfiction, business, advice, or graphic novels. Table 6.1 contains a range of best-seller lists to examine:

Table 6.1 Best-Seller Lists

Name	Website
New York Times	http://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/
Amazon.com	www.amazon.com/gp/bestsellers/books
USA Today	http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/best-selling/
American Booksellers	http://www.bookweb.org/professional-bookselling/indiebound/bestsellers
Publisher's Weekly	http://www.publishersweekly.com
The Washington Post	https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/

It is important to realize that your goal in looking at best-seller lists is not to choose a book to serve as the topic of your speech—unless you've been assigned to give a book review! The point is that while all these lists indicate what people are reading, you can use them to find out what topics people are generally interested in right now.

Polling Organizations

In addition to numerous sources for best sellers, there are also a number of polling organizations that regularly conduct research on the American public. Not only are these organizations good for finding interesting research, but generally the most recent polls are an indication of what people are interested in understanding today. For example, The Gallup Organization regularly conducts polls to find out Americans' perceptions of current political issues, business issues, social issues, and a whole range of other interesting information. Often just looking at the Gallup Organization's website can help you find very interesting speech topics.

Table 6.2 Tallied Information

Name	Website

Name	Website
The Gallup Organization	http://www.gallup.com
US Census Bureau	http://www.census.gov
Polling Report	http://www.pollingreport.com
Rasmussen Reports	http://www.rasmussenreports.com
Zogby International	http://www.zogby.com
Pew Research Center	http://pewresearch.org

Media Outlets

The next great ways to find interesting topics for your speeches are watching television and listening to the radio. The evening news, the History Channel, and the National Geographic channel can all provide ideas for many different speech topics. There are even a host of television shows that broadcast the latest and most interesting topics weekly (e.g., *Dateline*, *20/20*, *60 Minutes*). Here are some recent segments from *20/20* that could make interesting speeches: former *Tarzan* actor, Steve Sipek, has lived with tigers for forty years; the science behind the *Bachelor* phenomenon; the world of childhood schizophrenia; and a girl born with a rare "mermaid" condition.

As for listening to the radio, talk radio is often full of interesting possibilities for speech topics. Many of the most prominent talk radio shows have two or three hours to fill five days a week, so the shows' producers are always looking for interesting topics. Why not let those producers do the investigative work for you? If you're listening to talk radio and hear an interesting topic, write it down and think about using it for your next speech.

As with the best-seller list, it is important to realize that your goal is not to use a given television or radio program as the basis for your speech, much less to repeat the exact arguments that a talk radio host or caller has made. We are not advocating stealing someone's ideas—you need to do your own thinking to settle on your speech topic. You can certainly use ideas from the media as contributions to your speech; however, if you do this, it is only ethical to make sure that you correctly cite the show where you heard about the topic by telling your audience the title, station, and date when you heard it.

The Internet

You can, of course, also look for interesting speech topics online. While the Internet may not always provide the most reliable information, it is a rich source of interesting topics. For example, to browse many interesting blogs, check out www.blogcatalog.com/ or http://www.findblogs.com/. Both websites link to hundreds of blogs you could peruse, searching for a topic that inspires you.

If you find yourself really stumped, there are even a handful of websites that specialize in helping people, just like you, find speech topics. Yes, that's right! Some insightful individuals have posted long lists of possible topics for your next speech right on the Internet. Here are some we recommend:

- www.hawaii.edu/mauispeech/html/infotopichelp.html
- http://www.myspeechclass.com/informativetopics2.html
- http://www.kirtland.edu/library/research-help/term-paper-or-speech-topics

Using the Internet is a great way to find a topic, but you'll still need to put in the appropriate amount of your own thinking and time to really investigate your topic once you've found one that inspires you.

Poll Your Audience for Interests and Needs

The last way you can find a great topic is to conduct a simple poll of your audience to see what their interests and needs are. Let's handle these two methods separately. When you ask potential audience members about their interests, it's not hard to quickly find that patterns of interests exist in every group. You can find out about interests by either formally handing people a questionnaire or just asking people casually. Suppose it's your turn to speak at your business club's next meeting. If you start asking your fellow club members and other local business owners if there are any specific problems their businesses are currently facing, you will

probably start to see a pattern develop. While you may not be an expert on the topic initially, you can always do some research to see what experts have said on the topic and pull together a speech using that research.

The second type of poll you may conduct of your potential audience is what we call a needs analysis. A **needs analysis** involves a set of activities designed to determine your audience's needs, wants, wishes, or desires. The purpose of a needs analysis is to find a gap in information that you can fill as a speaker. Again, you can use either informal or formal methods to determine where a need is. Informally, you may ask people if they have problems with something specific like writing a business plan or cooking in a wok. The only problem that can occur with the informal method is that you often find out that people overestimate their own knowledge about a topic. Someone may think they know how to use a wok even though they've never owned one and never cooked in one. For that reason, we often use more formal methods of assessing needs.

The formal process for conducting a needs analysis is threefold: (1) find a gap in knowledge, (2) figure out the cause, and (3) identify solutions. First, you need to find that a gap in knowledge actually exists. Overall, this isn't very hard to do. You can have people try to accomplish a task or just orally have them explain a task to you, and if you find that they are lacking you'll know that there is a possible need. Second, you need to figure out what is causing the gap. One of the mistakes that people make is assuming that all gaps exist because of a lack of information. This is not necessarily true—it can also be because of lack of experience. For example, people may have learned how to drive a car in a driver education class, but if they've never been behind the wheel of a car, they're not really going to know how to drive. Would giving a speech on how to drive a car at this point be useful? No. Instead, these people need practice, not another speech. Lastly, when you determine that the major cause of the need is informational, it's time to determine the best way to deliver that information.

Key Takeaways

- Conducting a personal inventory is a good way to start the topic selection process. When we analyze our own experiences, interests, knowledge, and passions, we often find topics that others will also find interesting and useful.
- A speaker can investigate finding aids when searching for a good topic. Various finding aids have their positives and negatives, so we recommend investigating several different finding aids to see what topic ideas inspire you.
- One way to ensure a successful speech is to identify your audience's interests or needs. When the speaker's topic is immediately useful for the audience, the audience will listen to the speech and appreciate it.

Exercises

1. Look at the questions posed in this chapter related to conducting a personal inventory. Do you see any potential speech ideas developing from your personal inventory? If yes, which one do you think would impact your audience the most?
2. Take a broad subject area and then use two of the different finding aids to see what types of topics appear. Are you finding similarities or differences? The goal of this activity is to demonstrate how taking a very broad topic can be narrowed down to a more manageable topic using finding aids.
3. For an upcoming speech in your public speaking class, create a simple survey to determine your audience's needs. Find out what your audience may find interesting. Remember, the goal is to find out what your audience needs, not necessarily what you think your audience needs.

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5.5: Specific Purposes

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the process of extending a general purpose into a specific purpose.
2. Integrate the seven tips for creating specific purposes.



Figure 5.5.1: Roma Street Steps (CC BY-SA 2.0; Andrew Sutherland)

Once you have chosen your general purpose and your topic, it's time to take your speech to the next phase and develop your specific purpose. A **specific purpose** starts with one of the three general purposes and then specifies the actual topic you have chosen and the basic objective you hope to accomplish with your speech. Basically, the specific purpose answers the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* questions for your speech.

Getting Specific

When attempting to get at the core of your speech (the specific purpose), you need to know a few basic things about your speech. First, you need to have a general purpose. Once you know whether your goal is to inform, persuade, or entertain, picking an appropriate topic is easier. Obviously, depending on the general purpose, you will have a range of different types of topics. For example, let's say you want to give a speech about hygiene. You could still give a speech about hygiene no matter what your general purpose is, but the specific purpose would vary depending on whether the general purpose is to inform (discussing hygiene practices around the globe), to persuade (discussing why people need to adopt a specific hygiene practice), or to entertain (discussing some of the strange and unique hygiene practices that people have used historically). Notice that in each of these cases, the general purpose alters the topic, but all three are still fundamentally about hygiene.

Now, when discussing specific purposes, we are concerned with who, what, when, where, why, and how questions for your speech. Let's examine each of these separately. First, you want to know who is going to be in your audience. Different audiences, as discussed in the chapter on audience analysis, have differing desires, backgrounds, and needs. Keeping your audience first and foremost in your thoughts when choosing a specific purpose will increase the likelihood that your audience will find your speech meaningful.

Second is the "what" question, or the basic description of your topic. When picking an effective topic, you need to make sure that the topic is appropriate for a variety of constraints or limitations within a speaking context.

Third, you need to consider when your speech will be given. Different speeches may be better for different times of the day. For example, explaining the importance of eating breakfast and providing people with cereal bars may be a great topic at 9:00 a.m. but may not have the same impact if you're giving it at 4:00 p.m.

Fourth, you need to consider where your speech will be given. Are you giving a speech in front of a classroom? A church? An executive meeting? Depending on the location of your speech, different topics may or may not be appropriate.

The last question you need to answer within your speech is why. Why does your audience need to hear your speech? If your audience doesn't care about your specific purpose, they are less likely to attend to your speech. If it's a topic that's a little more off-the-wall, you'll really need to think about why they should care.

Once you've determined the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* aspects of your topic, it's time to start creating your actual specific purpose. First, a specific purpose, in its written form, should be a short, declarative sentence that emphasizes the main topic of your speech. Let's look at an example:

Topic	The military
Narrower Topic	The military's use of embedded journalists
Narrowed Topic	The death of British reporter Rupert Hamer in 2010 in a roadside bombing in Nawa, Afghanistan, along with five US Marines

In this example, we've quickly narrowed a topic from a more general topic to a more specific topic. Let's now look at that topic in terms of a general purpose and specific purpose:

General Purpose	To inform
Specific Purpose	To inform my audience about the danger of embedded journalism by focusing on the death of British reporter Rupert Hamer
General Purpose	To persuade
Specific Purpose	To persuade a group of journalism students to avoid jobs as embedded journalists by using the death of British reporter Rupert Hamer as an example of what can happen

For the purpose of this example, we used the same general topic area, but demonstrated how you could easily turn the topic into either an informative speech or a persuasive speech. In the first example, the speaker is going to talk about the danger embedded journalists face. In this case, the speaker isn't attempting to alter people's ideas about embedded journalists, just make them more aware of the dangers. In the second case, the specific purpose is to persuade a group of journalism students (the audience) to avoid jobs as embedded journalists.

Your Specific Statement of Purpose

To form a clear and succinct statement of the specific purpose of your speech, start by naming your general purpose (to inform, to persuade, or to entertain). Follow this by a capsule description of your audience (my peers in class, a group of kindergarten teachers, etc.). Then complete your statement of purpose with a prepositional phrase (a phrase using "to," "about," "by," or another preposition) that summarizes your topic. As an example, "My specific purpose is to persuade the students in my residence hall to protest the proposed housing cost increase" is a specific statement of purpose, while "My speech will be about why we should protest the proposed housing cost increase" is not.

Specific purposes should be statements, not questions. If you find yourself starting to phrase your specific purpose as a question, ask yourself how you can reword it as a statement. Table 6.3 provides several more examples of good specific purpose statements.

Table 6.3 My Specific Purpose Is…

General Purpose	Audience	Topic
To inform	my audience	**about** the usefulness of scrapbooking to save a family's memories.
To persuade	a group of kindergarten teachers	**to** adopt a new disciplinary method for their classrooms.
To entertain	a group of executives	**by** describing the lighter side of life in "cubicle-ville."

General Purpose	Audience	Topic
To inform	community members	**about** the newly proposed swimming pool plans that have been adopted.
To persuade	my peers in class	**to** vote for me for class president.
To entertain	the guests attending my mother's birthday party	**by** telling a humorous story followed by a toast.

Basic Tips for Creating Specific Purposes

Now that we've examined what specific purposes are, we are going to focus on a series of tips to help you write specific purposes that are appropriate for a range of speeches.

Audience, Audience, Audience

First and foremost, you always need to think about your intended audience when choosing your specific purpose. In the previous section, we talked about a speech where a speaker is attempting to persuade a group of journalism students to not take jobs as embedded journalists. Would the same speech be successful, or even appropriate, if given in your public speaking class? Probably not. As a speaker, you may think your topic is great, but you always need to make sure you think about your audience when selecting your specific purpose. For this reason, when writing your specific purpose, start off your sentence by including the words "my audience" or actually listing the name of your audience: a group of journalism students, the people in my congregation, my peers in class, and so on. When you place your audience first, you're a lot more likely to have a successful speech.

Matching the Rhetorical Situation

After your audience, the second most important consideration about your specific purpose pertains to the rhetorical situation of your speech. The **rhetorical situation** is the set of circumstances surrounding your speech (e.g., speaker, audience, text, and context). When thinking about your specific purpose, you want to ensure that all these components go together. You want to make sure that you are the appropriate speaker for a topic, the topic is appropriate for your audience, the text of your speech is appropriate, and the speech is appropriate for the context. For example, speeches that you give in a classroom may not be appropriate in a religious context and vice versa.

Make It Clear

The specific purpose statement for any speech should be direct and not too broad, general, or vague. Consider the lack of clarity in the following specific purpose: "To persuade the students in my class to drink more." Obviously, we have no idea what the speaker wants the audience to drink: water, milk, orange juice? Alcoholic beverages? Furthermore, we have no way to quantify or make sense of the word "more." "More" assumes that the students are already drinking a certain amount, and the speaker wants them to increase their intake. If you want to persuade your listeners to drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day, you need to say so clearly in your specific purpose.

Another way in which purpose statements are sometimes unclear comes from the use of colloquial language. While we often use colloquialisms in everyday life, they are often understood only by a limited number of people. It may sound like fun to have a specific purpose like, "To persuade my audience to get jiggy," but if you state this as your purpose, many people probably won't know what you're talking about at all.

Don't Double Up

You cannot hope to solve the entire world's problems in one speech, so don't even try. At the same time, you also want to make sure that you stick to one specific purpose. Chances are it will be challenging enough to inform your audience about one topic or persuade them to change one behavior or opinion. Don't put extra stress on yourself by adding topics. If you find yourself using the word "and" in your specific topic statement, you're probably doubling up on topics.

Can I Really Do This in Five to Seven Minutes?

When choosing your specific purpose, it's important to determine whether it can be realistically covered in the amount of time you have. Time limits are among the most common constraints for students in a public speaking course. Usually speeches early in the

term have shorter time limits (three to five minutes), and speeches later in the term have longer time limits (five to eight minutes). While eight minutes may sound like an eternity to be standing up in front of the class, it's actually a very short period of time in which to cover a topic. To determine whether you think you can accomplish your speech's purpose in the time slot, ask yourself how long it would take to make you an informed person on your chosen topic or to persuade you to change your behavior or attitudes.

If you cannot reasonably see yourself becoming informed or persuaded during the allotted amount of time, chances are you aren't going to inform or persuade your audience either. The solution, of course, is to make your topic narrower so that you can fully cover a limited aspect of it.

Key Takeaways

- Moving from a general to specific purpose requires you to identify the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* of your speech.
- State your specific purpose in a sentence that includes the general purpose, a description of the intended audience, and a prepositional phrase summarizing the topic.
- When creating a specific purpose for your speech, first, consider your audience. Second, consider the rhetorical situation. Make sure your specific purpose statement uses clear language, and that it does not try to cover more than one topic.
- Make sure you can realistically accomplish your specific purpose within the allotted time.

Exercises

1. You've been asked to give a series of speeches on the importance of health care in poverty-stricken countries. One audience will consist of business men and women, one audience will consist of religious leaders, and another audience will consist of high school students. How would you need to adjust your speech's purpose for each of these different audiences? How do these different audiences alter the rhetorical situation?
2. For the following list of topics, think about how you could take the same topic and adjust it for each of the different general purposes (inform, persuade, and entertain). Write out the specific purpose for each of your new speech topics. Here are the three general topic areas to work with: the First Amendment to the US Constitution, iPods, and literacy in the twenty-first century.

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5.6: Conclusion

After reading this chapter, we hope that you now have a better understanding not only of the purpose of your speech but also of how to find a really interesting topic for yourself and your audience. We started this chapter citing lyrics from the *Avenue Q* song "Purpose." While the character is trying to find his purpose in life, we hope this chapter has helped you identify your general purpose, choose a topic that will interest you and your audience, and use these to develop a specific purpose statement for your speech.

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5.7: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Rona is a huge supporter of Gerry Mitchell in the mayoral campaign. Rona decides to volunteer for Mitchell's campaign and is soon asked to speak at various rallies when Mitchell can't attend.

One Saturday evening, Rona is asked to speak before a group of retirees at a local retirement center. As a campaign insider, Rona knows that Mitchell has privately acknowledged that he's probably going to have to drastically cut city support for a number of programs that help the elderly. Of course, this information hasn't been made public. Rona also realizes that the group she is speaking before would not vote for Mitchell if they knew what his future plans are.

1. If Rona attempts to persuade the retirees without divulging the information about the future cuts, is she a pure persuader or a manipulative persuader?
2. Does a political operative have an ethical obligation to be honest when the information being disseminated to a group of people isn't complete?
3. If you were Rona, what would you do?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Modern scholars generally describe the three general purposes of speaking as
   a. entertain, persuade, and debate
   b. persuade, inform, and perpetuate
   c. celebrate, perpetuate, and inform
   d. inform, persuade, and entertain
   e. deliberative, epideictic, and forensic
2. "To persuade a group of local residents to buy a car from Mitken's Car Dealership" is an example of which type of purpose?
   a. celebratory
   b. specific
   c. systematic
   d. supplemental
   e. general
3. Benji wanted to speak on the elements of jazz music, but his instructor told the class that they could only choose from a specific list of topics. This is an example of
   a. poor topic selection
   b. constraints
   c. a bad speech
   d. poor narrowing
   e. topic shortage aversion
4. Which of the following would be a good scope for a speech that is five to seven minutes in length?
   a. the history of the United States
   b. military maneuvers in the nineteenth century
   c. women in the Battle of Lewisburg
   d. religion in Asia
   e. changes in state-sponsored militias
5. Tika is speaking on the benefits of sleep, but does not include a call for action to get more sleep. Which type of general purpose does Tika have?
   a. to inform
   b. to persuade
   c. to entertain
   d. to console
   e. to educate

Answer Key

1. d
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. a

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Research and Evidence

6.1: The Building Blocks of a Speech
6.2: Defining Evidence
6.3: Checking on the Domain Indicators
6.4: Using Evidence
6.5: Testing of Fake News Sources
6.6: The Focus of this Chapter

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6.1: The Building Blocks of a Speech

"Everyone is entitled to [their] own opinion, but not to [their] own facts"

--Daniel Patrick Moynihan



6.1.1: "Napoleon Boneparte" by Unknown is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

After the death of the famous French leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, an autopsy was performed and the doctors announced that he had died of a perforated stomach ulcer that had turned cancerous. Some of his supporters did not believe this. They were convinced that he was murdered. Their beliefs were fueled by the fact that Napoleon himself had written that he was being poisoned. What evidence existed to support his accusations?

Fortunately, in accordance with his wishes in his will, many relatives were given strands of his hair. One hundred years after his death, Napoleon's hair was tested and the results indicated that Napoleon had a trace amount of arsenic in his body. This raw data seemed to suggest that he was poisoned. But 20 years later, a second interpretation of the data suggested that he was killed by his wallpaper.

In the 1800's a type of wallpaper was colored with Scheele Green. This color was made with lead. That lead gave off arsenic compounds that could be absorbed by the human body and eventually affected the person's health. The walls in Napoleon's room was covered this wallpaper.

But a third interpretation indicated that the wallpaper did not contain enough arsenic to kill Napoleon, but it did contain enough to exacerbate a stomach ulcer that eventually killed him. So, although the wallpaper wasn't the ultimate killer, it did seem to contribute to Napoleon's death. The conclusion indicated that Napoleon Bonaparte was not intentionally poisoned.

This story illustrates two important aspects of evidence:

1. The quality of evidence
2. The accurate interpretation of evidence

Both of which we will explore in this chapter.

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6.2: Defining Evidence

What is evidence? According to Reike and Sillars (1993), ”[e]vidence refers to specific instances, statistics, and testimony, when they support a claim in such a way as to cause the decision maker(s) to grant adherence to that claim” (p. 10).



6.2.1: "Evidence" by Nick Youngson is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

Evidence is information that answers the question “*How do you know*?**”** of a contention you have made. Please take that question very literally. It is often hard to tell the difference at first between telling someone what you know and telling them how you know it. To become an effective speaker in almost any context, you need to be able to ask this question repeatedly and test the answers you hear to determine the strength of the evidence.

Only experts can use phrases like "I think" or "I feel" or "I believe" as they have the qualifications needed that allow you to accept their observations. As for everyone else, we need to use evidence to support our arguments. As a critical thinker, you should rely much more on what a person can prove to a reasonable degree instead of what a person feels.

Evidence is a term commonly used to describe the supporting material utilized when informing or persuading others. Evidence gives support to your statements and arguments. It also makes your arguments more than a mere collection of personal opinions or prejudices. No longer are you saying, “*I believe*” or “*I think*” or “*In my opinion*.” Now you can support your assertions with evidence. Because you are asking your audience to take a risk when you attempt to inform or persuade them, audiences will demand support for your assertions. Evidence needs to be carefully chosen to serve the needs of the claim and to reach the target audience.

An argument is designed to persuade a resistant audience to accept a claim via the presentation of evidence for the contentions being argued. The evidence establishes the amount of accuracy your arguments have. Evidence is one element of proof (the second is reasoning), that is used as a means of moving your audience toward the threshold necessary for them to grant adherence to your arguments.

The speaker should expect audiences to not be persuaded by limited evidence or by a lack of variety/scope, evidence drawn from only one source as opposed to diverse sources. On the other hand, too much evidence, particularly when not carefully crafted, may leave the audience overwhelmed and without focus. Evidence in support of the different contentions in the argument needs to make the argument reasonable enough to be accepted by the target audience.

Challenge of Too Much Evidence

I attended a lecture years ago where the guest speaker told us that we have access to more information in one edition of the New York Times than a man in the middle ages had in his entire lifetime. The challenge is not finding information, the challenge is sorting through information to find quality evidence to use in our speeches . Shenk (1997) expresses his concern in the first chapter:

> Information has also become a lot cheaper--to produce, to manipulate, to disseminate. All of this has made us information-rich, empowering Americans with the blessings of applied knowledge. It has also, though, unleashed the potential of information-gluttony...How much of the information in our midst is useful, and how much of it gets in the way? ... As we have accrued more and more of it, information has emerged not only as a currency, but also as a pollutant (p. 23).

- In 1971 the average American was targeted by at least 560 daily advertising messages. Twenty years later, that number had risen six-fold to 3,000 messages per day.
- In the office, an average of 60 percent of each person's time is now spent processing documents.

- Paper consumption per capita in the United States tripled from 1940 to 1980 (from 200 to 600 pounds) and tripled again from 1980 to 1990 (to 1,800 pounds).
- In the 1980s, third-class mail (used to send publications) grew thirteen times faster than population growth.
- Two-thirds of business managers surveyed report tension with colleagues, loss of job satisfaction, and strained personal relationships as a result of information overload.
- More than 1,000 telemarketing companies employ four million Americans, and generate $650 billion in annual sales.

"Let us call this unexpected, unwelcome part of our atmosphere "data smog," an expression for the noxious muck and druck of the information age. Data smog gets in the way; it crowds out quiet moments and obstructs much-needed contemplation. It spoils conversation, literature, and even entertainment. It thwarts skepticism, rendering us less sophisticated as consumers and citizens. It stresses us out" (Shenk, 1997, p. 24).

We need ways of sorting through this information and the first method is understanding the different types of evidence that we encounter.

Sources of Evidence

The first aspect of evidence we need to explore is the actual source of evidence or where we find evidence. There are two primary sources of evidence; primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary Sources

A primary source provides direct or firsthand evidence about an event, object, person, or work of art. Primary sources include historical and legal documents, eyewitness accounts, results of experiments, statistical data, pieces of creative writing, audio and video recordings, speeches, and art objects. Interviews, surveys, fieldwork, and Internet communications via email, blogs, tweets, and newsgroups are also primary sources. In the natural and social sciences, primary sources are often empirical studies—research where an experiment was performed or a direct observation was made. The results of empirical studies are typically found in scholarly articles that are peer-reviewed (Ithica College, 2019)

Included in primary sources are:

- Original, first-hand accounts of events, activities, or time periods;
- Factual accounts instead of interpretations of accounts or experiments;
- Results of an experiment;
- Reports of scientific discoveries;
- Results of scientifically based polls.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources describe, discuss, interpret, comment upon, analyze, evaluate, summarize, and process primary sources. Secondary source materials can be articles in newspapers or popular magazines, book, movie reviews, or articles found in scholarly journals that discuss or evaluate someone else's original research (Ithica, 2019).

Included in secondary sources are:

- Analyzation and interpretation of the accounts of primary sources;
- Secondhand account of an activity or historical event;
- Analyzation and interpretation of scientific or social research results.

The key difference between the two sources is how far the author of the evidence is removed from the original event. You want to ask, "*Is the author giving you a firsthand account, or a secondhand account?*"

Types of Evidence

There are **five** types of evidence critical thinkers can use to support their arguments: **precedent evidence, statistical evidence, testimonial evidence, hearsay evidence, and common knowledge evidence**.

Precedent evidence is an act or event which establishes expectations for future conduct. There are two forms of precedent evidence: legal and personal.

Legal precedent is one of the most powerful and most difficult types of evidence to challenge. Courts establish legal precedent. Once a court makes a ruling, that ruling becomes the legal principle upon which other courts base their actions. Legislatures can

also establish precedent through the laws they pass and the laws they choose not to pass. Once a principle of law has been established by a legislative body, it is very difficult to reverse.

Personal precedents are the habits and traditions you maintain. They occur as a result of watching the personal actions of others in order to understand the expectations for future behaviors. Younger children in a family watch how the older children are treated in order to see what precedents are being established. Newly employed on a job watch to see what older workers do in terms of breaks and lunchtime in order that their actions may be consistent. The first months of a marriage is essentially a time to establish precedent. Who does the cooking, who takes out the garbage, who cleans, which side of the bed does each person get, are precedents established early in a marriage. Once these precedents are displayed, an expectation of the other's behavior is established. Such precedent is very difficult to alter.

To use either type of precedent as evidence, the arguer refers to how the past event relates to the current situation. In a legal situation, the argument is that the ruling in the current case should be the same as it was in the past, because they represent similar situations. In a personal situation, if you were allowed to stay out all night by your parents "just once," you can use that "just once" as precedent evidence when asking that your curfew be abolished.

Statistical evidence consists primarily of polls, surveys, and experimental results from the laboratory. This type of evidence is the numerical reporting of specific instances. Statistical evidence provides a means for communicating a large number of specific instances without citing each one. Statistics can be manipulated and misused to make the point of the particular advocate.

Don't accept statistics just because they are numbers. People often fall into the trap of believing whatever a number says, because numbers seem accurate. Statistics are the product of a process subject to human prejudice, bias, and error. Questions on a survey can be biased, the people surveyed can be selectively chosen, comparisons may be made of non-comparable items, and reports of findings can be slanted. Take a look at all the polls that predict an election outcome. You will find variances and differences in the results.

Statistics have to be interpreted. In a debate over the use of lie detector tests to determine guilt or innocence in court, the pro-side cited a study which found that 98% of lie detector tests were accurate. The pro-side interpreted this to mean that lie detector tests were an effective means for determining guilt or innocence. However, the con-side interpreted the statistic to mean that two out of every 100 defendants in this country would be found guilty and punished for a crime they did not commit.



6.2.2: "Scully" by Floatjon is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

The great baseball announcer Vin Scully once described the misuse of statistics by a journalist by saying that "*He uses statistics like a drunk uses a lamppost, not for illumination but for support*

Statistics are often no more reliable than other forms of evidence, although people often think they are. Advocates need to carefully analyze how they use statistics when attempting to persuade others. Likewise, the audience needs to question statistics that don't make sense to them.

Testimonial evidence is used for the purpose of assigning motives, assessing responsibilities, and verifying actions for past, present and future events. Testimony is an opinion of reality as stated by another person. There are three forms of **testimonial evidence: eyewitness, expert-witness, and historiography.**

Eyewitness testimony is a personal declaration as to the accuracy of an event. That is, the person actually saw an event take place and is willing to bear witness to that event. Studies have confirmed that eyewitness testimony, even with all of its problems, is a powerful form of evidence. There seems to be almost something "magical" about a person swearing to "tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Expert-witness evidence calls upon someone qualified to make a personal declaration about the nature of the fact in question. Courts of law make use of experts in such fields as forensics, ballistics, and psychology. The critical thinker uses the credibility of another person to support an argument through statements about the facts or opinions of the situation.

What or who qualifies as an expert witness? Does being a former military officer make them an expert in military tactics? Often an advocate will merely pick someone who they know the audience will accept. But as an audience we should demand that advocates justify the expertise of their witness. As we acquire more knowledge, our standards of what constitutes an expert should rise. We need to make a distinction between sources that are simply credible like well-known athletes and entertainers that urge you to buy a particular product, and those who really have the qualities that allow them to make a judgment about a subject in the argumentative environment.

Although expert witness testimony is an important source of evidence, such experts can disagree. In a recent House Energy and Commerce subcommittee, two experts gave opposite testimony, on the same day, on a bill calling for a label on all aspirin containers warning of the drug's often fatal link to Reye's Syndrome. The head of the American Academy of Pediatrics gave testimony supporting the link, but Dr. Joseph White, President of The Aspirin Foundation of America, said there was insufficient evidence linking aspirin to Reye's syndrome.

Historiography is the third form of testimonial evidence. In their book, ARGUMENTATION AND ADVOCACY, Windes and Hastings write, *"Historiographers are concerned in large part with the discovery, use, and verification of evidence. The historian traces influences, assigns motives, evaluates roles, allocates responsibilities, and juxtaposes events in an attempt to reconstruct the past. That reconstruction is no wiser, no more accurate or dependable than the dependability of the evidence the historian uses for his reconstruction."* [5]

Keep in mind that there are many different ways of determining how history happens. Remember, historians may disagree over why almost any event happened. In the search for how things happen, we get ideas about how to understand our present world's events and what to do about them, if anything.

Primary sources are essential to the study of history. They are the basis for what we know about the distant past and the recent past. Historians must depend on other evidence from the era to determine who said what, who did what, and why.

How successful is the historian in recreating "objective reality?" As noted historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. says,

> *"The sad fact is that, in many cases, the basic evidence for the historian's reconstruction of the really hard cases does not exist, and the evidence that does exist is often incomplete, misleading, or erroneous. Yet, it is the character of the evidence which establishes the framework within which he writes. He cannot imagine scenes for which he has no citation, invent dialogue for which he has no text, assume relationships for which he has no warrant."*

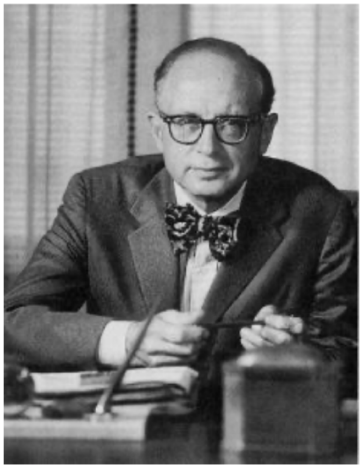
Historical reconstruction must be done by a qualified individual to be classified as historical evidence. Critical thinkers will find it useful to consider the following three criteria for evaluating historical evidence.

> Around 1,000 books are published internationally every day and the total of all printed knowledge doubles every 5 years.
>
> More information is estimated to have been produced in the last 30 years than in the previous 5,000.
>
> ----The Reuters Guide to Good Information Strategy 2000

Was the author an eyewitness to what is being described, or is the author considered an authority on the subject? Eyewitness accounts can be the most objective and valuable but they may also be tainted with bias. If the author professes to be an authority, he/she should present his/her qualifications.

Does the author have a hidden agenda? The author may purposely or unwittingly tell only part of the story. The excerpt may seem to be a straight-forward account of the situation, yet the author has selected certain facts, details, and language, which advance professional, personal or political goals or beliefs. They may be factual, but the hidden agenda of these books was to make money for the author, or get even with those in the administration they didn't like.

Does the author have a bias? The author's views may be based on personal prejudice rather than a reasoned conclusion based on facts. Critical thinkers need to notice when the author uses exaggerated language, fails to acknowledge, or dismisses his or her opponents' arguments. Historians may have biases based on their political allegiance. Conservative historians would view events differently than a liberal historian. It is important to know the **political persuasion** of the historian in order to determine the extent of bias he or she might have on the specific topic they are writing about.



"6.2.3: "Daniel Boorstin" by Unkown is in the Public Domain, CC0

Sometimes we think we might know our history, but Historian Daniel Boorstin puts a perspective on the ultimate validity and accuracy of historical testimony when he writes, *"Education is learning what you didn't even know you didn't know."* Modern techniques of preserving data should make the task of recreating the past easier and adding to our education.

Hearsay evidence (also called rumor or gossip evidence) can be defined as an assertion or set of assertions widely repeated from person to person, though its accuracy is unconfirmed by firsthand observation. "Rumor is not always wrong," wrote Tacitus, the Roman historian. A given rumor may be spontaneous or premeditated in origin. It may consist of opinion represented as fact, a nugget of accuracy garbled or misrepresented to the point of falsehood, exaggerations, or outright, intentional lies. Yet, hearsay may well be the "best available evidence" in certain situations where the original source of the information cannot be produced.

Rumor, gossip or hearsay evidence carries proportionately higher risks of distortion and error than other types of evidence. However, outside the courtroom, it can be as effective as any other form of evidence in proving your point. Large companies often rely on this type of evidence, because they lack the capability to deliver other types of evidence.

A recent rumor was started that actor Morgan Freeman had died. A page on “Facebook” was created and soon gained more that 60,000 followers, after it was announced that the actor had passed away. Many left their condolences and messages of tribute. Only one problem, Morgan Freeman was very much alive, actually that is not so much a problem, especially to Morgan Freeman. The Internet is a very effective tool when it comes to spreading rumors.

Common knowledge evidence is also a way to support one’s arguments. This type of evidence is most useful in providing support for arguments which lack any real controversy. Many claims are supported by evidence that comes as no particular surprise to anyone.

Basing an argument on common knowledge is the easiest method of securing belief in an idea, because an audience will accept it without further challenge. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) explain:

> Many argumentative claims we make are based on knowledge generally accepted by most people as true. For example, if you claimed that millions of Americans watch television each day, the claim would probably be accepted without evidence. Nor would you need to cite opinions or survey results to get most people to accept the statement that millions of people smoke cigarettes [6](Pat.

Credibility of Evidence or How Good Is It?

In order to tell us how you know something, you need to tell us where the information came from. If you personally observed the case you are telling us about, you need to tell us that you observed it, and when and where. If you read about it, you need to tell us where you read about it. If you are accepting the testimony of an expert, you need to tell us who the expert is and why she is an expert in this field. The specific identity, name or position and qualifications of your sources are part of the answer to the question “How do you know?” You need to give your audience that information.

Keep in mind that it is the person, the individual human being, who wrote an article or expressed an idea who brings authority to the claim. Sometimes that authority may be reinforced by the publication in which the claim appeared, sometimes not. But when you quote or paraphrase a source you are quoting or paraphrasing the author, not the magazine or journal. The credibility of the evidence you use can be enhanced by:

Specific Reference to Source: Does the advocate indicate the particular individual or group making the statements used for evidence? Does the advocate tell you enough about the source that you could easily find it yourself?

Qualifications of the Source: Does the advocate give you reason to believe that the source is competent and well-informed in the area in question?

Bias of the Source: Even if an expert, is the source likely to be biased on the topic? Could we easily predict the source's position merely from knowledge of his job, her political party, or organizations he or she works for?

Factual Support: Does the source offer factual support for the position taken or simply state personal opinions as fact?

Evaluating Internet Sources of Evidence

We currently obtain a significant amount of the evidence we use in an argument from the Internet. Some people are still under the influence that if they read it on the Internet, it must be accurate. But we all know that some Internet sources are better than others. We need to be able to evaluate websites to obtain the best information possible. Here are two approaches to evaluating websites

Who, What, When, Where, and Why

This first test is based on the traditional 5 "W's." These questions, like critical thinking, go back to Greek and Roman times. The notable Roman, Cicero, who was in office in 63 BC, is credited with asking these questions

Journalists are taught to answer these five questions when writing an article for publication. To provide an accurate interpretation of events to their viewers or readers, they ask these five questions and we can ask the same questions to begin discovering the level of quality of an online source.

Who wrote the post? What are their qualifications?

What is actually being said in the website. How accurate is the content?

When was the website's latest post?

Where is the source of the post? Does the URL suggest it is from an academic source or an individual?

Why is the website published? Is the website there to inform or entertain?

There is a second method of evaluating websites that is more popular and includes a more in depth analysis. This method is known as the CRAAP test.

The C.R.A.A.P. Test

C.R.A.A.P. is an acronym standing for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose. Developed by the Meriam Library at the California State University at Chico, each of these five areas is used to evaluate websites.

Currency How recent is this website. If you are conducting research on some historical subject a web site that has no recent additions could be useful. If, however you are researching some current news story, or technology, or scientific topic, you will want a site that has been recently updated.

Questions to Ask:

- When was the content of the website published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated recently?
- Have more recent articles on your subject been published?
- Does your topic require the most current information possible, or will older posts and sources be acceptable?
- Are the web links included in the website functional?
- **Relevance** This test of a website asks you how important is the information to the specific topic you are researching. You will want to determine if you are the intended audience and if the information provided fits your research needs.

Questions to Ask:

- Does the content relate to your research topic or the question you are answering?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level for the purpose of your work? In other words, is it college level or targeted to a younger or less educated audience?
- Have you compared this site to a variety of other resources?

- Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research project?

Authority Here we determine if the source of the website has the credentials to write on the subject which makes you feel comfortable in using the content. If you are looking for an accurate interpretation of news events, you will want to know if the author of the website is a qualified journalist or a random individual reposting content.

Questions to Ask:

- Who is the author/ publisher/ source/ sponsor of the website?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- Does the author have the qualifications to write on this particular topic?
- Can you find information about the author from reference sources or the Internet?
- Is the author quoted or referred to on other respected sources or websites?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?

Accuracy In this test we attempt to determine the reliability and accuracy of the content of the website. You need to determine if you can trust the information presented in the website or is it just slanted, personal beliefs.

Questions to Ask:

- Where does the information in the website come from?
- Is the information supported by Evidence, or is it just opinion?
- Has the information presented been reviewed by qualified sources?
- Can you verify any of the content in another source or personal knowledge?
- Are there statements in the website you know to be false?
- Does the language or tone used in the website appear unbiased or free of emotion or loaded language?
- Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors in the content of the website?

Purpose Finally we examine the purpose of the website. We need to determine if the website was created to inform, entertain or even sell a product or service. If we want accurate, high quality evidence, we would want to avoid a site that is trying to sell us something. Although a company selling solar power may have some factual information about solar energy on their site, the site is geared to sell you their product. The information they provide is not there to educate you with all aspects of solar power.

Questions to Ask:

- What is the purpose of the content of this website? Is the purpose to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors of the website make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the content in the website considered facts, opinion, or even propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Does the author omit important facts or data that might disprove the claim being made in the post?
- Are alternative points of view presented?
- Does the content of the website contain political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?

Questions used here are inspired from questions from the Meriam Library at California State University Chico, the University of Maryland University College Library and Creighton University Library



6.2.4: "Question Mark on Face" is in the Public Domain, CC0

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6.3: Checking on the Domain Indicators

Every website address ends with a domain indicator. This graphic illustrates four of them. Understanding each domain indicator can help us better understand the quality of the website.



What follows is a list of domain indicators from most reliable to least reliable sites. The sites at the top of the list are considered more trustworthy than those towards the bottom of the list.

.gov This is the site that is restricted for use of federal, state and local governments only. And yes, here I am saying that the government is to be trusted. These sites are reviewed for accuracy by individuals and agencies.

.edu Since 2001, these sites have been restricted for use of U.S. educational institutions of higher education. The content on this site will not only be written by people associated by that institution, but will be subject to review by that institution.

.org Although we think of this as a domain indicator for an organization, anyone can obtain this domain indicator. And even if it is an organization, you need to check the credibility of that organization.

.com Any individual can obtain this domain indicator and publish a site. There are no review boards to evaluate the content that is in this site.

.net As with .com, any individual can obtain this domain indicator.

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6.4: Using Evidence

In his book, ARGUMENTATION AND DEBATE, Austin J. Freeley discusses the uses of evidence. He says that the various types of evidence can be used in two ways:

To establish Conclusive Proof for your position. Conclusive proof is using evidence that is strong and convincing enough to override any objections to it. This evidence is so strong that the law will not permit it to be contradicted.

Often the argumentative environment will define what type of evidence is needed to establish your arguments to the defined threshold of that environment. For example, fingerprints at the crime scene may be the conclusive proof needed to find a person guilty of that crime. For a scientist to prove a hypothesis they need an experiment to reach a 95% certainty threshold. That is, they need to be 95% certain of the results. If the experiment by the scientist reaches this level, this would be conclusive proof.

To establish Circumstantial Proof for your position. This is where the various types of evidence are used to form a link strong enough to prove your point. Using the different types of evidence as support gives the argument the strength needed to establish the accuracy of your argument. The evidence is put together in such a manner so as to create an evidence chain. One bit of evidence is connected to another, and so on. Each piece of evidence, in and of itself, is not enough to reach the threshold of your audience for accepting your argument, but taken altogether, the accuracy of the claim can be established. [1]

Many Americans hold the incorrect view that circumstantial evidence cannot be used to convict someone in a court of law. In fact, more convictions are based on circumstantial proof than on conclusive proof.

How Much Evidence is Necessary?

All good arguments must be supported by a strong foundation of evidence. An argument filled with no supporting evidence is merely an assertion. It is instead a collection of interpretations or beliefs, and the audience will have no reason to believe the interpretations or beliefs if they are not well supported with evidence.

How much evidence do you need to support each contention that you make in support of your stand on a claim? Good question. To some extent, the amount of evidence needed depends on the degree of controversy of the claim you are trying to support and your credibility as an advocate. Thus, how much evidence an advocate needs to present is ultimately determined by the demands of his or her target audience. Since evidence must ultimately be persuasive to an audience, arguers must adjust their usage of evidence for maximum appeal. An advocate must deal with one of the following audience types:

A **friendly audience** is one that already supports an advocate's position on a claim. Audience members are already predisposed to granting adherence to the position, so very little additional evidence is needed as support.

A **neutral audience** is one that has made no commitment to granting adherence to the advocated point of view. Audience members are "fence sitting," waiting to see what type of support can be provided in order to move them over to one side or the other. The quality of the evidence used is important to this type of audience.

A **hostile audience** is one that is opposed to the advocate's point of view. Audience members are already predisposed to reject the advocated point of view. In this case, a great deal of high-quality evidence is needed in order to move audience members off their existing position.

Tests of Evidence

You have evidence that you plan to use in your arguments. The key question for you, because it will be a key question for your audience, is whether the evidence is accurate, whether you can trust it. Unless you are reporting your own personal experience directly to us, your evidence comes from somebody else.

If you use the word of some other person or group to answer the question "How do you know?" it just moves the question back a step: How do they know? Even if you understand them, and they were correct as they saw it, they may have been just plain wrong. If you really care about the accuracy or correctness of what you are reporting, then you have to have some way of checking the reliability of your sources. In reviewing evidence, you can use a few tests that are widely used to evaluate evidence.

Recency: Is the evidence too old to be of current relevance to the issue? Would the source have had knowledge of recent developments or discoveries that might have bearing on the issue?

Sufficiency: Is there enough evidence to justify all of the claims being made from it?

Logical Relevance: Does the claim made in the evidence provide a premise which logically justifies the conclusion offered? Can you reasonably draw the conclusion being urged based on what the evidence says?

Internal Consistency: Does this source make claims that are contradicted by other claims from the same source?

External Consistency: Are the claims made by this source consistent with general knowledge and other evidence? If not, does the writer account for this discrepancy? If printed, can it be found? If not in print format, can you provide citation as to time, place and date?

Reference

1. Freeley, Austin J. *Argumentation and Debate*. Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1993

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6.5: Testing of Fake News Sources

There has always been fake news, but with the advent of social media, posted news does not have to go through any editorial board to be published. Anyone with a computer and an Internet connection can publish what they refer to as the “news,” and that “news” is easily passed along and eventually believed by many.

Facebook contributes to this as their algorithm records what you like or interact with and shows you more content that is related to your interest. If you like a meme showing how foolish a particular candidate supposedly is, then more, similar memes will appear on your Facebook site.

Because of the viral nature of these fake news reports, both Google and Facebook are attempting to reduce their impact by decreasing the amount of revenue these fake news sources can generate.

There are different types of misleading and false news as described below by AJ Willingham, CNN news:

Fake news These are the easiest to debunk and often come from known sham sites that are designed to look like real news outlets. They may include misleading photographs and headlines that, at first read, sound like they could be real.

Misleading news These are the hardest to debunk, because they often contain a kernel of truth: A fact, event or quote that has been taken out of context. Look for sensational headlines that aren't supported by the information in the article.

Highly partisan news A type of misleading news, this may be an interpretation of a real news event where the facts are manipulated to fit an agenda.

Clickbait The shocking or teasing headlines of these stories trick you into clicking for more information -- which may or may not live up to what was promised.

Satire This one is tough, because satire doesn't pretend to be real and serves a purpose as commentary or entertainment. But if people are not familiar with a satire site, they can share the news as if it is legitimate.[1]

As Willingham described **click-bait,** The purpose of these sites is to get viewers because the owner then makes money with all the accompanying advertisements. The more people who view the site, the more money the owner makes.

And don't forget the problem with other countries posting on the web in order to spread propaganda and create dissension. We need to be on guard as other countries interfere with our internal affairs.

We need to be more skeptical. You may have seen a meme during the 2016 election that had a picture of a young Donald Trump with his alleged quote:

> *"If I were to run, I'd run as a Republican. They're the dumbest group of voters in the country. They believe anything on Fox News. I could lie and they'd still eat it up. bet my numbers would be terrific."*

People who disliked Trump would re-post this in hopes of getting Republican voters to also dislike him and not vote for him. This quote was allegedly from a People Magazine interview in 1998. But looking through the People Magazine archives this quote is nowhere to be found. This statement was totally made up. Were you fooled by it?

The good news is that there are several, relatively simple steps we can take. The following are questions from both FactCheck.org and CNN you can ask to make sure you are not being manipulated by **Fake News**.

Does the story, article or meme originate from a strange looking web address? Check and see if the url has a **.co** or **.su**, or is hosted by a free web site like Weebly or Wordpress. It was reported on abcnews.com.co that President Obama had signed an order banning assault weapon sales. Now look at that url again and you will see the **.co** at the very end. This was a **“Fake New** story.

Does the article match the Headline? Often people will just read the headline and repost the article. By reading the article you might see a very different story. I once read a headline stating that Congress was going to impeach President Obama. But the article just said that one member of congress was thinking about filing the articles of impeachment.

Is the article recent or is it an old one that has been re-purposed. CNN once reported that “A blog called Viral Liberty recently reported that Ford had moved production of some of their trucks from Mexico to Ohio because of Donald Trump’s election win.” Actually, this had been done a year before and had nothing to do with the election.

Do the supporting videos and photos relate to the article? You want to verify that the picture actually relates to the article or is it taken out of context. After the 2016 Presidential election, many anti-Trump protests were staged. There was a picture of a person

defecating in the street with the caption referring to the classlessness of liberals.

It turns out the picture was taken years earlier in an entirely different event. But it was reposted many times.

Does the article cite primary source? Check and see the actual source of a news article. Is it just the website who says so? Do they cite any credible sources? One fake news site, Now8News, is one of those fake sites that look real. As I am writing this, one of their lead stories is that Melania Trump is divorcing Donald Trump. Just because a site looks professional, doesn't make the evidence accurate.

Can you Trace the Quotes you are reading? Often you will see a key figure making a quote that just does not sound believable. Check the quote. Put the quote in Google and see if it comes up somewhere else.

Are there any other news outlets reporting the story? Check to see if there are other, legitimate, news sources reporting the same story. Google the story and select the "News" option. You can see other sources, if there are any, for that story. And make sure they are legitimate. Remember, USAToday.com.co is not a legitimate source with that .**co** at the end.

Is your own personal bias getting in your way? This is a very big influential factor for the success of **Fake News**. As stated in FactCheck.org,

> "*We know this is difficult. Confirmation bias leads people to put more stock in information that confirms their beliefs and discount information that doesn't. But the next time you're automatically appalled at some Facebook post concerning, say, a politician you oppose, take a moment to check it out.*" [2]

It is human nature. The more you hate a particular politician, let's say, Hillary Clinton, the more you will want to believe negative stories about her, no matter how outrageous they may be. A critical thinker needs to fight that human urge.

Has the article been debunked by a reputable fact-checking organization? There are many fact-checking organizations around the world that will help you determine the validity and accuracy of news stories. One excellent website is the "International Fact-Checking Network." On their website is a list of international fact-checking sites including the most popular ones in the Unites States[3]:

- Factcheck.org
- PolitiFact
- Snopes
- The Washington Post Fact Checker
- FactCheck Georgia

Is the web host of the article on a list of unreliable news websites? There are a couple of places that have lists of these dubious websites. One is at Snopes and another is a growing document titled "False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and/or Satirical "news" Sources."*(Zimbars, 2016)* This is an extensive and growing document that describes hundreds of fake news sites and how to analyze them. The challenge with these sites is the determination of which ones are based on some factual information and which ones are total fiction made to sound like fact.

AJ Willingham from CNN urges us to "hone your fact-checking skills." And she cites two experts in the field.

Alexios Mantzarlis trains fact-checkers for a living. He says it's important to have a "*healthy amount of skepticism*" and to think, really think, before sharing a piece of news.

"*If we were a little slower to share and re-tweet content purely based on the headline, we'd go a good way towards combating falsehoods*," he told CNN.

Melissa Zimdars, Communication Professor at Merrimack College, points out that even those who spend a lot of time online aren't immune to fake content.

> "*People think this [thinking] applies only for older people," she told CNN. "I think even early education should be teaching about communication, media and the internet. Growing up with the internet doesn't necessarily mean you are internet savvy*." [4]

Facebook has become a major source of information for many people. Recently Facebook posted a list of strategies a person can use to analyze articles to see if they might be an example of false news.

Facebook states, "*We want to stop the spread of false news on Facebook. As we work to limit the spread, here are some tips on what to look out for":*

Be skeptical of headlines. False news stories often have catchy headlines in all caps with exclamation points. If shocking claims in the headline sound unbelievable, they probably are.

Look closely at the URL. A phony or look-alike URL may be a warning sign of false news. Many false news sites mimic authentic news sources by making small changes to the URL. You can go to the site to compare the URL to established sources.

Investigate the source. Ensure that the story is written by a source that you trust with a reputation for accuracy. If the story comes from an unfamiliar organization, check their "**About"** section to learn more.

Watch for unusual formatting. Many false news sites have misspellings or awkward layouts. Read carefully if you see these signs.

Consider the photos. False news stories often contain manipulated images or videos. Sometimes the photo may be authentic, but taken out of context. You can search for the photo or image to verify where it came from.

Inspect the dates. False news stories may contain timelines that make no sense, or event dates that have been altered.

Check the evidence. Check the author's sources to confirm that they are accurate. Lack of evidence or reliance on unnamed experts may indicate a false news story.

Look at other reports. If no other news source is reporting the same story, it may indicate that the story is false. If the story is reported by multiple sources you trust, it's more likely to be true.

Is the story a joke? Sometimes false news stories can be hard to distinguish from humor or satire. Check whether the source is known for parody, and whether the story's details and tone suggest it may be just for fun.

Some stories are intentionally false. Think critically about the stories you read, and only share news that you know to be credible. [5] You can actually learn more about what Facebook is doing to reduce the spread of false news by going online and reading, "Working to Stop Misinformation and False News." [6] Evidence is one part of the advocate's process for proving his or her arguments in support of their stand on a claim.

Reporting a Fake News Story In Facebook

If you see a story in News Feed that you believe is false, you can report it to Facebook.

Click ∨ next to the post you'd like to mark as false

Click Report post

Click It's a false news story

Click Mark this post as false news

News stories that are reported as false by people on Facebook may be reviewed by independent, third-party, fact-checkers. A story may be marked as disputed if these fact-checkers find the story to be false.

Because of the importance of evidence as the supportive underpinning to arguments, it is important that the use of evidence be ethically based. Advocates must be careful in gathering, recording, and using evidence in an effort to sway the hearts and minds of others. This is especially important because the free marketplace of commerce and ideas rests on the foundation of trying to persuade others fairly and honestly.

Persuasion is central to our political campaigns, social compliance, leadership, interpersonal relations, and consumer protections. The fabrication, misrepresentation, and distortion of evidence cannot be tolerated. Advocates, if not already held legally responsible, are certainly ethically responsible for the evidence they use in trying to gain audience adherence for their stand on a claim.

As Patterson and Zarefsky write in CONTEMPORARY DEBATE:

> "All evidence originates from observations of perceived reality. Direct observation means experiencing a situation for ourselves, using one or more of our senses to gather the information. It is often unnecessary and, in fact, sometimes impossible to observe all the events and behavior we use as evidence for arguments. In some cases, we report what others said they observed as eyewitnesses. More often, however, we report generalizations others have drawn, because we do not have the time or the expertise to do the sampling ourselves."[7](Patterson, 1983)

Finding quality evidence that you can use to support your claim is a crucial step in developing a successful argument. Discovering the weakness in the evidence that others use in their arguments is a great first step in clashing with their positions.

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1. AJ Willingham, "Here's how to outsmart fake news in your Facebook feed," 2016, https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/18/tech/...rnd/index.html (accessed October 31, 2019)
2. Factcheck, "How to Spot Fake News," https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/ho...pot-fake-news/ 2016 (accessed October 31, 2019)
3. www.poynter.org/ifcn/(accessed October 31, 2019)
4. AJ Willingham, "Here's how to outsmart fake news in your Facebook feed," 2016, https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/18/tech/...rnd/index.html (accessed October 31, 2019)
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6.6: The Focus of this Chapter

The foundation of any argument is evidence. The higher the quality of evidence the stronger the argument. Poor quality evidence is open to counter arguments that weaken the strength of your argument. In this chapter, we looked at:

- The challenge of sifting through the enormous amount of evidence that is available to us.
- We looked at the five types of evidence and their strengths and weaknesses.
- It is important to analyze the source of the evidence. To do this we can use the “5 W’s” or the C.R.A.A.P test
- If the source of the evidence is the Internet, checking on the domain names becomes important.
- Because of the growth of “Fake News” sites, determining what is “real news” and what is “fake news” has become more and more of a challenge.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Organization and Outlining

7.1: Prelude to Organizing and Outlining Speeches
7.2: Why Outlining and Organizing Speeches Matter
7.3: Using Common Organizing Patterns
7.4: Types of Outlines
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7.1: Prelude to Organizing and Outlining Speeches



Figure 7.1: Once Upon a Time The End - CC BY-SA 3.0

We all expect a good story to begin with an introduction, and then move into the significant events of the story, and ultimately end by wrapping it all up nicely. However, authors take different approaches to conveying the main events in their stories. Sometimes authors tell stories chronologically, going into detail about what happened first, second, and third. Other times authors will detail the main events out of order. In this chapter, we focus on the different ways to organize the main points of a speech. Additionally, we discuss the importance of outlining a speech, along with the different types of outlining required for speeches.

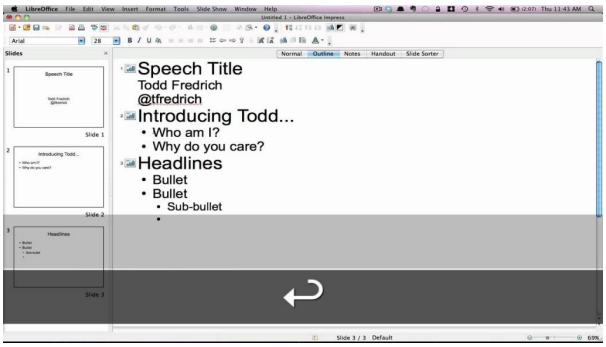
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7.2: Why Outlining and Organizing Speeches Matter

Learning Objectives

1. Outlines help maintain the speech's focus on the thesis by allowing the speaker to test the scope of content, assess logical relationships between ideas, and evaluate the relevance of supporting ideas.
2. Outlines help organize a message that the audience can understand by visually showing the balance and proportion of a speech.
3. Outlines can help you deliver clear meanings by serving as the foundation for speaking notes you will use during your presentation.



Screenshot from this youtube video..

In order for a speech to be as effective as possible, it needs to be organized into logical patterns. Information will need to be presented in a way the audience can understand. When writing speeches, we need to take careful steps to include pertinent information our audience might not know and to explain relationships that might not be evident to them. Using a standard outline format, we can make decisions about our main points, the specific information we will use to support those points, and the language we will use. Without an outline, our message is liable to lose logical integrity. Keep in mind that logic is subjective and this is another reason it's important to recognize the logical structures a specific audience might be using.

A full-sentence outline lays a strong foundation for any message. As we have seen in other chapters of this book, writing a specific purpose in clear language serves the speech writing process well. It helps frame a clear, concrete thesis statement. It helps exclude irrelevant information. It helps focus only on information that directly bears on the thesis. It reduces the amount of research that we must do. It suggests what kind of supporting evidence is needed, so less effort is expended in trying to figure out what to do next. It helps both the speaker and the audience remember the central message of the speech.

Finally, a solid full-sentence outline helps the audience understand the message because they will be able to follow the reasoning much easier. Remember that live audiences for oral communications lack the ability to "rewind" a message, so it is critically important to help the audience follow the reasoning as it reaches their ears.

Students are often reluctant to write full-sentence outlines. It's a task too often perceived as busywork, unnecessary, time consuming, and restricted. On one hand, we understand that reluctance. But on the other hand, we find that students who carefully write a full-sentence outline show a stronger tendency to give powerful presentations of excellent messages.

Logical Relationships to Main Points

We have many choices for topics, and therefore, there are many ways our content can be logically organized. Often the main points of a speech can be arranged into a logical pattern; let's take a look at some such patterns.

Whatever logical pattern we use, if we examine our thesis statement and then look at the three to four main points in our outline, we should easily be able to see the logical way in which they relate.

Balance and Proportion of the Speech

Part of the value of writing a full-sentence outline is the visual space we use for each of your main points. Is each main point of approximately the same importance? Does each main point have the same number of supporting points? If we find that one of our

main points has eight supporting points while the others only have three each, we have two choices: either choose the best three from the eight supporting points or strengthen the authoritative support for the other two main points.

Remember that you should use the best supporting evidence you can find even if it means investing more time in your search for knowledge.

Serves as Notes during the Speech

Although we recommend writing a full-sentence outline during the speech preparation phase, speech writers should also create a shortened outline to use as notes allowing for a strong delivery. If we were to use the full-sentence outline when delivering a speech, we would do a great deal of reading, which would limit our ability to give eye contact and use gestures, hurting our connection with the audience. For this reason, we recommend writing a short-phrase outline on 4 × 6 notecards or on a single 8.5" by 11" paper to use when delivering a speech. The good news is that the main points suggest how we should prepare notecards.

The first 4 × 6 notecard can contain key words and phrases that will help with presenting the introduction. The second card can contain the first main point, together with key words and phrases to act as a map to follow while presenting. If the first main point has an exact quotation, include that on the notecard. The third notecard should be related to the second main point, the fourth card should be about the third main point, and the final notecard should be related to the conclusion. In this way, the notecards follow the very same organizational pattern as the full-sentence outline. In the next section, we will explore more fully how to create a speaking outline.

Key Takeaways

- An outline can help the speech writer stay focused on the thesis of the presentation by testing the scope of the content, examining logical relationships between topics, and checking the relevance of supporting ideas.
- An outline can help organize a message by making sure that all of the main points are well developed.
- A full-sentence outline forms the foundation for a speaking outline, which allows the speaker to connect to with the audience and be clear in presenting the message.

Exercises

1. In one sentence, write a clear, compelling thesis statement about each of the following topics: the effects of schoolyard bullying, the impact of alcohol on brain development, and the impact of the most recent volcano eruption in Iceland. Fully cite the sources where you verify that your thesis statements are actually true.
2. Prepare a full-sentence outline for your next speech assignment. Trade outlines with a classmate and check through the outline for logical sequence of ideas, presence of credible support, proper citation, and clear organization. Give feedback to your partner on areas where he or she has done well and where the outline might be improved.
3. Transfer information from your speech outline to notecards using the guidelines described above. Practice delivering your speech for a small audience (e.g., family member, group of friends or classmates) using first the outline and then the notecards. Ask the audience for feedback comparing your delivery using the two formats.

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7.3: Using Common Organizing Patterns

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among the common speech organizational patterns: categorical/topical, comparison/contrast, spatial, chronological, biographical, causal, problem-cause-solution, and psychological.
2. Understand how to choose the best organizational pattern, or combination of patterns, for a specific speech.

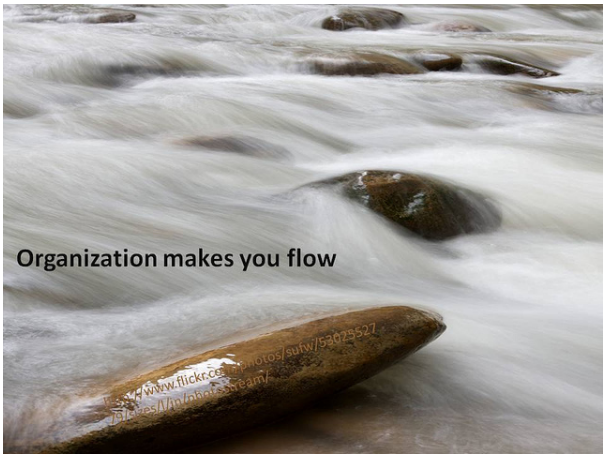


Figure 7.3.1: Twentyfour Students – Organization makes you flow – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Previously in this chapter we discussed how to make main points flow logically. This section is going to explore a number of organizational patterns to create a logically organized speech. The first organization pattern we'll discuss is categorical/topical.

Categorical/Topical

By far the most common pattern for organizing a speech is by categories or topics. The categories function as a way to help the speaker organize the message in a consistent fashion. The goal of a categorical/topical speech pattern is to create categories (or chunks) of information that go together to help support the original specific purpose. Let's look at an example.

Specific Purpose	To explain the different aspect of attending a four-year university.
Main Points	I. Life in the dorms
	II. Life in the classroom
	III. Life on campus

In this case, we have a speaker trying to explain to a group of junior highers the different aspects of going away to college. To inform this group, the speaker has divided the information into three basic categories: what it's like to live in the dorms, what classes are like, and what life is like on campus. Almost anyone could take this basic speech and specifically tailor the speech to fit their own university or college. The main points in this example could be rearranged and the organizational pattern would still be effective because there is no inherent logic to the sequence of points. Let's look at a second example.

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of parents about the different types of COVID vaccines they can give their children.
Main Points	I. Describe Moderna vaccine and FDA's approval groups.
	II. Describe the Pfizer vaccine and which age groups the FDA has given approval for.
	III. Describe the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and the age groups the FDA has approved to take this vaccine.



Figure 7.3.2: Agência Brasília - COVID-19 Vaccines - CC-BY-2.0

The topical organizational pattern recognizes that there isn't any natural way to organize the main points, except by importance. For example, for a speech on different types of COVID vaccines, the three main points would be the Pfizer vaccine, the Moderna vaccine, and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. In describing each vaccine, one is not more important than the other. However, when determining the order of main points, it is important to consider the concept of primacy and recency. If we want our audience to remember one main point more than another, then we would either include it first or last in our discussion.

Comparison/Contrast

Another method for organizing main points is the comparison/contrast speech pattern. While this pattern clearly lends itself easily to two main points, we can also create a third point by giving basic information about what is being compared and what is being contrasted. Let's look at two examples; the first one will be a two-point example and the second a three-point example.

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of physicians about Drug X, a newer drug with similar applications to Drug Y
Main Points	I. Show how Drug X and Drug Y are similar.
	II. Show how Drug X and Drug Y differ.
Specific Purpose	To inform a group of physicians about Drug X, a newer drug with similar applications to Drug Y
Main Points	I. Explain the basic purpose and use of both Drug X and Drug Y.
	II. Show how Drug X and Drug Y are similar.
	III. Show how Drug X and Drug Y differ.

Spatial

The spatial speech pattern organizes information according to how things fit together in physical space. This pattern is best used when your main points are oriented to different locations that can exist independently. The basic reason to choose this format is to show that the main points have clear locations. We'll look at two examples here, one involving physical geography and one involving a different spatial order.

Take a look at Figure 7.3.3 below, an ofrenda [alter] for Dia de los Muertos - a day in November that is dedicated to memorializing family members that have died. We might identify the main parts of the alter as food items, pictures, candles, and flowers. If we were to arrange those main points in a spatial organizational pattern, we would begin with the picture as the first main point; it is at the top of the ofrenda. Moving down the picture, we see candles, so that would be the second main point. The third main point would be the food items, and the last main point would be the flowers, as they are at the bottom of the ofrenda. Essentially, we plan to discuss the ofrenda spatially because we will discuss those main points in the way they are spaced out on the alter.



Figure 7.3.3: Eneas de Troya - Altar de dia de muertos - CC-BY-2.0

Specific Purpose	To explain the different physical aspects of an ofrenda.
Main Points	I. Explain the importance of the deceased's picture to the alter.
	II. Identify where candles are located on the ofrenda and the purpose of the candles.
	III. Explain the relevance of the food items to the deceased and the ofrenda.
	IV. Describe the location of the flowers and their purpose to the ofrenda.

Now let’s look at a spatial speech related to geography.

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of history students about the states that seceded from the United States during the Civil War.
Main Points	I. Locate and describe the Confederate states just below the Mason-Dixon Line (Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee).
	II. Locate and describe the Confederate states in the deep South (South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida).
	III. Locate and describe the western Confederate states (Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas).

If you look at a basic map of the United States, you’ll notice that these groupings of states were created because of their geographic location to one another. In essence, the states create three spatial territories to explain.

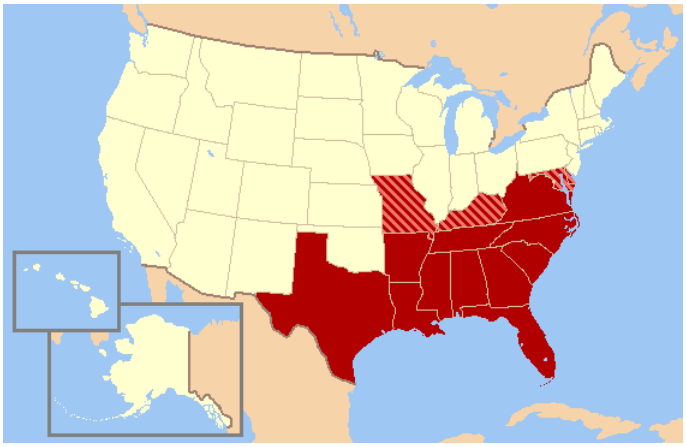


Figure 7.3.4: Southern United States Civil War Map - CC-SA-3.0

Chronological

The chronological speech pattern places the main idea in the time order in which items appear—whether backward or forward. Here's a simple example.

Specific Purpose	To inform my audience about the books written by Winston Churchill
Main Points	I. Examine the style and content of Winston Churchill's writings prior to World War II.
	II. Examine the style and content of Winston Churchill's writings during World War II.
	III. Examine the style and content of Winston Churchill's writings after World War II.

In this example, we're looking at the writings of Winston Churchill in relation to World War II (before, during, and after). By placing his writings into these three categories, we develop a system for understanding this material based on Churchill's own life. Note that we could also use reverse chronological order and start with Churchill's writings after World War II, progressing backward to his earliest writings.

Biographical

The biographical speech pattern is generally used when a speaker wants to describe a person's life—either a speaker's own life, the life of someone they know personally, or the life of a famous person. By the nature of this speech organizational pattern, these speeches tend to be informative or entertaining; they are usually not persuasive. Let's look at an example.

Specific Purpose	To inform my audience about the early life of Marilyn Manson
Main Points	I. Describe Brian Hugh Warner's early life and the beginning of his feud with Christianity.
	II. Describe Warner's stint as a music journalist in Florida.
	III. Describe Warner's decision to create Marilyn Manson and the Spooky Kids.

In this example, we see how Brian Warner, through three major periods of his life, ultimately became the musician known as Marilyn Manson.

In this example, these three stages are presented in chronological order, but the biographical pattern does not have to be chronological. For example, it could compare and contrast different periods of the subject's life, or it could focus topically on the

subject's different accomplishments.

Causal

The causal speech pattern is used to explain cause-and-effect relationships. When using a causal speech pattern, the speech will have two basic main points: cause and effect. In the first main point, typically the speaker will talk about the causes of a phenomenon, and in the second main point will then show how the causes lead to either a specific effect or a small set of effects. Let's look at an example. A causal organizational pattern can begin with an effect and then explore one or more causes or vice versa. In the following example, the effect is the number of arrests for domestic violence.

Specific Purpose	To inform local voters about the problem of domestic violence in our city
Main Points	I. Explain that there are significantly more arrests for domestic violence in our city than in cities of comparable size in our state.
	II. List possible causes for the difference, which may be unrelated to the actual amount of domestic violence.

In this example, the possible causes for the difference might include stricter law enforcement, greater likelihood of neighbors reporting an incident, and police training that emphasizes arrests as opposed to other outcomes. Examining these possible causes may suggest that despite the arrest statistic, the actual number of domestic violence incidents in the city may not be greater than in other cities of similar size.

Problem-Cause-Solution

Another format for organizing distinct main points in a clear manner is the problem-cause-solution speech pattern. In this format we would describe a problem, identify what we believe is causing the problem, and then recommend a solution to correct the problem.

Specific Purpose	To persuade a civic group to support a citywide curfew for individuals under the age of eighteen
Main Points	I. Demonstrate that vandalism and violence among youth is having a negative effect on our community.
	II. Show how vandalism and violence among youth go up after 10:00 p.m. in our community.
	III. Explain how instituting a mandatory curfew at 10:00 p.m. would reduce vandalism and violence within our community.

In this speech, the speaker wants to persuade people to pass a new curfew for people under eighteen. To help persuade the civic group members, the speaker first shows that vandalism and violence are problems in the community. Once the speaker has shown the problem, the speaker then explains to the audience that the cause of this problem is youth outside after 10:00 p.m. Lastly, the speaker provides the mandatory 10:00 p.m. curfew as a solution to the vandalism and violence problem within the community. The problem-cause-solution format for speeches generally lends itself to persuasive topics because the speaker is asking an audience to believe in and adopt a specific solution.

Selecting an Organizational Pattern

Each of the preceding organizational patterns is potentially useful for organizing the main points of a speech. However, not all organizational patterns work for all speeches. For example, as we mentioned earlier, the biographical pattern is useful when telling the story of someone's life. Some other patterns, particularly problem-cause-solution is well suited for persuasive speaking. The challenge is to choose the best pattern for the particular speech topic and purpose.

Key Takeaways

- Speakers can use a variety of different organizational patterns, including categorical/topical, comparison/contrast, spatial, chronological, biographical, causal, and problem-cause-solution. Ultimately, speakers must really think about which organizational pattern best suits a specific speech topic.

Exercises

1. Imagine that you are giving an informative speech about your favorite book. Which organizational pattern do you think would be most useful? Why? Would your answer be different if your speech goal were persuasive? Why or why not?
2. Working on your own or with a partner, develop three main points for a speech designed to persuade college students to attend your university. Work through the preceding organizational patterns and see which ones would be possible choices for your speech. Which organizational pattern seems to be the best choice? Why?
3. Use one of the common organizational patterns to create three main points for your next speech.

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7.4: Types of Outlines

Learning Objective

1. Define types of outlines: full-sentence outline and speaking outline.



Figure 7.4.1: Dave Gray – Blank index card – CC BY 2.0.

When we discuss outlining, we are actually focusing on a series of outlines instead of a single one. Outlines are designed to evolve throughout the speech preparation process, so this section will discuss how to progress from a full-sentence outline to a speaking outline. We will also discuss how using notecards for a speaking outline can be helpful as a speaker.

Full-Sentence Outline

The full-sentence outline should contain full sentences only. There are several reasons why this kind of outline is important. First, it includes a full plan of everything a speaker intends to say, so not to have to struggle with wordings or examples. Second, it provides a clear idea of how much time it will take to present the speech. Third, it contributes a fundamental ingredient of good preparation, part of being an ethical and accountable speaker. This is how a full-sentence outline looks:

Name: Anomaly May McGillicuddy

- >*Topic*: Smart dust
- >*General Purpose*: To inform
- >*Specific Purpose*: To inform a group of science students about the potential of smart dust.
- >*Main Ideas*:
    1. Smart dust is an assembly of microcomputers.
    2. Smart dust could be an enormous asset in covert military operations.
    3. Smart dust could also have applications to daily life.
- >*Introduction*: **(Grabber)** In 2002, famed science fiction writer, Michael Crichton, released his book *Prey*, which was about a swarm of nanomachines that were feeding off living tissue. The nanomachines were solar powered, self-sufficient, and intelligent. Most disturbingly, the nanomachines could work together as a swarm as it took over and killed its prey in its need for new resources. The technology for this level of sophistication in nanotechnology is surprisingly more science fact than science fiction. In 2000, three professors of electrical engineering and computer Science at the University of California at Berkeley, Kahn, Katz, and Pister, hypothesized in the *Journal of Communications and Networks* that wireless networks of tiny microelectromechanical sensors, or MEMS; robots; or devices could detect phenomena including light, temperature, or vibration. By 2004, *Fortune Magazine* listed “smart dust” as the first in their “Top 10 Tech Trends to Bet On.”
- >**(Thesis Statement)** Thus far researchers hypothesized that smart dust could be used for everything from tracking patients in hospitals to early warnings of natural disasters and as a defense against bioterrorism.
- >**(Preview)** Today, I’m going to explain what smart dust is and the various applications smart dust has in the near future. To help us understand the small of it all, we will first examine what smart dust is and how it works. We will then examine some military applications of smart dust. And we will end by discussing some nonmilitary applications of smart dust.

- >**(Transition)** To help us understand smart dust, we will begin by first examining what smart dust is.
- >*Main Point I*: Dr. Kris Pister, a professor in the robotics lab at the University of California at Berkeley, originally conceived the idea of smart dust in 1998 as part of a project funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).
    1. According to a 2001 article written by Bret Warneke, Matt Last, Brian Liebowitz, and Kris Pister titled "Smart Dust: Communicating with a Cubic-Millimeter Computer" published in *Computer*, Pister's goal was to build a device that contained a built-in sensor, communication device, and a small computer that could be integrated into a cubic millimeter package.
    2. For comparison purposes, Doug Steel, in a 2005 white paper titled "Smart Dust" written for C. T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston, noted that a single grain of rice has a volume of five cubic millimeters.
        1. Each individual piece of dust, called a mote, would then have the ability to interact with other motes and supercomputers.
        2. As Steve Lohr wrote in the January 30, 2010, edition of the *New York Times* in an article titled "Smart Dust? Not Quite, But We're Getting There," smart dust could eventually consist of "Tiny digital sensors, strewn around the glove, gathering all sorts of information and communicating with powerful computer networks to monitor, measure, and understand the physical world in new ways."
- >**(Transition)** Now that we've examined what smart dust is, let's switch gears and talk about some of the military applications for smart dust.
- >*Main Point II*: Because smart dust was originally conceptualized under a grant from DARPA, military uses of smart dust have been widely theorized and examined.
    1. According to the smart dust website, smart dust could eventually be used for "battlefield surveillance, treaty monitoring, transportation monitoring, scud hunting" and other clear military applications.
        1. Probably the number one benefit of smart dust in the military environment is its surveillance abilities.
            1. Major Scott Dickson, in a Blue Horizons paper written for the US Air Force Center for Strategy and Technology's Air War College, sees smart dust as helping the military in battlespace awareness, homeland security, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) identification.
            2. Furthermore, Major Dickson also believes it may be possible to create smart dust that has the ability to defeat communications jamming equipment created by foreign governments, which could help the US military not only communicate among itself, but could also increase communications with civilians in military combat zones.
    2. According to a 2010 article written by Jessica Griggs in new *Scientist*, one of the first benefits of smart dust could be an early defense warning for space storms and other debris that could be catastrophic.
- >**(Transition)** Now that we've explored some of the military benefits of smart dust, let's switch gears and see how smart dust may be able to have an impact on our daily lives.
- >*Main Point III*: According to the smart dust project website, smart dust could quickly become a common part of our daily lives.
    1. Everything from pasting smart dust particles to our finger tips to create a virtual computer keyboard to inventory control to product quality control have been discussed as possible applications for smart dust.
        1. Steve Lohr, in his 2010 *New York Times* article, wrote, "The applications for sensor-based computing, experts say, include buildings that manage their own energy use, bridges that sense motion and metal fatigue to tell engineers they need repairs, cars that track traffic patterns and report potholes, and fruit and vegetable shipments that tell grocers when they ripen and begin to spoil."
    2. Medically, according to the smart dust website, smart dust could help disabled individuals interface with computers.
        1. Theoretically, we could all be injected with smart dust, which relays information to our physicians and detects adverse changes to our body instantly.
        2. Smart dust could detect the microscopic formations of center cells or alert us when we've been infected by a bacterium or virus, which could speed up treatment and prolong all of our lives.
- >**(Transition)** Today, we've explored what smart dust is, how smart dust could be utilized by the US military, and how smart dust could impact all of our lives in the near future.

- >*Conclusion*: While smart dust is quickly transferring from science fiction to science fact, experts agree that the full potential of smart dust will probably not occur until 2025. Smart dust is definitely in our near future, but swarms of smart dust eating people as was depicted in Michael Crichton's 2002 novel, *Prey*, isn't reality. However, as with any technological advance, there are definite ethical considerations and worries related to smart dust. Even Dr. Kris Pister's smart dust project website admits that as smart dust becomes more readily available, one of the trade-offs will be privacy. Pister responds to these critiques by saying, "As an engineer, or a scientist, or a hair stylist, everyone needs to evaluate what they do in terms of its positive and negative effect. If I thought that the negatives of working on this project were greater than or even comparable to the positives, I wouldn't be working on it. As it turns out, I think that the potential benefits of this technology far outweigh the risks to personal privacy."

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When preparing a full-sentence outline carefully, it may take as much as 1 ½ hours to complete the first part of the outline, from a title page through the introduction. When completed, take a break and do something else. Upon returning to the outline, the draft could be completed in another 1 ½ hours. After that, do a detailed check for completeness, accuracy, relevance, balance, omitted words, and consistency.

Notice that the various parts of a speech, for instance, the transition and main points, are labeled. There are compelling reasons for these labels. Labels help to quickly locate passages in the draft. Second, the labels work as a checklist to ensure everything is included. Third, it helps in preparing the peaking outline.

Notice the full references at the end of the outline; they match the citations within the outline. Sometimes while preparing a speech, a speaker finds it important to go back to an original source to be sure the message will be accurate. Don't think of the references as busywork or drudgery. Although they're more time consuming than text, they are good practice for the more advanced academic work that college students will eventually do.

Speaking Outline

The full-sentence outline is preparation for a well-organized message, but the speaking outline will include far less detail. Whenever possible, use key words and phrases only, but in some instances, an extended quotation will need to be fully written on the speaking outline.

Resist the temptation to use a full-sentence outline as a speaking outline. The temptation is real for at least two reasons. First, students want to ensure that they deliver a well-crafted speech, especially since so much time was spent preparing it. Second, students often want to use the full-sentence outline as a safety net. In our experience, however, if students have your full-sentence outline with them, they will end up reading, rather than speaking, to their audience.

Plan to use five cards. Use 4 × 6 cards. The smaller 3 × 5 cards are too small to provide space for a visually organized set of notes. With five cards, there will be one card for the introduction, one card for each of the three main points, and one card for the conclusion. Be sure to number the cards and write on one side only. Numbering is helpful if the cards are accidentally dropped. Each card should contain key words and key phrases but not full sentences.

Some speeches will include direct or extended quotations from expert sources. Some of these quotations might be highly technical or difficult to memorize for other reasons, but they must be presented correctly. This is an appropriate time to include an extra card in the sequence of notecards. This is the one time reading from a card is necessary. If the quotation is important and the exact wording is crucial, the audience will understand that.

The "trick" to selecting the phrases and quotations for notecards is to identify the labels that will trigger a recall sequence. For instance, if the phrase "more science fact" brings to mind the connection to science fiction and the differences between the real developments and the fictive events of Crichton's novel *Prey*, that phrase on the card will support the speaker through a fairly extended part of an introduction.

Having identified what works, make a preliminary set of no more than five cards written on one side only, and practice with them. Revise and refine as needed.

The following is a hypothetical set of cards for the smart dust speech:

Card 1.

- >*Introduction*: 2002, *Prey*, swarm nanomachines feed on living tissue.
- >Kahn, Katz, and Pister, U C Berkeley engineering and computer sci. profs. hyp.
- >Microelectromechanical (MEMS) devices could detect light, temp, or vib.
- >*Thesis Statement*: Researchers hyp that s.d. could track patients, warn of natural disaster, act as defense against bioterrorism.
- >*Prev*.: What smart dust is and how it works, military aps, nonmilitary aps.
- >*Transition*: To help understand, first, what smart dust is.

Card 2.

- >I. Dr. Kris Pister, prof robotics lab UC Berkeley conceived the idea in 1998 in a proj. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).
    1. 2001 article by Bret Warneke et al titled "Smart Dust: Communicating with a Cubic-Millimeter Computer" publ. in *Computer*, Pister wanted sensors, comm. devices, and computer in a cubic millimeter package.
    2. Doug Steel of CT Bauer College of Bus at Houston noted grain of rice = 5 cm.
        1. Each mote could interact w/ others.
        2. (see extended quotation, next card)

Card 3.

- >*Quotation*: Steve Lohr, NYT Jan 30 2005, "Smart Dust? Not Quite, but We're Getting There." Smart dust could eventually consist of "Tiny digital sensors, strewn around the globe, gathering all sorts of information and communicating with powerful computer networks to monitor, measure, and understand the physical world in new ways."

Card 4.

- >II. Orig conceptualized under DARPA, military uses theor. and examined.
    1. Smart Dust website, battlefield surveill., treaty monitor., transp. monitor., + scud hunting.
        1. benefit, surveill.
            1. Maj. Scott Dickson, Blue Horizons Paper for Ctr for Strat and Tech for USAF air war college, sees s.d. as help for battlespace awareness, homeland security, and WMD ID.
            2. could also defeat comm. jamming equipt by communicating among itself and w/ civilians in combat zones.
    2. 2010 article Jessica Griggs *New Scientist*, early defense, storms and debris.
- >*Transition*: Switch gears to daily lives.

Card 5.

- >III. s.d. project website: s.d. could become common in daily life.
    1. Pasting particles for virtual computer keyboard to inventory control poss.

1. Steve Lohr, 2010, NYT, “The applications for sensor-based computing, experts say, include buildings that manage their own energy use, bridges that sense motion and metal fatigue to tell engineers they need repairs, cars that track traffic patterns and report potholes, and fruit and vegetable shipments that tell grocers when they ripen and begin to spoil.”
2. Medically, accdng to SD project website, help disabled.
    1. interface w/ computers
    2. injected, cd. relay info to docs and detect body changes instantly
        1. cancer cells, bacteria or virus, speed up treatment, and so on.

- >*Transition*: We expl. What SD is, how SD cd be used military, and how SD cd impact our lives.

Card 6.

- >*Conclusion*: Transf fiction to fact, experts agree potential 2025. Michael Crichton’s Prey isn’t reality, but in developing SD as fact, there are ethical considerations. Pister: privacy.
- >Dr. Kris Pister: “As an engineer, or a scientist, or a hair stylist, everyone needs to evaluate what they do in terms of its positive and negative effect. If I thought that the negatives of working on this project were larger or even comparable to the positives, I wouldn’t be working on it. As it turns out, I think that the potential benefits of this technology far far outweigh the risks to personal privacy.”

Using a set of cards similar to this could help us get through an impressive set of specialized information. But what if we lose our place during a speech? With a set of cards, it will take less time to re-find it than with a full-sentence outline. We will not be rustling sheets of paper, and because our cards are written on one side only, we can keep them in order without flipping them back and forth to check both sides.

Under no circumstances should we ever put our entire speech on cards in tiny writing. We will end up reading a sequence of words to our audience instead of telling them our message.

Key Takeaways

- Working outlines help with speech logic, development, and planning.
- The full-sentence outline develops the full detail of the message.
- The speaking outline helps speakers stay organized in front of the audience without reading to them.
- Using notecards for a speaking outline helps with delivery and makes it easier to find information.

Exercises

1. With respect to your speech topic, what words need to be defined?
2. Define what you mean by the terms you will use.
3. How does your definition compare with those of experts?

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7.5: Linking Speech Organization to Speech Outlining

Learning Objective

1. Understand five basic principles of outline creation.



Figure 7.4.1: Tom706 – parallelism – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

As with any part of the speech process, there are some pretty commonly agreed upon principles for organizing speeches and creating outlines. Now that we've examined the basic organizational patterns, there are some important factors to consider when creating an organized, logical, and coherent outline: singularity, consistency, adequacy, uniformity, and parallelism.

Singularity

For the sake of clarity, make sure the thesis statement expresses one idea only. Only in this way will it be optimally useful to build the outline. After narrowing the topic skillfully, focus the thesis statement as one central point. For example, with a thesis statement suggesting the Second Amendment protects gun ownership rights but most people are unaware of the responsibility involved, it's clear the thesis statement focuses on two different issues. It's crucial to choose just one issue, saving the other perhaps for a different speech.

The same holds true for the main points: they should each express one clear idea. For the audience's sake, maintain clarity. If many different ideas are required in order to build a complete message, handle them in separate sentences with the use of such transitions as "at the same time," "alternately," "in response to that event," or some other transition that clarifies the relationship between two separate ideas.

Consistency

The entire point of framing a thesis with one clear focus is to maintain consistency throughout the speech. Beyond the grammatical requirements of subject-verb agreement, we want to maintain a consistent approach. For instance, unless our speech has a chronological structure that begins in the past and ends in the future, we should choose a tense, past or present, to use throughout the speech. Similarly, we should choose language and use it consistently. For instance, use humanity instead of mankind or humans, and use that term throughout.

Similarly, define terms and use those terms only to designate the meanings in the definition. To do otherwise could result in equivocation and confusion. For instance, if we use the word "right" in two or three different senses, we should change our language. The word "right" can be applicable to *right* to a good education; the ethical difference between *right* and wrong; and the status of a statement as *right*, or accurate and correct. By the same token, in a health care setting, saying that a medical test had a

positive outcome can be confusing. Does the patient test positive for the presence of disease, or does the test reveal some good news?

Adequacy

To make sure the audience will understand the speech, we need to set aside the assumption that what is obvious to us is also obvious to your audience. Therefore, pay attention to adequacy in two ways: definitions of terms and support for main points.

Use concrete language as much as possible. For instance, if we use the word “community,” we are using an abstract term that can mean many things. We might be referring to a suburban neighborhood; to a cultural group, such as the Jewish community; to an institutional setting that includes an academic community; or to a general sense of overarching mainstream community standards for what materials should or should not be broadcast on television, for instance.

Adequacy is also a concern when using evidence to support main points. Evidence of the right kind and the right weight are needed. For instance, if we make a substantial claim, such as a claim that all printed news sources will be obsolete within ten years, we need expert sources. This means we need at least two well-known experts from the institutions that provide news (newspapers, television news, or news radio). They should be credible sources, not sources with extreme views whose contact with reality is questioned. This will provide us with the right kind of evidence, and a large enough amount of evidence.

Uniformity

A full-sentence outline readily shows if we are giving “equal time” to each of our main points. For example, are we providing three pieces of evidence to support each main point? It should also show whether each main point is directly related to the thesis statement.

Parallelism

Parallelism refers to the idea that the three main points follow the same structure or make use of the same kind of language. For instance, in the sample outline we used previously, we see that each of the main points emphasizes the topic, smart dust.

Parallelism also allows us to check for inconsistencies and self-contradictory statements. For instance, does anything within main point two contradict anything in main point one? Examining the text for this purpose can strengthen the clarity of the message. For instance, if in main point one we claim that computer crime leaves an electronic trail, but in main point two we claim that hackers often get away with their crimes, we have some explaining to do. If an electronic trail can readily lead to the discovery of the electronic felon, how or why do they get away with it? The answer might be that cyber-crime does not fall within the jurisdiction of any law enforcement agency or that the law lags behind technology. Perhaps there are other reasons as well, and we must make sure we don’t leave our audience confused. If we confuse them, we will sound confused, and we will lose credibility. There is no doubt that a full-sentence outline provides the most useful opportunity to examine a message for the details that either clarify or undermine a message.

Key Takeaways

- For an outline to be useful, it’s important to follow five basic principles: singularity, consistency, adequacy, uniformity, and parallelism.

Exercises

1. Look at an outline you’ve created for your public speaking course. Did you follow the five basic rules of outlining? How could you have changed your outline to follow those five basic principles?
2. Write an outline for your next speech in your course, paying special attention to the structure of the outline to ensure that none of the principles of outlining are violated.

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7.6: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

George needs to turn in an outline for the speech he is assigned to deliver. The speech itself is two weeks away, but the outline is due today. George has already written the entire speech, and he does not see why he should spend time deleting parts of it to transform it into an outline. He knows exactly what he's going to say when he gives the speech. Then he discovers that the word-processing program in his computer can create an outline version of a document. Aha! Technology to the rescue! George happily turns in the computer-generated outline, feeling confident that never again will he have to hassle with writing an outline himself.

1. Do you think George's use of a computer-generated outline fulfills the purpose of creating an outline for a speech? Why or why not?
2. Do you think George's professor will be able to tell that the outline was created by a word-processing program?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Joe is beginning to prepare his speech and has constructed a brief outline that sketches out his thesis and main points but does not yet have a fully developed conclusion or transitions. Which type of outline has Joe constructed?
    1. speaking outline
    2. full-sentence outline
    3. opening outline
    4. working outline
    5. transitory outline
2. Brenda has prepared her speaking outline on a set of six notecards, so she believes she is finished preparing for her speech. You tell her that simply preparing the speaking outline is not enough; she needs to practice using her notecards as well. Why is this the case?
    1. She should get used to how the notecards feel in her hand.
    2. She needs to make sure the information on the cards will work as a memory cue for her.
    3. She needs to know whether her audience prefers white or colored notecards.
    4. You think she needs to add more notecards.
    5. She needs to memorize all the quotations she is using.

Answer Key

1. d
2. b

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Introductions and Conclusions Matter- How to Begin and End A Speech Effectively

8.1: Prelude to Introductions and Conclusions
8.2: The Importance of an Introduction
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8.1: Prelude to Introductions and Conclusions

In a 2012 APA article, James Uleman, a psychology professor and researcher, stated, "'You don't get a second chance to make a first impression'" (Rowh, p. 32). As public speakers, we have an opportunity to make a solid first impression by crafting a compelling introduction. Ending a speech with a solid conclusion solidifies that good first impression we strive for.



Figure 8.1.1: Silicon Valley Leadership Group - CC BY NC-2.0

In this chapter, we discuss the most effective ways to make a positive impression on our audience through introductions and conclusions. A compelling introduction engages the audience and offers them a good reason to listen. A compelling conclusion reminds the audience of the relevance of the message. In addition to discussing the why it's important to have compelling introductions and conclusions, we offer various strategies to make introductions and conclusions as poignant as possible. In this chapter there are opportunities to analyze introductions and conclusions in order to assess their effectiveness.

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8.2: The Importance of an Introduction

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the general length of an introduction.
2. List and explain the five basic functions of an introduction.
3. Understand how to use three factors of credibility in an introduction.



Figure 8.2.1: Enter at your own risk (CC BY-NC 2.0; Brian Indrelunas via source)

The introduction for a speech is generally only 10 to 15 percent of the entire time the speaker will spend speaking. This means that if a speech is to be five minutes long, the introduction should be no more than forty-five seconds. If a speech is to be ten minutes long, then the introduction should be no more than a minute and a half. Unfortunately, that 10 to 15 percent of a speech can either make an audience interested in what we have to say or cause them to tune out before we've started. Overall, a good introduction should serve five functions, goals, and/or purposes (A, B, C, D, and E). Let’s examine each of these.

A: Gain Audience Attention and Interest

The first goal of an introduction is to gain the audience’s attention and make them interested in the speech. One of the biggest mistakes that novice speakers make is to assume that people will naturally listen because the speaker is speaking. While many audiences may be polite and not talk while a speaker is speaking, actually getting them to listen is a completely different challenge. Let’s face it—we’ve all tuned someone out at some point because we weren’t interested in what they had to say. If we do not get the audience’s attention at the outset, it will only become more difficult to do so as we continue speaking. We’ll talk about some strategies for grabbing an audience’s attention later on in this chapter.

B: State the Speech's Purpose

The second major function of an introduction is to reveal the purpose of the speech. We all have sat through speeches, church sermons, class lectures and wondered what the speaker, preacher, and/or teacher was actually talking about. An introduction is important because it forces the speaker to be mindfully aware of explaining the topic of the speech to the audience. If the speaker doesn’t know what her, his, or their topic is and cannot convey that topic to the audience, then we’ve got really big problems! Robert Cavett, the founder of the National Speaker’s Association, used the analogy of a preacher giving a sermon when he noted, “When it’s foggy in the pulpit, it’s cloudy in the pews.”

As we discussed in Chapter 5 “Finding a Purpose and Selecting a Topic”, the specific purpose is the one idea we want our audience to remember when we are finished with our speech. The specific purpose is the rudder that guides your research, organization, and development of main points. The more clearly focused our purpose is, the easier our task will be in developing our speech. In addition, a clear purpose provides the audience with a single, simple idea to remember even if they daydream during the body of our speech. To develop a specific purpose, we should complete the following sentence: “I want my audience to understand that…” Notice that the specific speech purpose is phrased in terms of expected audience responses, not in terms of the speaker's own perspective.

C. Establish Speaker Credibility

One of the most researched areas within the field of communication has been Aristotle's concept of *ethos* or credibility. First, and foremost, the concept of credibility must be understood as a perception of receivers. Essentially, the audience determines whether or not a speaker is credible, but a speaker has many opportunities to influence the audience's perception. Even if we think we are the most competent, caring, and trustworthy individuals, the audience has to believe it. As public speakers, we need to make sure that we explain to our audiences why we are credible speakers on a given topic.

James C. McCroskey and Jason J. Teven (1999) have conducted extensive research on credibility and have determined that an individual's credibility is composed of three factors: competence, trustworthiness, and caring/goodwill. Competence is the degree to which a speaker is perceived to be knowledgeable or expert in a given subject by an audience member. Some individuals are given expert status because of positions they hold in society. For example, Dr. Vivek Murthy, the US Surgeon General during the Biden Administration, is expected to be competent in matters related to health and wellness as a result of being the United States' top physician.



Figure 8.2.2: Dr. Vivek Murthy (Public Domain)

But what if we do not possess a fancy title that lends itself to established competence? We need to explain to the audience why we are competent to speak on our various topics. Keep in mind that even well-known speakers are not perceived as universally credible. US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy may be seen as competent on health and wellness issues, but may not be seen as a competent speaker on trends in Latin American music or different ways to cook summer squash. Like well-known speakers, we need to establish our credibility on each topic we address, so establishing our competence about the energy efficiency of furnace systems during an informative speech does not automatically mean we will be seen as competent on the topic of organ donation for a persuasive speech.

The second factor of credibility noted by McCroskey and Teven is trustworthiness, or the degree to which an audience member perceives a speaker as honest. Nothing will turn an audience against a speaker faster than if the audience believes the speaker is lying. When an audience does not perceive a speaker as trustworthy, the information coming out of the speaker's mouth is automatically perceived as deceitful. The speaker could be 100 percent honest, but the audience will still find the information suspect. For example, in the summer of 2009, many Democratic members of Congress attempted to hold public town-hall meetings about health care. For a range of reasons, many of the people who attended these town-hall meetings refused to let their elected officials actually speak because the audiences were convinced that the members of Congress were lying.

In these situations, where a speaker is in front of a very hostile audience, there is little a speaker can do to reestablish that sense of trustworthiness. These public town-hall meetings became screaming matches between the riled-up audiences and the congressional representatives. Some police departments actually ended up having to escort the representatives from the buildings because they feared for their safety. Check out this video from CNN.com to see what some of these events actually looked like: http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2009/08/07/ldt.sylvester.town.hall.cnn?iref=videosearch. These incidents serve to underscore how important speaker trustworthiness is across speaking contexts.

Caring/goodwill is the final factor of credibility noted by McCroskey and Teven. Caring/goodwill refers to the degree to which an audience member perceives a speaker as caring about the audience member. As noted by Wrench, McCroskey, and Richmond (2008), "If a receiver does not believe that a source has the best intentions in mind for the receiver, the receiver will not see the source as credible. Simply put, we are going to listen to people who we think truly care for us and are looking out for our welfare" (p. 33-34). As a speaker, then, we need to establish that our information is being presented because we care about our audience and

are not just trying to manipulate them. We should note that research has indicated that caring/goodwill is the most important factor of credibility. This means that if an audience believes that a speaker truly cares about the audience's best interests, the audience may overlook some competence and trust issues.

D. Provides Audience Reasons to Listen

The fourth major function of an introduction is to establish a connection between the speaker and the audience, and one of the most effective means of establishing a connection with the audience, is to provide them with reasons why they should listen to the speech. The idea of establishing a connection is an extension of the notion of caring/goodwill. In the chapters on Language and Speech Delivery, we spend more time discussing how to establish a good relationship with the audience. However, this relationship starts the moment a speaker steps to the front of the room and begins speaking.

Instead of assuming the audience will make their own connections to the speech material, effective speakers should explicitly state how the information might be useful to the audience. Tell them directly how they might use the information themselves. Build a bridge to the audience by explicitly connecting the topic to their possible needs.

E. Previews Main Ideas

The last major function of an introduction is to preview the main ideas that will be covered in the body of the speech. A preview establishes the direction the speech will take. We sometimes call this process signposting because we're establishing signs for audience members to look for while we are speaking. In the most basic speech format, speakers generally have three to five major points they plan on making. During the preview, a speaker outlines what these three to five points will be, which demonstrates to the audience that the speaker is organized.

A study by Baker (1965) found that individuals who were unorganized while speaking were perceived as less credible than those individuals who were organized. Having a solid preview of the information contained within one's speech and then following that preview will definitely help a speaker's credibility. It also helps the audience keep track of where the speaker is in the speech if they momentarily daydream or get distracted.

Key Takeaways

- Introductions are only 10–15 percent of one's speech, so speakers need to make sure they think through the entire introduction to ensure that they will capture an audience. During an introduction, speakers attempt to impart the general and specific purpose of a speech while making their audience members interested in the speech topic, establishing their own credibility, and providing the audience with a preview of the speech structure.
- A speaker's perceived credibility is a combination of competence, trustworthiness, and caring/goodwill. Research has shown that caring/goodwill is probably the most important factor of credibility because audiences want to know that a speaker has their best interests at heart. At the same time, speakers should strive to be both competent and honest while speaking.

Exercises

1. What are the five basic functions of an introduction? Discuss with your classmates which purpose you think is the most important. Why?
2. Why is establishing a relationship with one's audience important? How do you plan on establishing a relationship with your audience during your next speech?
3. Of the three factors of credibility, which do you think is going to be hardest to establish with your peers during your next speech? Why? What can you do to enhance your peers' perception of your credibility?

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8.3: The Attention-Getter- The First Step of an Introduction

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the different tools speakers can use to gain their audience's attention.
2. Name some common mistakes speakers make in trying to gain attention.

As we now know, a good introduction will capture an audience's attention, while a bad introduction can turn an audience against a speaker. An attention-getter is the device a speaker uses at the beginning of a speech to capture an audience's interest and make them interested in the speech's topic. Typically, there are four things to consider in choosing a specific attention-getting device:

1. Appropriateness or relevance to audience
2. Purpose of speech
3. Topic
4. Occasion

First, when selecting an attention-getting device, make sure that the strategy is actually appropriate and relevant to the specific audience. Different audiences will have different backgrounds and knowledge, so use audience analysis to determine whether specific information would be appropriate for a specific audience. For example, if giving a speech on family units to a group of individuals over the age of sixty-five, starting a speech with a reference to the television show *Gossip Girl* may not be the best idea because the television show may not be relevant to that audience.

Second, consider the basic purpose of the speech. As discussed earlier in this text, there are three basic purposes for giving a speech: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. When selecting an attention-getter, make sure to select one that corresponds with the basic purpose. If the goal is to entertain an audience, then starting a speech with a quotation about how many people are dying in Africa each day from malnutrition may not be the best way to get the audience's attention. Remember, one of the basic goals of an introduction is to prepare the audience for the speech. If the attention-getter differs drastically in tone from the rest of the speech, the disjointedness may cause the audience to become confused or tuned out.



Figure 8.3.1: NES Control start button. (CC BY-NC 2.0; Stephen Velasco via Flickr)

The third consideration when picking an attention-getting device is the speech topic. Ideally, an attention-getting device should have a relevant connection to the speech. Imagine if a speaker pulled condoms out of his pocket, yelled "Free sex!" and threw the condoms at the audience in the beginning of a speech about the economy. While this may clearly get the audience's attention, this isn't really a good way to prepare an audience for a speech about bull and bear markets. Not every attention-getter is appropriate for a given topic. Instead, a speaker could start this speech by explaining that "according to a 2004 episode of *60 Minutes*, adults in the United States spend approximately $10 billion annually on adult entertainment, which is roughly the equivalent to the amounts they spend attending professional sporting events, buying music, or going out to the movies" (Leung, 2004). Notice how effective the shocking statistic is in clearly introducing the monetary value of the adult entertainment industry.

The last consideration when picking an attention-getting device involves the speech occasion. Different occasions will necessitate different tones, or particular styles or manners of speaking. For example, a persuasive speech about death and dying shouldn't be happy and hilarious. An informative speech on the benefits of laughing shouldn't be dull, dreary, and depressing. When selecting an attention-getter, make sure that the attention-getter sets the tone for the speech.

Now that we've explored the four major considerations for selecting an attention-getter, let's look at a range of different attention-getters to employ. Miller (1946) discovered that speakers tend to use one of eleven attention-getting devices when starting a speech.

The rest of this section is going to examine some of these eleven attention-getting devices.

Reference to Subject

The first attention-getting method to consider is to tell your audience the subject of your speech. This device is probably the most direct, but it may also be the least interesting of the possible attention-getters. Here's an example:

> We are surrounded by statistical information in today's world, so understanding statistics is becoming paramount to citizenship in the twenty-first century.

This sentence explicitly tells an audience that the speech they are about to hear is about the importance of understanding statistics. While this isn't the most entertaining or interesting attention-getter, it is very clear and direct.



Figure 8.3.2: Dave Dugdale – Attentive Audience – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Reference to Audience

The second attention-getting device to consider is a direct reference to the audience. In this case, the speaker has a clear understanding of the audience and points out that there is something unique about the audience that should make them interested in the speech's content. Here's an example:

As human resource professionals, you and I know the importance of talent management. In today's competitive world, we need to invest in getting and keeping the best talent for our organizations to succeed.

In this example, the speaker reminds the audience of their shared status as human resource professionals and uses the common ground to acknowledge the importance of talent management in human resources.

Quotation

Another way to capture an audience's attention is to use the words of another person that relate directly to the speech topic. When researching for the speech, books and articles can provide those compelling quotations to begin a speech with. There are also a number of sources that compile useful quotations from noted individuals. Probably the most famous quotation book of all time is *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (http://www.bartleby.com/100), now in its seventeenth edition. Here are some other websites that contain useful databases of quotations for almost any topic:

- http://www.quotationspage.com
- http://www.bartleby.com/quotations
- http://www.moviequotes.com
- www.quotesandsayings.com
- http://www.quoteland.com

Quotations are a great way to start a speech, so let's look at an example that could be used for a speech on deception:

Oliver Goldsmith, a sixteenth-century writer, poet, and physician, once noted that "the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them."

Reference to Current Events

Referring to a current news event that relates to your topic is often an effective way to capture attention, as it immediately makes the audience aware of how relevant the topic is in today's world. For example, consider this attention-getter for a persuasive speech on frivolous lawsuits:

On January 10, 2007, Scott Anthony Gomez Jr. and a fellow inmate escaped from a Pueblo, Colorado, jail. During their escape the duo attempted to rappel from the roof of the jail using a makeshift ladder of bed sheets. During Gomez's attempt to scale the building, he slipped, fell forty feet, and injured his back. After being quickly apprehended, Gomez filed a lawsuit against the jail for making it too easy for him to escape.

In this case, the speaker is highlighting a news event that illustrates what a frivolous lawsuit is, setting up the speech topic of a need for change in how such lawsuits are handled.

Historical Reference

You may also capture your listeners' attention by referring to a historical event related to your topic. Obviously, this strategy is closely related to the previous one, except that instead of a recent news event you are reaching further back in history to find a relevant reference. For example, if you are giving a speech on the Iraq War that began in 2003, you could refer back to the Vietnam War as way of making a comparison:

During the 1960s and '70s, the United States intervened in the civil strife between North and South Vietnam. The result was a long-running war of attrition in which many American lives were lost and the country of Vietnam suffered tremendous damage and destruction. Today, we see a similar war being waged in Iraq. American lives are being lost, and stability has not yet returned to the region.

In this example, the speaker is evoking the audience's memories of the Vietnam War to raise awareness of similarities to the war in Iraq.

Anecdote

Another device you can use to start a speech is to tell an anecdote related to the speech's topic. An anecdote is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event. Notice the emphasis here is on the word "brief." A common mistake speakers make when telling an anecdote is to make the anecdote too long. Remember, your entire introduction should only be 10 to 15 percent of your speech, so your attention-getter must be very short.

One type of anecdote is a real story that emphasizes a speech's basic message. For example, here is an anecdote a speaker could use to begin a speech on how disconnected people are from the real world because of technology:

In July 2009, a high school girl named Alexa Longueira was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole (Whitney, 2009).

A second type of anecdote is a parable or fable. A parable or fable is an allegorical anecdote designed to teach general life lessons. The most widely known parables for most Americans are those given in the Bible and the best-known fables are Aesop's Fables (http://www.aesopfables.com). For the same speech on how disconnected people are with the real world because of technology, the speaker could have used the Fable of The Boy and the Filberts:

The ancient Greek writer Aesop told a fable about a boy who put his hand into a pitcher of filberts. The boy grabbed as many of the delicious nuts as he possibly could. But when he tried to pull them out, his hand wouldn't fit through the neck of the pitcher because he was grasping so many filberts. Instead of dropping some of them so that his hand would fit, he burst into tears and cried about his predicament. The moral of the story? "Don't try to do too much at once" (Aesop, 1881).

After recounting this anecdote, the speaker could easily relate the fable to the notion that the technology in our society leads us to try to do too many things at once.

While parables and fables are short and entertaining, their application to your speech topic should be clear. We'll talk about this idea in more detail later in this chapter when we discuss how to link your attention-getter explicitly to your topic.

Startling Statement

The eighth device you can use to start a speech is to surprise your audience with startling information about your topic. Often, startling statements come in the form of statistics and strange facts. The goal of a good startling statistic is that it surprises the audience and gets them engaged in your topic. For example, if you're giving a speech about oil conservation, you could start by saying, "A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel." You could start a speech on the psychology of dreams by noting, "The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year." A strange fact, on the other hand, is a statement that does not involve numbers but is equally surprising to most audiences. For example, you could start a speech on the gambling industry by saying, "There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas." You could start a speech on the Harlem Globetrotters by saying, "In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters." All four of these examples came from a great website for strange facts (http://www.strangefacts.com).

Although startling statements are fun, it is important to use them ethically. First, make sure that your startling statement is factual. The Internet is full of startling statements and claims that are simply not factual, so when you find a statement you'd like to use, you have an ethical duty to ascertain its truth before you use it. Second, make sure that your startling statement is relevant to your speech and not just thrown in for shock value. We've all heard startling claims made in the media that are clearly made for purposes of shock or fear mongering. As speakers, we have an ethical obligation to avoid playing on people's emotions in this way.

Question

Another strategy for getting your audience's attention is to ask them a question. There are two types of questions commonly used as attention-getters: response questions and rhetorical questions. A response question is a question that the audience is expected to answer in some manner. For example, you could ask your audience, "Please raise your hand if you have ever thought about backpacking in Europe" or "Have you ever voted for the Electoral College? If so, stand up." In both of these cases, the speaker wants her or his audience to respond. A rhetorical question, on the other hand, is a question to which no actual reply is expected. For example, a speaker talking about the importance of HIV testing could start by asking the audience, "I have two questions that I'd like you to think about. How many students on this campus have had sexual intercourse? Of those who have had sex, how many have been tested for HIV?" In this case, the speaker does not expect the audience to give an estimate of the numbers of students that fit into each category but rather to think about the questions as the speech goes on.

Humor

Humor is another effective method for gaining an audience's attention. Humor is an amazing tool when used properly. We cannot begin to explain all the amazing facets of humor within this text, but we can say that humor is a great way of focusing an audience on what you are saying. However, humor is a double-edged sword. If you do not wield the sword carefully, you can turn your audience against you very quickly. When using humor, you really need to know your audience and understand what they will find humorous. One of the biggest mistakes a speaker can make is to use some form of humor that the audience either doesn't find funny or finds offensive. Think about how incompetent the character of Michael Scott seems on the television program *The Office*, in large part because of his ineffective use of humor. We always recommend that you test out humor of any kind on a sample of potential audience members prior to actually using it during a speech.



Figure 8.3.3: Audience laughing. (CC BY-NC 2.0.; Thinkmedialabs via Flickr)

Now that we've offered warnings about the perils of using humor, let's talk about how to use humor as an attention-getter. Humor can be incorporated into several of the attention-getting devices already mentioned. We could use a humorous anecdote, quotation, or current event. As with other attention-getting devices, we need to make sure our humor is relevant to our topic, as one of the biggest mistakes some novices make when using humor is to add humor that really doesn't support the overall goal of the speech. So when looking for humorous attention-getters, we want to make sure that the humor is non-offensive to our audiences and

relevant to our speeches. For example, here's a humorous quotation from Nicolas Chamfort, a French author during the sixteenth century, "The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless." While this quotation could be great for some audiences, other audiences may find this humorous quotation offensive (e.g., religious audiences). The Chamfort quotation could be great for a speech on the ills of modern society, but probably not for a speech on the state of modern religious conflict. We want to make sure that the leap from our attention-getters to our topics isn't too complicated for our audiences, or the attention-getter will backfire.

Personal Reference

Another attention getting device to consider is referencing a relevant personal story. Some of the best speeches are ones that come from personal knowledge and experience. Some of the best speeches are ones that come from personal knowledge and experience. If you are an expert or have firsthand experience related to your topic, sharing this information with the audience is a great way to show that you are credible during your attention-getter. For example, if you had a gastric bypass surgery and you wanted to give an informative speech about the procedure, you could introduce your speech in this way:

In the fall of 2008, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease.

When using a personal example, don't get carried away with the focus on other aspects of life. The speech topic is the purpose of the attention-getter, not the other way around. Another pitfall in using a personal example is that it may be too personal for a speaker to maintain composure. For example, a student once started a speech about her grandmother by stating, "My grandmother died of cancer at 3:30 this morning." The student then proceeded to cry nonstop for ten minutes. While this is an extreme example, we strongly recommend that you avoid any material that could get you overly choked up while speaking. When speakers have an emotional breakdown during their speech, audience members stop listening to the message and become very uncomfortable.

Reference to Occasion

The last device we mention for starting a speech is to refer directly to the speaking occasion. This attention-getter is only useful if the speech is being delivered for a specific occasion. Many toasts, for example, start with the following statement: "Today we are here to honor X." In this case, the "X" could be a retirement, a marriage, a graduation, or any number of other special occasions. Because of its specific nature, this attention-getter is the least likely to be used for speeches being delivered for college courses.

Key Takeaways

- In developing a speech introduction, begin by deciding upon a statement to capture the audience's attention.
- Attention-getters can include references to the audience, quotations, references to current events, historical references, anecdotes, startling statements, questions, humor, personal references, and references to the occasion.

Exercises

1. Make a list of the attention-getting devices you might use to give a speech on the importance of recycling. Which do you think would be most effective? Why?
2. You've been asked to deliver a speech on the use of advertising in children's media. Out of the list of ten different possible attention-getting devices discussed in the chapter, how could you use four of them to start your speech?

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8.4: Putting It Together- Steps to Complete Your Introduction

Learning Objectives

1. Clearly identify why an audience should listen to a speaker.
2. Discuss how to build credibility during a speech.
3. Write a clear thesis statement.
4. Design an effective preview of your speech's content for your audience.

Once we have captured our audience's attention, it's important to make the rest of our introduction interesting, and use it to lay out the rest of the speech. In this section, we are going to explore the five remaining parts of an effective introduction: linking to the topic, reasons to listen, stating credibility, thesis statement, and preview.



Figure 8.4.1: Puzzle (CC BY-NC 2.0.; Erin Brown-John via Flcikr)

Link to Topic

After the attention-getter, the second major part of an introduction is called the **link to topic**. The link to topic is the shortest part of an introduction and occurs when a speaker demonstrates how an attention-getting device relates to the topic of a speech. Often the attention-getter and the link to topic are very clear. For example, remember the attention-getting device example under historical reference in the previous section, we see that the first sentence brings up the history of the Vietnam War and then shows us how that war can help us understand the Iraq War. In this case, the attention-getter clearly flows directly to the topic. However, some attention-getters need further explanation to get to the topic of the speech. For example, both of the anecdote examples (the girl falling into the manhole while texting and the boy and the filberts) need further explanation to connect clearly to the speech topic (i.e., problems of multitasking in today's society).

Let's look at the first anecdote example to demonstrate how we could go from the attention-getter to the topic.

> In July 2009, a high school girl named Alexa Longueira was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole. This anecdote illustrates the problem that many people are facing in today's world. We are so wired into our technology that we forget to see what's going on around us—like a big hole in front of us.

In this example, the third sentence here explains that the attention-getter was an anecdote that illustrates a real issue. The fourth sentence then introduces the actual topic of the speech.

Let's now examine how we can make the transition from the parable or fable attention-getter to the topic. The paragraph below provides an example of how that might be done:

> "The ancient Greek writer Aesop told a fable about a boy who put his hand into a pitcher of filberts. The boy grabbed as many of the delicious nuts as he possibly could. But when he tried to pull them out, his hand wouldn't fit through the neck of the pitcher because he was grasping so many filberts. Instead of dropping some of them so that his hand would fit, he burst into tears and cried about his predicament. The moral of the story? 'Don't try to do too much at once.' In today's world, many of us are us are just like the boy putting his hand into the pitcher. We are constantly trying to grab so much or do so much that it prevents us from accomplishing our goals. I would like to show you three simple techniques to manage your time so that you don't try to pull too many filberts from your pitcher."

In this example, we added three new sentences to the attention-getter to connect it to the speech topic.

Reasons to Listen

Once we have linked an attention-getter to the topic of a speech, we need to explain why ther topic is important. We call this the "why should I care?" part of the speech because it tells our audience why the topic is directly important to them. Sometimes we can include the significance of our topics in the same sentence as our links to the topic, but other times we may need to spell out in one or two sentences why our specific topic is important.

People in today's world are very busy, and they do not like their time wasted. Nothing is worse than having to sit through a speech that is irrelevant. Imagine sitting through a speech about a new software package that no one owns and will never hear of again. How would we react to the speaker? Most of us would be pretty annoyed at having had our time wasted in this way. Obviously, this particular speaker didn't do a great job of analyzing her, his, or their audience if the audience isn't going to use the software package—but even when speaking on a topic that is highly relevant to the audience, speakers often totally forget to explain how and why it is important.

Appearing Credible

The next part of a speech is not so much a specific "part" as an important characteristic that needs to be pervasive throughout the introduction and the entire speech. As a speaker, we want to be seen as credible (competent, trustworthy, and caring/having goodwill). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, credibility is ultimately a perception that is made by the audience. While the audience determines whether they perceive us as competent, trustworthy, and caring/having goodwill, there are some strategies we can employ to make ourselves appear more credible.

First, to appear competent, we can either clearly explain to our audiences why we are competent about a given subject or demonstrate our competence by showing that we have thoroughly researched a topic by including relevant references within the introduction. The first method of demonstrating competence—saying it directly—is only effective if we are actually a competent person on a given subject. If an undergraduate student is delivering a speech about the importance of string theory in physics, unless they are a prodigy of some kind, they are probably not a recognized expert on the subject. Conversely, if another student's number one hobby in life is collecting memorabilia about the Three Stooges, then they may be an expert about the Three Stooges. However, they would need to explain to their audience their passion for collecting Three Stooges memorabilia and how this has made them an expert on the topic.

The second characteristic of credibility, trustworthiness, is a little more complicated than competence, for it ultimately relies on audience perceptions. One way to increase the likelihood that a speaker will be perceived as trustworthy is to use reputable sources. If quoting Dr. John Smith, then explain who Dr. John Smith is so the audience will see the quotation as being more trustworthy. As speakers, we can easily manipulate our sources into appearing more credible than they actually are, which would be unethical. When we are honest about our sources with our audience, they will trust us and our information more so than when we are ambiguous. The worst thing we can do is to out-and-out lie about information during a speech. Not only is lying highly unethical, but if we are caught lying, our audience will deem us untrustworthy and perceive everything we are saying as untrustworthy. Many speakers have attempted to lie to an audience because it will serve their own purposes or even because they believe their message is in their audience's best interest, but lying is one of the fastest ways to turn off an audience and get them to distrust both the speaker and the message.

The third characteristic of credibility to establish during the introduction is the sense of caring/goodwill. While some unethical speakers can attempt to manipulate an audience's perception that the speaker cares, ethical speakers truly do care about their audiences and have their audience's best interests in mind while speaking. Often speakers must speak in front of audiences that may be hostile toward the speaker's message. In these cases, it is very important for the speaker to explain that they really do believe their message is in the audience's best interest. One way to show that we have our audience's best interests in mind is to acknowledge disagreement from the start:

"Today I'm going to talk about why I believe we should enforce stricter immigration laws in the United States. I realize that many of you will disagree with me on this topic. I used to believe that open immigration was a necessity for the United States to survive and thrive, but after researching this topic, I've changed my mind. While I may not change all of your minds today, I do ask that you listen with an open mind, set your personal feelings on this topic aside, and judge my arguments on their merits."

While clearly not all audience members will be open or receptive to opening their minds and listening to your arguments, by establishing that there is known disagreement, we are telling the audience that we understand their possible views and are not trying to attack their intellect or their opinions.

Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a short, declarative sentence that states the purpose, intent, or main idea of a speech. A strong, clear thesis statement is very valuable within an introduction because it lays out the basic goal of the entire speech. We strongly believe that it is worthwhile to invest some time in framing and writing a good thesis statement. We suggest writing the thesis statement before we even begin conducting research for a speech. Even though it will be necessary to rewrite the thesis later, having a clear idea of purpose, intent, or main idea before beginning the research process will help focus on the most appropriate material. To help us understand thesis statements, we will first explore their basic functions and then discuss how to write a thesis statement.

Basic Functions of a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement helps the audience by letting them know "in a nutshell" what a speaker is going to talk about. A good thesis statement will fulfill four basic functions: express specific purpose, provide a way to organize main points, make research more effective, and enhance delivery.

Express Your Specific Purpose

To orient an audience, be as clear as possible about meaning. A strong thesis will prepare the audience effectively for the points that will follow. Here are two examples:

1. "Today, I want to discuss academic cheating." (**weak example**)
2. "Today, I will clarify exactly what plagiarism is and give examples of its different types so that you can see how it leads to a loss of creative learning interaction." (**strong example**)

The weak statement will probably give the impression that we have no clear position about our topic because we haven't said what that position is. Additionally, the term "academic cheating" can refer to many behaviors—acquiring test questions ahead of time, copying answers, changing grades, or allowing others to do your coursework—so the specific topic of the speech is still not clear to the audience.

The strong statement not only specifies plagiarism but also states our specific concerns (loss of creative learning interaction).

Provide a Way to Organize Main Points

A thesis statement should appear, almost verbatim, toward the end of the introduction to a speech, usually the final sentence of the introduction. A thesis statement helps the audience get ready to listen to the arrangement of points that follow. Many speakers say that if they can create a strong thesis sentence, the rest of the speech tends to develop with relative ease. On the other hand, when the thesis statement is not very clear, creating a speech is an uphill battle.

When the thesis statement is sufficiently clear and decisive, it's clear where the speech will go.

Let's say we have a fairly strong thesis statement, and that we've already brainstormed a list of information that we know about the topic. Chances are our list is too long and has no focus. Using our thesis statement, we can select only the information that (1) is directly related to the thesis and (2) can be arranged in a sequence that will make sense to the audience and will support the thesis. In essence, a strong thesis statement helps us keep useful information and weed out less useful information.

Make Your Research More Effective

If we begin our research with only a general topic in mind, we run the risk of spending hours reading mountains of excellent literature about our topic. However, mountains of literature do not always make coherent speeches. We may have little or no idea of how to tie our research all together, or even whether we should tie it together. If, on the other hand, we conduct our research with a clear thesis statement in mind, we will be better able to zero in only on material that directly relates to our chosen thesis statement. Let's look at an example that illustrates this point:

> *Many traffic accidents involve drivers older than fifty-five.*

While this statement may be true, we could find industrial, medical, insurance literature that can drone on *ad infinitum* about the details of all such accidents in just one year. Instead, focusing our thesis statement will help us narrow the scope of information we will be searching for while gathering information. Here's an example of a more focused thesis statement:

> *Three factors contribute to most accidents involving drivers over fifty-five years of age: failing eyesight, slower reflexes, and rapidly changing traffic conditions.*

This framing is somewhat better. This thesis statement at least provides three possible main points and some keywords for your electronic catalog search. However, if we want our audience to understand the context of older people at the wheel, consider something like:

> *Mature drivers over fifty-five years of age must cope with more challenging driving conditions than existed only one generation ago: more traffic moving at higher speeds, the increased imperative for quick driving decisions, and rapidly changing ramp and cloverleaf systems. Because of these challenges, I want my audience to believe that drivers over the age of sixty-five should be required to pass a driving test every five years.*

This framing of the thesis provides some interesting choices. First, several terms need to be defined, and these definitions might function surprisingly well in setting the tone of the speech. Definitions of words like "generation," "quick driving decisions," and "cloverleaf systems" could jolt our audiences out of assumptions they have taken for granted as truth.

Second, the framing of the thesis provides us with a way to describe the specific changes as they have occurred between, say, 1970 and 2010. How much, and in what ways, have the volume and speed of traffic changed? Why are quick decisions more critical now? What is a "cloverleaf," and how does any driver deal cognitively with exiting in the direction seemingly opposite to the desired one? Questions like this, suggested by our own thesis statement, can lead to a strong, memorable speech.

Enhance Your Delivery

With a good clear thesis statement, our speech becomes clear to our listeners. When we stand in front of our audience presenting our introductions, we can vocally emphasize the essence of our speech, expressed as our thesis statement. Many speakers pause for a half second, lower their vocal pitch slightly, slow down a little, and deliberately present the thesis statement, the one sentence that encapsulates its purpose. When this is done effectively, the purpose, intent, or main idea of a speech is driven home for an audience.

How to Write a Thesis Statement

Now that we've looked at why a thesis statement is crucial in a speech, let's switch gears and talk about how we go about writing a solid thesis statement.

Choose a Topic

As discussed in a previous chapter, choosing a topic is the first step in writing a speech. Once you have a general topic, you are ready to go to the second step of creating a thesis statement.

Narrow the Topic

One of the hardest parts of writing a thesis statement is narrowing a speech from a broad topic to one that can be easily covered during a five- to ten-minute speech. While five to ten minutes may sound like a long time to new public speakers, the time flies by very quickly when speaking. We can easily run out of time if our topics are too broad.

Put the Topic into a Sentence

Once we've narrowed our topics to something that is reasonably manageable given the constraints placed on our speeches, we can then formalize those topics as a complete sentence. Once we have a clear topic sentence, we can start tweaking the thesis statement to help set up the purpose of our speech.

Add the Argument, Viewpoint, or Opinion

This function only applies when giving a speech to persuade. If our topic is informative, our jobs are to make sure that the thesis statement is nonargumentative and focuses on facts. On the other hand, if our topic is persuasive, we want to make sure that our argument, viewpoint, or opinion is clearly indicated within the thesis statement.

Use the Thesis Checklist

Once we have written a first draft of our thesis statement, we are probably going to end up revising our thesis statements a number of times prior to delivering our actual speeches. A thesis statement is something that is constantly tweaked until the speech is given. As our speech develops, often our thesis will need to be rewritten to whatever direction the speech itself has taken. We often start with a speech going in one direction, and find out through our research that we should have gone in a different direction. When we think we finally have a thesis statement that is good to go for our speeches, we will take a second and make sure it adheres to the criteria shown in Table 8.4.1 "Thesis Checklist"

Table 8.4.1 Thesis Checklist. Instructions: For each of the following questions, check either “yes” or “no.”

		Yes	No
1.	Does your thesis clearly reflect the topic of your speech?		
2.	Can you adequately cover the topic indicated in your thesis within the time you have for your speech?		
3.	Is your thesis statement simple?		
4.	Is your thesis statement direct?		
5.	Does your thesis statement gain an audience’s interest?		
6.	Is your thesis statement easy to understand?		
Persuasive Speeches			
7.	Does your thesis statement introduce a clear argument?		
8.	Does your thesis statement clearly indicate what your audience should do, how your audience should think, or how your audience should feel?		
Scoring: For a strong thesis statement, all your answers should have been “yes.”			

Preview of Speech

The final part of an introduction contains a preview of the major points to be covered within the speech. We've all seen signs that have three cities listed on them with the mileage to reach each city. This mileage sign is an indication of what is to come. A preview works the same way. A preview foreshadows what the main body points will be in the speech. For example, to preview a speech on bullying in the workplace, one could say, “To understand the nature of bullying in the modern workplace, I will first define what workplace bullying is and the types of bullying, I will then discuss the common characteristics of both workplace bullies and their targets, and lastly, I will explore some possible solutions to workplace bullying.” In this case, each of the phrases mentioned in the preview would be a single distinct point made in the speech itself. In other words, the first major body point in this speech would examine what workplace bullying is and the types of bullying; the second major body point in this speech would discuss the common characteristics of both workplace bullies and their targets; and lastly, the third body point in this speech would explore some possible solutions to workplace bullying.

Key Takeaways

- Linking the attention-getter to the speech topic is essential to maintain audience attention and so that the relevance of the attention-getter is clear to the audience.
- Establishing speech topic relevance and importance shows the audience why they should listen to the speech.
- To be an effective speaker, convey all three components of credibility, competence, trustworthiness, and caring/goodwill, by the content and delivery of the introduction.
- A clear thesis statement is essential to provide structure for a speaker and clarity for an audience.
- An effective preview identifies the specific main points that will be present in the speech body.

Exercises

1. Make a list of the attention-getting devices you might use to give a speech on the importance of recycling. Which do you think would be most effective? Why?
2. Create a thesis statement for a speech related to the topic of collegiate athletics. Make sure that your thesis statement is narrow enough to be adequately covered in a five- to six-minute speech.
3. Discuss with a partner three possible body points you could utilize for the speech on the topic of volunteerism.
4. Fill out the introduction worksheet to help work through your introduction for your next speech. Please make sure that you answer all the questions clearly and concisely.

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8.5: Analyzing an Introduction

Learning Objectives

1. See what a full introduction section looks like.
2. Distinguish among the six parts of an introduction.

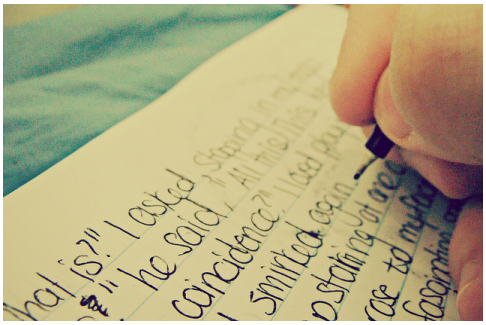


Figure 8.5.1 Nilufer Godgieva – Writing Forever – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Thus far, this chapter has focused on how to create a clear introduction. We discussed why introductions are important and the six important functions of effective introductions. In this section we're going to examine an actual introduction to a speech. Before we start analyzing the introduction, please read the introduction paragraph that follows.

Smart Dust Introduction

In 2002, the famed science fiction writer Michael Crichton released his book *Prey*, which was about a swarm of nanomachines that were feeding off living tissue. The nanomachines were solar-powered, self-sufficient, and intelligent. Most disturbingly, the nanomachines could work together as a swarm as it overtook and killed its prey in its need for new resources. The technology for this level of sophistication in nanotechnology is surprisingly more science fact than science fiction. In 2000, three professors of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of California at Berkeley, Professors Kahn, Katz, and Pister, hypothesized in the *Journal of Communications and Networks* that wireless networks of tiny microelectromechanical sensors, or MEMS: sensors, robots, or devices could detect phenomena including light, temperature, or vibration. By 2004, *Fortune Magazine* listed "smart dust" as the first in their "Top 10 Tech Trends to Bet On." Thus far researchers have hypothesized that smart dust could be used for everything from tracking patients in hospitals to early warnings of natural disasters and as a defense against bioterrorism. Today I'm going to explain what smart dust is and the various applications smart dust has in the near future. To help us understand the small of it all, we will first examine what smart dust is and how it works, we will then examine some military applications of smart dust, and we will end by discussing some nonmilitary applications of smart dust.

Now that you've had a chance to read the introduction to the speech on smart dust, read it over a second time and look for the six parts of the speech introduction as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Which part of the paragraph is the attention getter?

Which part of the paragraph reveals the topic?

Which part of the paragraph states the speaker's credibility?

Which part of the paragraph connects the topic to the audience?

Which part of the paragraph previews the main points?

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8.6: Why Conclusions Matter

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the basic benefits of a strong conclusion.
2. Explain the serial position effect and its importance on public speaking.

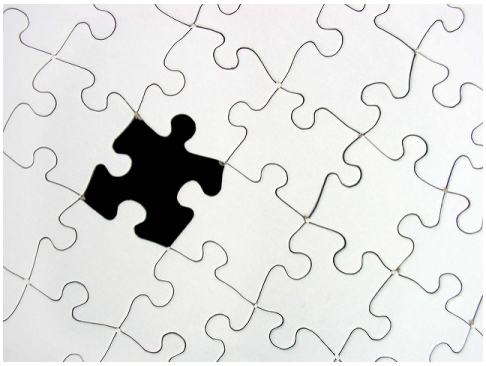


Figure 8.6.1 Willi Heidelbach – Puzzle2 – CC BY 2.0.

As public speaking professors and authors, we have seen many students give otherwise good speeches that seem to fall apart at the end. We've seen students end their three main points by saying things such as "OK, I'm done"; "Thank God that's over!"; or "Thanks. Now what? Do I just sit down?" It's understandable to feel relief at the end of a speech, but remember that as a speaker, our conclusions are the last chance we have to drive home our ideas. When a speaker opts to end the speech with an ineffective conclusion—or no conclusion at all—the speech loses the energy that's been created, and the audience is left confused and disappointed. Instead of falling prey to emotional exhaustion, we need to stay energetic as we approach the end of our speeches, and plan ahead so that our conclusions will be an effective one.

Of course, a good conclusion will not rescue a poorly prepared speech. Thinking again of the chapters in a novel, if one bypasses all the content in the middle, the ending often isn't very meaningful or helpful. So to take advantage of the advice in this chapter, keep in mind the importance of developing a speech with an effective introduction and an effective body; these are fundamental to conclude effectively. Just as a good introduction helps bring an audience member into the world of your speech, and a good speech body holds the audience in that world, a good conclusion helps bring that audience member back to the reality outside of your speech.

In this section, we're going to examine the functions fulfilled by the conclusion of a speech. A strong conclusion serves to signal the end of the speech and to help your listeners remember your speech.

Signals the End

The first thing a good conclusion can do is to signal the end of a speech. When a speaker just suddenly stops speaking, the audience is left confused and disappointed. Instead, we want to make sure that audiences are left knowledgeable and satisfied with our speeches. In Section 8.7 "Steps of a Conclusion", we'll explain in great detail about how to ensure that you signal the end of your speech in a manner that is both effective and powerful.

Aids Audience's Memory of a Speech

The second reason for a good conclusion stems out of some very interesting research reported by the German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus back in 1885 in his book *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*. Ebbinghaus proposed that humans remember information in a linear fashion, which he called the serial position effect. He found an individual's ability to remember information in a list (e.g., a grocery list, a chores list, or a to-do list) depends on the location of an item on the list. Specifically, he found that items toward the top of the list and items toward the bottom of the list tended to have the highest recall rates. The serial position effect basically finds that information at the beginning of a list (primacy) and information at the end of the list (recency) are easier to recall than information in the middle of the list.

So what does this have to do with conclusions? A lot! Ray Ehrensberger wanted to test Ebbinghaus' serial position effect in public speaking. Ehrensberger (1945) created an experiment that rearranged the ordering of a speech to determine the recall of

information. Ehrensberger's study reaffirmed the importance of primacy and recency when listening to speeches. In fact, Ehrensberger found that the information delivered during the conclusion (recency) had the highest level of recall overall.

Key Takeaways

- A strong conclusion is very important because it's a speaker's final chance to really explain the importance of her or his message and allows the speaker to both signal the end of the speech and help the audience to remember the main ideas. As such, speakers need to thoroughly examine how they will conclude their speeches with power.
- The serial position effect is the idea that people remember ideas that are stated either first (primacy) or last (recency) in a list the most. It is important to speech conclusions because restating main ideas helps to take advantage of the recency effect and helps the audience remember.

Exercises

1. Think about a recent speech you heard either in class or elsewhere. Did the speaker have a strong conclusion? List the elements of the conclusion that were particularly effective and ineffective. Identify two ways you could have made the speaker's conclusion stronger.
2. After listening to a speech or class lecture, close your eyes and say aloud the main points you remember from the presentation. Does your memory follow what you would expect according to the serial position effect?

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8.7: Steps of a Conclusion

Learning Objectives

1. Examine the three steps of an effective conclusion: restatement of the thesis, review of the main points, and concluding device.
2. Differentiate among Miller's (1946) concluding devices.



Figure 8.7.1 Matthew Culnane – Steps – CC BY-SA 2.0.

In Section 8.6 "Why Conclusions Matter", we discussed the importance a conclusion has on a speech. In this section, we're going to examine the three steps in building an effective conclusion.

Restatement of the Thesis

Restating a thesis statement is the first step in a powerful conclusion. As we explained earlier in this chapter, a thesis statement is a short, declarative sentence that states the purpose, intent, or main idea of a speech. When we restate the thesis statement at the conclusion of our speech, we're attempting to reemphasize what the overarching main idea of the speech has been. Suppose our thesis statement was, "I will analyze Barack Obama's use of lyricism in his July 2008 speech, 'A World That Stands as One.'" We could restate the thesis in this fashion at the conclusion of our speech: "In the past few minutes, I have analyzed Barack Obama's use of lyricism in his July 2008 speech, 'A World That Stands as One.'" Notice the shift in tense: the statement has gone from the future tense (this is what I will speak about) to the past tense (this is what I have spoken about). Restating the thesis in a conclusion reminds the audience of the major purpose or goal of the speech, helping them remember it better.

Review of Main Points

After restating the speech's thesis, the second step in a powerful conclusion is to review the main points from of the speech. One of the biggest differences between written and oral communication is the necessity of repetition in oral communication. When we preview our main points in the introduction, effectively discuss and make transitions to our main points during the body of the speech, and finally, review the main points in the conclusion, we increase the likelihood that the audience will retain our main points after the speech is over.

In the introduction of a speech, we deliver a *preview* of our main body points, and in the conclusion we deliver a *review*. Let's look at a sample preview:

In order to understand the field of gender and communication, I will first differentiate between the terms biological sex and gender. I will then explain the history of gender research in communication. Lastly, I will examine a series of important findings related to gender and communication.

In this preview, we have three clear main points. Let's see how we can review them at the conclusion of our speech:

1. *Today, we have differentiated between the terms biological sex and gender, examined the history of gender research in communication, and analyzed a series of research findings on the topic.*
2. *In the past few minutes, I have explained the difference between the terms "biological sex" and "gender," discussed the rise of gender research in the field of communication, and examined a series of groundbreaking studies in the field.*

Notice that both of these conclusions review the main points originally set forth. Both variations are equally effective reviews of the main points, but we might like the linguistic turn of one over the other. Remember, while there is a lot of science to help us understand public speaking, there's also a lot of art as well, so choose the wording that will be most effective for the audience.

Concluding Device

The final part of a powerful conclusion is the concluding device. A concluding device is essentially the final thought we want our audience members to have when we stop speaking. It also provides a definitive sense of closure to a speech. One of the authors of this text often makes an analogy between a gymnastics dismount and the concluding device in a speech. Just as a gymnast dismounting the parallel bars or balance beam wants to stick the landing and avoid taking two or three steps, a speaker wants to "stick" the ending of the presentation by ending with a concluding device instead of with, "Well, umm, I guess I'm done." Miller (1946) observed that speakers tend to use one of ten concluding devices when ending a speech. The rest of this section is going to examine several of these ten concluding devices.

Conclude with a Challenge

The first way that Miller found that some speakers end their speeches is with a challenge. A challenge is a call to engage in some kind of activity that requires a contest or special effort. In a speech on the necessity of fund-raising, a speaker could conclude by challenging the audience to raise 10 percent more than their original projections. In a speech on eating more vegetables, challenge the audience to increase their current intake of vegetables by two portions daily. In both of these challenges, audience members are being asked to go out of their way to do something different that involves effort on their part.

Concluding with a challenge is ideal for a persuasive speech, as persuasive speeches require the speaker to attempt to change the attitudes, beliefs, or actions of it's audience. If we ask our audience to do something different, we are challenging them. Challenges are best left for persuasive speeches, rather than informative speeches.

Conclude with a Quotation

A second way to conclude a speech is by reciting a quotation relevant to the speech topic. When using a quotation, think about whether the goal is to end on a persuasive note or an informative note. Some quotations will have a clear call to action, while other quotations summarize or provoke thought. For example, let's say we are delivering an informative speech about dissident writers in the former Soviet Union. We could end by citing this quotation from Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1964): "A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason no regime has ever loved great writers." Notice that this quotation underscores the idea of writers as dissidents, but it doesn't ask listeners to put forth effort to engage in any specific thought process or behavior. If, on the other hand, we were delivering a persuasive speech urging our audience to participate in a very risky political demonstration, we might use this quotation from Martin Luther King Jr. (1963): "If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live." In this case, the quotation leaves the audience with the message that great risks are worth taking, that they make our lives worthwhile, and that the right thing to do is to go ahead and take that great risk.

Conclude with a Summary

When a speaker ends with a summary, he or she is simply elongating the review of the main points. While this may not be the most exciting concluding device, it can be useful for information that was highly technical or complex or for speeches lasting longer than thirty minutes. Typically, for short speeches (like those in our class), this summary device should be avoided.

Conclude by Visualizing the Future

The purpose of a conclusion that refers to the future is to help the audience imagine the future that is possible. If we are giving a speech on the development of video games for learning, we could conclude by depicting the classroom of the future where video games are perceived as true learning tools and how those tools could be utilized. More often, speakers use visualization of the future to depict how society would be, or how individual listeners' lives would be different, if the speaker's persuasive attempt

worked. For example, if a speaker proposes that a solution to illiteracy is hiring more reading specialists in public schools, the speaker could ask her or his audience to imagine a world without illiteracy. In this use of visualization, the goal is to persuade people to adopt the speaker's point of view. By showing that the speaker's vision of the future is a positive one, the conclusion should help to persuade the audience to help create this future.

Conclude with an Appeal for Action

Probably the most common persuasive concluding device is the appeal for action or the call to action. In essence, the appeal for action occurs when a speaker asks her or his audience to engage in a specific behavior or change in thinking. When a speaker concludes by asking the audience "to do" or "to think" in a specific manner, the speaker wants to see an actual change. Whether the speaker appeals for people to eat more fruit, buy a car, vote for a candidate, oppose the death penalty, or sing more in the shower, the speaker is asking the audience to engage in action.

One specific type of appeal for action is the immediate call to action. Whereas some appeals ask for people to engage in behavior in the future, the immediate call to action asks people to engage in behavior right now. If a speaker wants to see a new traffic light placed at a dangerous intersection, he or she may conclude by asking all the audience members to sign a digital petition right then and there, using a computer the speaker has made available (http://www.petitiononline.com). Here are some more examples of immediate calls to action:

- In a speech on eating more vegetables, pass out raw veggies and dip at the conclusion of the speech.
- In a speech on petitioning a lawmaker for a new law, provide audience members with a prewritten e-mail they can send to the lawmaker.
- In a speech on the importance of using hand sanitizer, hand out little bottles of hand sanitizer and show audience members how to correctly apply the sanitizer.
- In a speech asking for donations for a charity, send a box around the room asking for donations.

These are just a handful of different examples we've actually seen students use in our classrooms to elicit an immediate change in behavior. These immediate calls to action may not lead to long-term change, but they can be very effective at increasing the likelihood that an audience will change behavior in the short term.

Conclude by Inspiration

By definition, the word inspire means to affect or arouse someone. Both affect and arouse have strong emotional connotations. The ultimate goal of an inspiration concluding device is similar to an "appeal for action" but the ultimate goal is more lofty or ambiguous; the goal is to stir someone's emotions in a specific manner. Maybe a speaker is giving an informative speech on the prevalence of domestic violence in our society today. That speaker could end the speech by reading Paulette Kelly's powerful poem "I Got Flowers Today." "I Got Flowers Today" is a poem that evokes strong emotions because it's about an abuse victim who received flowers from her abuser every time she was victimized. The poem ends by saying, "I got flowers today… / Today was a special day—it was the day of my funeral / Last night he killed me" (Kelly, 1994).

Conclude with Advice

The next concluding device is one that should be used primarily by speakers who are recognized as expert authorities on a given subject. Advice is essentially a speaker's opinion about what should or should not be done. The problem with opinions is that everyone has one, and one person's opinion is not necessarily any more correct than another's. There needs to be a really good reason your opinion—and therefore your advice—should matter to your audience. If, for example, a speaker is an expert in nuclear physics, she might conclude a speech on energy by giving advice about the benefits of nuclear energy.

Conclude with a Question

Another way to end a speech is to ask a rhetorical question that forces the audience to ponder an idea. Maybe we are giving a speech on the importance of the environment, so we end the speech by saying, "Think about your children's future. What kind of world do you want them raised in? A world that is clean, vibrant, and beautiful—or one that is filled with smog, pollution, filth, and disease?" Notice that we aren't actually asking the audience to verbally or nonverbally answer the question; the goal of this question is to force the audience into thinking about what kind of world they want for their children.

Informative versus Persuasive Conclusions

Some of the devices listed above are more appropriate for informative speeches and some are more appropriate for persuasive speeches. To help choose appropriate conclusions for informative, persuasive, or entertaining speeches, we've created a table (Table 8.7.1 "Speech Purpose and Concluding Devices") to help quickly identify appropriate concluding devices.

Table 8.7.1 Your Speech Purpose and Concluding Devices

Types of Concluding Devices	General Purposes of Speeches		
	Informative	*Persuasive*	
Challenge		x	x
Quotation	x	x	x
Summary	x	x	x
Visualizing the Future	x	x	x
Appeal		x	x
Inspirational	x	x	x
Advice		x	x
Question	x	x	x

Key Takeaways

- An effective conclusion contains three basic parts: a restatement of the speech's thesis; a review of the main points discussed within the speech; and a concluding device that helps create a lasting image in audiences' minds.
- Miller (1946) found that speakers tend to use one of ten concluding devices. All of these devices are not appropriate for all speeches, so speakers need to determine which concluding device would have the strongest, most powerful effect for a given audience, purpose, and occasion.

Exercises

1. Take the last speech you gave in class and rework the speech's conclusion to reflect the three parts of a conclusion. Now do the same thing with the speech you are currently working on for class.
2. Think about the speech you are currently working on in class. Write out concluding statements using three of the devices discussed in this chapter. Which of the devices would be most useful for your speech? Why?

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8.8: Analyzing a Conclusion

Learning Objectives

1. See what a full conclusion section looks like.
2. Distinguish among the three parts of a conclusion.



Figure 8.8.1: Theilr – blank dossier – CC BY-SA 2.0.

So far this chapter has focused on how to go about creating a compelling introduction and a clear conclusion. We discussed why conclusions are important, the three steps of effective conclusions, and different ways to conclude a speech. In this section, we're going to examine an actual conclusion to a speech. Please read the sample conclusion paragraph for the smart dust speech.

Sample Conclusion: Smart Dust

Today, we've explored how smart dust may impact all of our lives in the near future by examining what smart dust is, how smart dust could be utilized by the US military, and how smart dust could impact all of our lives sooner rather than later. While smart dust is quickly transforming from science fiction to science fact, experts agree that the full potential of smart dust will probably not occur until 2025. While smart dust is definitely coming, swarms of smart dust eating people as was depicted in Michael Crichton's 2002 novel, Prey, aren't reality. However, as with any technological advance, there are definite ethical considerations and worries to consider. Even Dr. Kris Pister's Smart Dust Project website admits that as smart dust becomes more readily available, one of the trade-offs will be privacy. Pister responds to these critiques by saying, "As an engineer, or a scientist, or a hair stylist, everyone needs to evaluate what they do in terms of its positive and negative effect. If I thought that the negatives of working on this project were larger than or even comparable to the positives, I wouldn't be working on it. As it turns out, I think that the potential benefits of this technology far outweigh the risks to personal privacy."

Identify the three parts of a conclusion in the previous chapter. After analyzing this conclusion, take a look at Table 8.8.1 "Smart Dust Conclusion", which shows how the speech was broken down into the various parts of a conclusion.

Table 8.8.1 Smart Dust Conclusion

Parts of a Conclusion	Analysis
Today we've explored how smart dust may impact all of our lives in the near future by	*Restate Thesis* The first part of the conclusion is a restatement of the thesis statement.
examining what smart dust is, how smart dust could be utilized by the US military, and how smart dust could impact all of our lives in the near future.	*Review Main Points* Following the thesis statement, the speech briefly reiterates the three main points discussed in the speech.

Parts of a Conclusion	Analysis
While smart dust is quickly transferring from science fiction to science fact, experts agree that the full potential of smart dust will probably not occur until 2025. While smart dust is definitely in our near future, swarms of smart dust eating people as was depicted in Michael Crichton's 2002 novel, *Prey*, isn't reality. However, as with any technological advance, there are definite ethical considerations and worries to consider. Even Dr. Kris Pister's Smart Dust Project website admits that as smart dust becomes more readily available, one of the trade-offs will be privacy. Pister responds to these critiques by saying, "As an engineer, or a scientist, or a hair stylist, everyone needs to evaluate what they do in terms of its positive and negative effect. If I thought that the negatives of working on this project were larger than or even comparable to the positives, I wouldn't be working on it. As it turns out, I think that the potential benefits of this technology far outweigh the risks to personal privacy."	*Concluding Device* In this concluding device, we see not only a referral to the attention getter (Michael Crichton's book *Prey*), we also see a visualizing of some future oriented factors people need to consider related to smart dust, which is then followed by a direct quotation. Notice that in an informative speech this type of conclusion is appropriate because we are trying to inform people about smart dust, but would you want to end a persuasive speech in this fashion? Definitely not! However, you could create an entire persuasive speech advocating for smart dust (its many applications are more important than the loss of privacy) or against smart dust (privacy is more important than its many applications).

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8.9: Chapter Exercises for Introductions and Conclusions

Exercises for Introductions

Speaking Ethically

Imagine that you are preparing a speech on the benefits of a new drug, and you find a direct quotation that clearly establishes your argument. Unfortunately, you soon realize that the source of your quotation is actually a lobbyist who works for the pharmaceutical company that manufactures the drug. You really want to use this quotation as your attention-getter, but you realize that the source is clearly biased. Which of the following options do you think is the most ethical? Why?

1. Disregard the quotation and find another way to start your speech.
2. Use the quotation, but acknowledge that the source comes from a paid lobbyist of the pharmaceutical company who manufactures the drug.
3. Use the quotation and just give the name of the source. If your audience is interested in your topic, they'll do their own research and make informed decisions for themselves.

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. During a keynote presentation, the speaker mentions that she is the head of neurology at a major medical center. The speaker then goes on to discuss why wearing helmets is important for bicyclists of all ages. What factor of credibility has the speaker attempted to establish?
    1. competence
    2. caring/goodwill
    3. extroversion
    4. trustworthiness
    5. character
2. A kid perched on the roof of his house one day notices a wolf walking by. The kid yells at the wolf, "Evil, vile creature! Why have you come near honest folks' homes?" The wolf quickly replied, "It is easy to be brave from a safe distance." What type of attention-getting device does this represent?
    1. personal reference
    2. fairy tale
    3. personal anecdote
    4. parable or fable
    5. humor
3. During an introduction, a speaker says, "I realize that many of us disagree on the use of corporal punishment in public schools. I just ask that you listen to my arguments with an open mind." Which aspect of credibility is the speaker attempting to enhance?
    1. competence
    2. caring/goodwill
    3. extroversion
    4. trustworthiness
    5. character
4. Which of the following is a function of a thesis statement?
    1. It provides a clear ending point for your speech.
    2. It helps to organize your introduction.
    3. It enhances your language usage.
    4. It expresses the body points in your speech.
    5. It clarifies your perspective about your topic.
5. What part of an introduction does the following sentence represent? "Today we're going to examine the video gaming industry by first discussing the history of video games, then by examining the current trends in video gaming, and lastly, by discussing the future of video games."
    1. attention-getter
    2. link to topic

3. preview
4. thesis
5. significance of topic

Answer Key

1. a
2. d
3. b
4. e
5. c

Introduction Worksheet

Directions: Use this worksheet to map out the introduction to your next speech.

1. What is your general purpose? (circle one)

To inform	To persuade	To entertain

2. What is your specific purpose?

_____

_____

_____

3. Which attention-getting device do you plan on using?

_____

_____

_____

4. How will you link your attention-getting device to your actual topic?

_____

_____

_____

5. Why should your audience listen to your speech?

_____

_____

_____

6. How will you establish your credibility during speech?
    1. Competence

    _____

    _____

    _____

    2. Trustworthiness

    _____

    _____

    _____

    3. Caring/goodwill

4. What is your thesis statement?

7. What are your three main body points?
    1. Body point 1
    2. Body point 2
    3. Body point 3
    4. Write a preview of your three main body points.

Exercise for Conclusions

Directions

1. Read the paragraph below.
2. Identify the problems with this student's approach to a conclusion.
3. Answer the following questions.

- What could this student have done differently?
- What are the ethical implications for ending a speech this way?

Tika's speech on death camps in Africa was a real flop, and she knew it. The speech was quickly prepared, inadequately researched, and not very logical. Thankfully, Tika knew she had an ace in her back pocket. She planned on ending her speech with a video showing mass graves that she knew would make people sick.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Delivering the Speech

9.1: Four Methods of Delivery
9.2: Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery
9.3: Using Notes Effectively
9.4: Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery
9.5: Chapter Exercises

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9.1: Four Methods of Delivery

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among the four methods of speech delivery.
2. Understand when to use each of the four methods of speech delivery.



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The easiest approach to speech delivery is not always the best. Substantial work goes into the careful preparation of an interesting and ethical message, so it is understandable that students may have the impulse to avoid “messing it up” by simply reading it word for word. But students who do this miss out on one of the major reasons for studying public speaking: to learn to “connect” with one’s audience and to increase one’s confidence. You already know how to read, and you already know how to talk. But public speaking is neither reading nor talking.

Speaking in public has more formality than talking. During a speech, you should present yourself professionally. This doesn’t mean you must wear a suit or “dress up” (unless your instructor asks you to), but it does mean making yourself presentable by being well groomed and wearing clean, appropriate clothes. You should consult with your instructor on what they consider "professional." It also means being prepared to use language correctly and appropriately for the audience and the topic, to maintain 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 meaningful pauses, eye contact, small changes in word order, and vocal emphasis. Reading is more or less an exact replication of words on paper without the use of any nonverbal interpretation; speaking provides a more animated message.

The next sections introduce four methods of delivery that can help you balance between too much and too little formality when giving a public speech.

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is the presentation of a short message without advance preparation. Impromptu speeches often occur when someone is asked to “say a few words” or give a toast on a special occasion. 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 documentary?”

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.

- Take a moment to collect your thoughts and plan the main point you want to make.

- Thank the person for inviting you to speak.
- 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.
- Thank the person again for the opportunity to speak.
- Stop talking.

As you can see, impromptu speeches are generally most successful when they are brief and focus on a single point.

Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemporaneous speaking is the presentation of a carefully planned and rehearsed speech, spoken in a conversational manner using brief notes. Under no circumstances should the speaker be spending more than 20% of the speaking time looking at the notes. It would be ideal to practice so you only glance at your notes approximately 5% of the time of the speech. 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. The opportunity to assess is also an opportunity to restate more clearly any idea or concept that the audience seems to have trouble grasping.

For instance, suppose you are speaking about workplace safety and you use the term “sleep deprivation.” If you notice your audience’s eyes glazing over, this might not be a result of their own sleep deprivation, but rather an indication of their uncertainty about what you mean. If this happens, you can add a short explanation; for example, “sleep deprivation is sleep loss serious enough to threaten one’s cognition, hand-to-eye coordination, judgment, and emotional health.” You might also (or instead) provide a concrete example to illustrate the idea. Then you can resume your message, having clarified an important concept.

Speaking extemporaneously has some advantages. It promotes the likelihood that you, the speaker, will be perceived as knowledgeable and credible. In addition, your audience is likely to pay better attention to the message because it is engaging both verbally and nonverbally. The disadvantage of extemporaneous speaking is that it requires a great deal of preparation for both the verbal and the nonverbal components of the speech. Adequate preparation cannot be achieved the day before you’re scheduled to speak.

Because extemporaneous speaking is the style used in the great majority of public speaking situations, most of the information in this chapter is targeted to this kind of speaking.

Speaking from a Manuscript

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. As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, 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.

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 (as poets do in a poetry slam and actors do in a reader’s theater), the presentation tends to be dull. Keeping one’s eyes glued to the script precludes 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 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 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.

Speaking from Memory

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 in a stage play, television program, or movie scene. 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. More frighteningly, if you go completely blank during the presentation, it will be extremely difficult to find your place and keep going.

Key Takeaways

- There are four main kinds of speech delivery: impromptu, extemporaneous, manuscript, and memorized.
- Impromptu speaking involves delivering a message on the spur of the moment, as when someone is asked to "say a few words."
- Extemporaneous speaking consists of delivering a speech in a conversational fashion using notes. This is the style most speeches call for.
- Manuscript speaking consists of reading a fully scripted speech. It is useful when a message needs to be delivered in precise words.
- Memorized speaking consists of reciting a scripted speech from memory. Memorization allows the speaker to be free of notes.

Exercises

1. Find a short newspaper story. Read it out loud to a classroom partner. Then, using only one notecard, tell the classroom partner in your own words what the story said. Listen to your partner's observations about the differences in your delivery.
2. In a group of four or five students, ask each student to give a one-minute impromptu speech answering the question, "What is the most important personal quality for academic success?"
3. Watch the evening news. Observe the differences between news anchors using a TelePrompTer and interviewees who are using no notes of any kind. What differences do you observe?

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9.2: Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how the physical setting of a speech is an element that calls for preparation.
2. Examine some tips and strategies for common speaking situations.



Mad Mou – Empty – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous *I Have a Dream* speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at a gigantic civil rights rally on an August afternoon in 1963. His lectern was bristling with microphones placed there for news coverage and for recording the historic event. His audience, estimated to number a quarter of a million people, extended as far as the eye could see. He was the last speaker of the day, delivering his speech after more than a dozen civil rights leaders and world-famous performers such as Joan Baez, Mahalia Jackson, and Charlton Heston had occupied the stage (Ross, 2007). King gave us his speech in the assertive ringing tones of inspired vision. Nothing less would have worked that day.

Most of us will never speak to so many people at once. Even an appearance on television will probably command a much smaller audience than the crowd that heard King's speech. Even though you don't expect an audience of such size or a setting of such symbolic importance, you should still be prepared to adapt to the setting in which you will speak.

Our 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 very little time to get used to speaking with a microphone. These are contexts and situations we address in the following subsections.

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 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.

However, for new 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

simply a place to rest your notes. 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, so you will want to speak more slowly 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.

Limited space is not as disconcerting for most speakers as enormous space, but it has the advantage of minimizing the tendency to pace back and forth while you speak. We have all seen dramatic soliloquies in the movies and plays where an actor makes use of the space on the stage, but this is generally not a good strategy for a speech. A small space also calls for more careful management of notecards 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. We will discuss visual aids further in Chapter 15 "Presentation Aids: Design and Usage".

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, 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 ants 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.

Using a Microphone

Most people today are familiar with microphones that are built into video recorders 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. 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.

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 and 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.

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.

Key Takeaways

- Not every speaking setting happens in a classroom. As such, different environments call for speakers to think through their basic speaking strategies.
- Speakers need to be prepared to deal with five common challenges in speaking contexts: using a lectern, large or small space, speaking in the outdoors, using a microphone, and audience size.

Exercises

1. Get permission from your instructor and announce a campus event to the class. Make sure your details are complete and accurate. How does your physical space affect the way you present the information?
2. Watch a speech that takes place indoors or outside. How do you think this speech would be different if the speech occurred in the other location? What changes would you recommend for the speaker?
3. If you were suddenly asked to give your next classroom speech in front of two hundred of your peers, how would adjust your speech? Why?

References

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9.3: Using Notes Effectively

Learning Objectives

1. Know how to use notecards to free you from your manuscript.
2. Know how to use notecards to stay organized while you make audience contact.
3. Understand how to develop effective notecards for a speech.

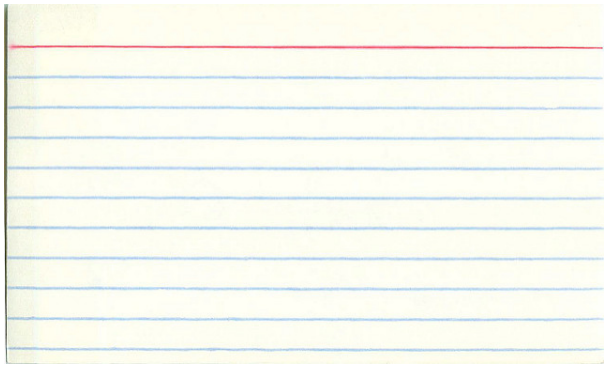


Figure 9.3.1: Blank index card! (CC BY 2.0; Dave Gray via Blank index card!)

It's a great deal of work to prepare a good speech, and you want to present it effectively so that your audience will benefit as much as possible. We've already said that extemporaneous speaking provides the best opportunity for speaker-audience contact and that speaking extemporaneously means you do not have your full manuscript or outline with you. Instead, you will use notecards. The cards should have notes, not the full text of your speech. This can also be done with an autocue device—the TelePrompTer does not have to provide a full word-for-word script.

We have developed a system for creating highly effective notecards. Our system has been used effectively both in public speaking courses and in freshman composition courses. Surprisingly, the system consists of only five cards. For many people, this does not sound like nearly enough cards. We would make the case that you can do a good job with five cards, and we have seen many students do just that.

The Purpose of Speaker Notes

Using notes adds to your credibility as a speaker. If you depend on a full manuscript to get through your delivery, your listeners might believe you don't know the content of your speech. Second, the temptation to read the entire speech directly from a manuscript, even if you're only carrying it as a safety net, is nearly overwhelming. Third, well-prepared cards are more gracefully handled than sheets of paper, and they don't rattle if your hands tremble from nervousness. Finally, cards look better than sheets of paper. Five carefully prepared cards, together with practice, will help you more than you might think.

Key Tips for Using Notes

Plan on using just five cards, written on one side only. Get 4 × 6 cards. Use one card for the introduction, one card for each of your three main points, and one card for the conclusion.

Include Only Key Words

Your cards should include key words and phrases, not full sentences. The words and phrases should be arranged in order so that you can stay organized and avoid forgetting important points.

One exception to the key word guideline would be an extended or highly technical quotation from an authoritative source. If it is critically important to present an exact quotation, you may add one additional card that will contain the quotation together with its citation. If you plan to use such a quotation, make sure it has central importance in your speech.

Hold Your Notes Naturally

Notes are a normal part of giving a presentation. You do not need to conceal them from the audience; in fact, trying to hide and use your notes at the same time tends to be very awkward and distracting. Some instructors recommend that you avoid gesturing with

your notes on the grounds that nervous shaking is more noticeable if you are holding your notes in your hand. If this is the case for you, practice gesturing with your free hand, or put your cards down if you need to use both hands. Other instructors recommend treating notecards as a natural extension of your hand, as they believe it is distracting to put your notes down and pick them up again. Whichever "rule" you follow, remember that the goal is for your use of notecards to contribute to your overall appearance of confidence and credibility.

Prepare Notecards to Trigger Recall

The "trick" to selecting the words to write on your cards is to identify the keywords that will trigger a recall sequence. For instance, if the word "Fukushima" brings to mind the nuclear power plant meltdown that followed the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in 2011, then that one word on your notecard should propel you through a sizable sequence of points and details. Once you have delivered that material, perhaps you'll glance at your card again to remind yourself of the key word or phrase that comes next.

You must discover what works for you and then select those words that tend to jog your recall. Having identified what works, make a preliminary set of five cards, written on one side only. Number the cards, and practice with them. Revise and refine them the way you would an outline. If you must, rewrite an entire card to make it work better, and test it the next time you practice.

Always practice with your notecards—and with any visual aids you plan to use. Practicing is also the best way to find out what kinds of things might go wrong with your notes in the presented speech and what steps you should take to make things go smoothly.

Write in Large Letters

You should be able to read something on your card by glancing, not peering at it. A few key words and phrases, written in large, bold print with plenty of white space between them, will help you. If the lighting in your speech location is likely to have glare, be sure to write your notes in ink, as pencil can be hard to read in poor lighting.

Using Notecards Effectively

If you use as much care in developing your five notecards as you do your speech, they should serve you well. If you lose your place or go blank during the speech, you will only need a few seconds to find where you were and get going again. For instance, if you know that you presented the introduction and the first main point, which centers on the Emancipation Proclamation, you can readily go to your second card and remind yourself that your next main point is about the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution.

In addition, the use of your notecards allows you to depart from the exact prepared wordings in your manuscript. In your recovery from losing your place, you can transpose a word or phrase to make your recovery graceful. It allows you to avoid feeling pressured to say every single word in your manuscript.

Under no circumstances should you ever attempt to put your entire speech on cards in little tiny writing. You will end up reading words to your audience instead of telling them your meaning, and the visual aspect of your speech will be spoiled by your need to squint to read your cards.

Key Takeaways

- Good notecards keep you from reading to your audience.
- Good notecards are carefully based on key words and phrases to promote recall.
- Good notecards should enhance your relationship with listeners.

Exercises

1. Using the introduction to your speech, create a 4 × 6 notecard that includes the grabber, the thesis statement, and the preview. Test it by standing as you would during a speech and using it to guide you.
2. Answer these questions: Is it absolutely crucial to utter every word on your outline? Are there some words or phrases that are crucially important? How can you use your notecards to focus on the most important ideas?
3. Select key terms from your speech that you believe will trigger your recall of the sequence of main ideas in your speech. Use them as the basis of your next four notecards. Test the cards by practicing with them to see whether your selected terms are the ones you should use.

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9.4: Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery

Learning Objectives

1. Explain why having a strong conversational quality is important for effective public speaking.
2. Explain the importance of eye contact in public speaking.
3. Define vocalics and differentiate among the different factors of vocalics.
4. Explain effective physical manipulation during a speech.
5. Understand how to practice effectively for good speech delivery.



Figure 9.4.1: Speech (CC BY 2.0; Christian Pierret via Speech)

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. Even when we know our messages are strong and well-articulated on paper, it is difficult to know for sure that our presentation will also be good.

We are still obligated to do our best out of respect for the audience and their needs. Fortunately, there are some tools that can be helpful to you even the very first time you present a speech. You will continue developing your skills each time you put them to use and can experiment to find out which combination of delivery elements is most effective for you.

What Is Good Delivery?

The more you care about your topic, the greater your motivation to present it well. Good delivery is a process of presenting a clear, coherent message in an interesting way. Communication scholar Stephen E. Lucas tells us:

Good delivery…conveys the speaker's ideas clearly, interestingly, and without distracting the audience. Most audiences prefer delivery that combines a certain degree of formality with the best attributes of good conversation—directness, spontaneity, animation, vocal and facial expressiveness, and a lively sense of communication (Lucas, 2009).

Many writers on the nonverbal aspects of delivery have cited the findings of psychologist Albert Mehrabian, asserting that the bulk of an audience's understanding of your message is based on nonverbal communication. Specifically, Mehrabian is often credited with finding that when audiences decoded a speaker's meaning, the speaker's face conveyed 55 percent of the information, the vocalics conveyed 38 percent, and the words conveyed just 7 percent (Mehrabian, 1972). Although numerous scholars, including Mehrabian himself, have stated that his findings are often misinterpreted (Mitchell), scholars and speech instructors do agree that nonverbal communication and speech delivery are extremely important to effective public speaking.

In this section of the chapter, we will explain six elements of good delivery: conversational style, conversational quality, eye contact, vocalics, physical manipulation, and variety. And since delivery is only as good as the practice that goes into it, we conclude with some tips for effective use of your practice time.

Conversational Style

Conversational style is a speaker's ability to sound expressive and to be perceived by the audience as natural. It's a style that approaches the way you normally express yourself in a much smaller group than your classroom audience. This means that you

want to avoid having your presentation come across as didactic or overly exaggerated. You might not feel natural while you're using a conversational style, but for the sake of audience preference and receptiveness, you should do your best to appear natural. It might be helpful to remember that the two most important elements of the speech are the message and the audience. You are the conduit with the important role of putting the two together in an effective way. Your audience should be thinking about the message, not the delivery.

Stephen E. Lucas defines conversational quality as the idea that "no matter how many times a speech has been rehearsed, it still *sounds* spontaneous" [emphasis in original] (Lucas, 2009). No one wants to hear a speech that is so well rehearsed that it sounds fake or robotic. One of the hardest parts of public speaking is rehearsing to the point where it can appear to your audience that the thoughts are magically coming to you while you're speaking, but in reality you've spent a great deal of time thinking through each idea. When you can sound conversational, people pay attention.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is a speaker's ability to have visual contact with everyone in the audience. Your audience should feel that you're speaking to them, not simply uttering main and supporting points. If you are new to public speaking, you may find it intimidating to look audience members in the eye, but if you think about speakers you have seen who did not maintain eye contact, you'll realize why this aspect of speech delivery is important. Without eye contact, the audience begins to feel invisible and unimportant, as if the speaker is just speaking to hear her or his own voice. Eye contact lets your audience feel that your attention is on them, not solely on the cards in front of you.

Sustained eye contact with your audience is one of the most important tools toward effective delivery. O'Hair, Stewart, and Rubenstein note that eye contact is mandatory for speakers to establish a good relationship with an audience (O'Hair, Stewart, & Rubenstein, 2001). Whether a speaker is speaking before a group of five or five hundred, the appearance of eye contact is an important way to bring an audience into your speech.

Eye contact can be a powerful tool. It is not simply a sign of sincerity, a sign of being well prepared and knowledgeable, or a sign of confidence; it also has the power to convey meanings. Arthur Koch tells us that all facial expressions "can communicate a wide range of emotions, including sadness, compassion, concern, anger, annoyance, fear, joy, and happiness" (Koch, 2010).

If you find the gaze of your audience too intimidating, you might feel tempted to resort to "faking" eye contact with them by looking at the wall just above their heads or by sweeping your gaze around the room instead of making actual eye contact with individuals in your audience until it becomes easier to provide real contact. The problem with fake eye contact is that it tends to look mechanical. Another problem with fake attention is that you lose the opportunity to assess the audience's understanding of your message. Still, fake eye contact is somewhat better than gripping your cards and staring at them and only occasionally glancing quickly and shallowly at the audience.

This is not to say that you may never look at your notecards. On the contrary, one of the skills in extemporaneous speaking is the ability to alternate one's gaze between the audience and one's notes. Rehearsing your presentation in front of a few friends should help you develop the ability to maintain eye contact with your audience while referring to your notes. When you are giving a speech that is well prepared and well rehearsed, you will only need to look at your notes occasionally. This is an ability that will develop even further with practice. Your public speaking course is your best chance to get that practice.

Effective Use of Vocalics

Vocalics, also known as paralanguage, is the subfield of nonverbal communication that examines how we use our voices to communicate orally. This means that you speak loudly enough for all audience members (even those in the back of the room) to hear you clearly, and that you enunciate clearly enough to be understood by all audience members (even those who may have a hearing impairment or who may be English-language learners). If you tend to be soft-spoken, you will need to practice using a louder volume level that may feel unnatural to you at first. For all speakers, good vocalic technique is best achieved by facing the audience with your chin up and your eyes away from your notecards and by setting your voice at a moderate speed. Effective use of vocalics also means that you make use of appropriate pitch, pauses, vocal variety, and correct pronunciation.

If you are an English-language learner and feel apprehensive about giving a speech in English, there are two things to remember: first, you can meet with a reference librarian to learn the correct pronunciations of any English words you are unsure of; and second, the fact that you have an accent means you speak more languages than most Americans, which is an accomplishment to be proud of.

If you are one of the many people with a stutter or other speech challenge, you undoubtedly already know that there are numerous techniques for reducing stuttering and improving speech fluency and that there is no one agreed-upon "cure." The Academy Award–winning movie *The King's Speech* did much to increase public awareness of what a person with a stutter goes through when it comes to public speaking. It also prompted some well-known individuals who stutter, such as television news reporter John Stossel, to go public about their stuttering (Stossel, 2011). If you have decided to study public speaking in spite of a speech challenge, we commend you for your efforts and encourage you to work with your speech instructor to make whatever adaptations work best for you.

Volume

Volume refers to the loudness or softness of a speaker's voice. As mentioned, public speakers need to speak loudly enough to be heard by everyone in the audience. In addition, volume is often needed to overcome ambient noise, such as the hum of an air conditioner or the dull roar of traffic passing by. In addition, you can use volume strategically to emphasize the most important points in your speech. Select these points carefully; if you emphasize everything, nothing will seem important. You also want to be sure to adjust your volume to the physical setting of the presentation. If you are in a large auditorium and your audience is several yards away, you will need to speak louder. If you are in a smaller space, with the audience a few feet away, you want to avoid overwhelming your audience with shouting or speaking too loudly.

Rate

Rate is the speed at which a person speaks. To keep your speech delivery interesting, your rate should vary. If you are speaking extemporaneously, your rate will naturally fluctuate. If you're reading, your delivery is less likely to vary. Because rate is an important tool in enhancing the meanings in your speech, you do not want to give a monotone drone or a rapid "machine-gun" style delivery. Your rate should be appropriate for your topic and your points. A rapid, lively rate can communicate such meanings as enthusiasm, urgency, or humor. A slower, moderated rate can convey respect, seriousness, or careful reasoning. By varying rapid and slower rates within a single speech, you can emphasize your main points and keep your audience interested.

Pitch

Pitch refers to the highness or lowness of a speaker's voice. Some speakers have deep voices and others have high voices. As with one's singing voice range, the pitch of one's speaking voice is determined to a large extent by physiology (specifically, the length of one's vocal folds, or cords, and the size of one's vocal tract). We all have a normal speaking pitch where our voice is naturally settled, the pitch where we are most comfortable speaking, and most teachers advise speaking at the pitch that feels natural to you.

While our voices may be generally comfortable at a specific pitch level, we all have the ability to modulate, or move, our pitch up or down. In fact, we do this all the time. When we change the pitch of our voices, we are using inflections. Just as you can use volume strategically, you can also use pitch inflections to make your delivery more interesting and emphatic. If you ordinarily speak with a soprano voice, you may want to drop your voice to a slightly lower range to call attention to a particular point. How we use inflections can even change the entire meaning of what we are saying. For example, try saying the sentence "I love public speaking" with a higher pitch on one of the words—first raise the pitch on "I," then say it again with the pitch raised on "love," and so on. "*I* love public speaking" conveys a different meaning from "I love *public* speaking," doesn't it?

There are some speakers who don't change their pitch at all while speaking, which is called monotone. While very few people are completely monotone, some speakers slip into monotone patterns because of nerves. One way to ascertain whether you sound monotone is to record your voice and see how you sound. If you notice that your voice doesn't fluctuate very much, you will need to be intentional in altering your pitch to ensure that the emphasis of your speech isn't completely lost on your audience.

Finally, resist the habit of pitching your voice "up" at the ends of sentences. It makes them sound like questions instead of statements. This habit can be disorienting and distracting, interfering with the audience's ability to focus entirely on the message. The speaker sounds uncertain or sounds as though he or she is seeking the understanding or approval of the listener. It hurts the speaker's credibility and it needs to be avoided.

The effective use of pitch is one of the keys to an interesting delivery that will hold your audience's attention.

Pauses

Pauses are brief breaks in a speaker's delivery that can show emphasis and enhance the clarity of a message. In terms of timing, the effective use of pauses is one of the most important skills to develop. Some speakers become uncomfortable very quickly with the

"dead air" that the pause causes. And if the speaker is uncomfortable, the discomfort can transmit itself to the audience. That doesn't mean you should avoid using pauses; your ability to use them confidently will increase with practice. Some of the best comedians use the well-timed pause to powerful and hilarious effect. Although your speech will not be a comedy routine, pauses are still useful for emphasis, especially when combined with a lowered pitch and rate to emphasize the important point you do not want your audience to miss.

Vocal Variety

Vocal variety has to do with changes in the vocalics we have just discussed: volume, pitch, rate, and pauses. No one wants to hear the same volume, pitch, rate, or use of pauses over and over again in a speech. Your audience should never be able to detect that you're about to slow down or your voice is going to get deeper because you're making an important point. When you think about how you sound in a normal conversation, your use of volume, pitch, rate, and pauses are all done spontaneously. If you try to overrehearse your vocalics, your speech will end up sounding artificial. Vocal variety should flow naturally from your wish to speak with expression. In that way, it will animate your speech and invite your listeners to understand your topic the way you do.

Pronunciation

The last major category related to vocalics is pronunciation, or the conventional patterns of speech used to form a word. Word pronunciation is important for two reasons: first, mispronouncing a word your audience is familiar with will harm your credibility as a speaker; and second, mispronouncing a word they are unfamiliar with can confuse and even misinform them. If there is any possibility at all that you don't know the correct pronunciation of a word, find out. Many online dictionaries, such as the Wiktionary (http://wiktionary.org), provide free sound files illustrating the pronunciation of words.

Many have commented on the mispronunciation of words such as "nuclear" and "cavalry" by highly educated public speakers, including US presidents. There have been classroom examples as well. For instance, a student giving a speech on the Greek philosopher Socrates mispronounced his name at least eight times during her speech. This mispronunciation created a situation of great awkwardness and anxiety for the audience. Everyone felt embarrassed and the teacher, opting not to humiliate the student in front of the class, could not say anything out loud, instead providing a private written comment at the end of class.

One important aspect of pronunciation is articulation, or the ability to clearly pronounce each of a succession of syllables used to make up a word. Some people have difficulty articulating because of physiological problems that can be treated by trained speech therapists, but other people have articulation problems because they come from a cultural milieu where a dialect other than standard American English is the norm. Speech therapists, who generally guide their clients toward standard American English, use the acronym SODA when helping people learn how to more effectively articulate: substitutions, omissions, distortions, and additions.

- **Substitutions** occur when a speaker replaces one consonant or vowel with another consonant (*water* becomes *wudda*; *ask* becomes *ax*; *mouth* becomes *mouf*).
- **Omissions** occur when a speaker drops a consonant or vowel within a word (*Internet* becomes *Innet*; *mesmerized* becomes *memerized*; *probably* becomes *prolly*).
- **Distortions** occur when a speaker articulates a word with nasal or slurring sounds (*pencil* sounds like *mencil*; *precipitation* sounds like *persination*; *second* sounds like *slecond*).
- **Additions** occur when a speaker adds consonants or vowels to words that are not there (*anyway* becomes *anyways*; *athletic* becomes *athaletic*; *black* becomes *buhlack*; *interpret* becomes *interpretate*).

Another aspect of pronunciation in public speaking is avoiding the use of verbal surrogates or "filler" words used as placeholders for actual words (like *er*, *um*, *uh*, etc.). You might be able to get away with saying "um" as many as two or three times in your speech before it becomes distracting, but the same cannot be said of "like." We know of a student who trained herself to avoid saying "like." As soon as the first speech was assigned, she began wearing a rubber band on her left wrist. Each time she caught herself saying "like," she snapped herself with the rubber band. It hurt. Very quickly, she found that she could stop inflicting the snap on herself, and she had successfully confronted an unprofessional verbal habit.

Effective Physical Manipulation

In addition to using our voices effectively, a key to effective public speaking is physical manipulation, or the use of the body to emphasize meanings or convey meanings during a speech. While we will not attempt to give an entire discourse on nonverbal communication, we will discuss a few basic aspects of physical manipulation: posture, body movement, facial expressions, and dress. These aspects add up to the overall physical dimension of your speech, which we call self-presentation.

Posture

“Stand up tall!” I’m sure we’ve all heard this statement from a parent or a teacher at some point in our lives. The fact is, posture is actually quite important. When you stand up straight, you communicate to your audience, without saying a word, that you hold a position of power and take your position seriously. If however, you are slouching, hunched over, or leaning on something, you could be perceived as ill prepared, anxious, lacking in credibility, or not serious about your responsibilities as a speaker. While speakers often assume more casual posture as a presentation continues (especially if it is a long one, such as a ninety-minute class lecture), it is always wise to start by standing up straight and putting your best foot forward. Remember, you only get one shot at making a first impression, and your body’s orientation is one of the first pieces of information audiences use to make that impression.

Body Movement

Unless you are stuck behind a podium because of the need to use a nonmovable microphone, you should never stand in one place during a speech. However, movement during a speech should also not resemble pacing. One of our authors once saw a speaker who would walk around a small table where her speaking notes were located. She would walk around the table once, toss her chalk twice, and then repeat the process. Instead of listening to what the speaker was saying, everyone became transfixed by her walk-and-chalk-toss pattern. As speakers, we must be mindful of how we go about moving while speaking. One common method for easily integrating some movement into your speech is to take a few steps any time you transition from one idea to the next. By only moving at transition points, not only do you help focus your audience’s attention on the transition from one idea to the next, but you also are able to increase your nonverbal immediacy by getting closer to different segments of your audience.

Body movement also includes gestures. These should be neither overdramatic nor subdued. At one extreme, arm-waving and fist-pounding will distract from your message and reduce your credibility. At the other extreme, refraining from the use of gestures is the waste of an opportunity to suggest emphasis, enthusiasm, or other personal connection with your topic.

There are many ways to use gestures. The most obvious are hand gestures, which should be used in moderation at carefully selected times in the speech. If you overuse gestures, they lose meaning. Many late-night comedy parodies of political leaders include patterned, overused gestures or other delivery habits associated with a particular speaker. However, the well-placed use of simple, natural gestures to indicate emphasis, direction, size is usually effective. Normally, a gesture with one hand is enough. Rather than trying to have a gesture for every sentence, use just a few well-planned gestures. It is often more effective to make a gesture and hold it for a few moments than to begin waving your hands and arms around in a series of gestures.

Finally, just as you should avoid pacing, you will also want to avoid other distracting movements when you are speaking. Many speakers have unconscious mannerisms such as twirling their hair, putting their hands in and out of their pockets, jingling their keys, licking their lips, or clicking a pen while speaking. As with other aspects of speech delivery, practicing in front of others will help you become conscious of such distractions and plan ways to avoid doing them.

Facial Expressions

Faces are amazing things and convey so much information. As speakers, we must be acutely aware of what our face looks like while speaking. While many of us do not look forward to seeing ourselves on videotape, often the only way you can critically evaluate what your face is doing while you are speaking is to watch a recording of your speech. If video is not available, you can practice speaking in front of a mirror.

There are two extremes you want to avoid: no facial expression and overanimated facial expressions. First, you do not want to have a completely blank face while speaking. Some people just do not show much emotion with their faces naturally, but this blankness is often increased when the speaker is nervous. Audiences will react negatively to the message of such a speaker because they will sense that something is amiss. If a speaker is talking about the joys of Disney World and his face doesn’t show any excitement, the audience is going to be turned off to the speaker and his message. On the other extreme end is the speaker whose face looks like that of an exaggerated cartoon character. Instead, your goal is to show a variety of appropriate facial expressions while speaking.

Like vocalics and gestures, facial expression can be used strategically to enhance meaning. A smile or pleasant facial expression is generally appropriate at the beginning of a speech to indicate your wish for a good transaction with your audience. However, you should not smile throughout a speech on drug addiction, poverty, or the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. An inappropriate smile creates confusion about your meaning and may make your audience feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, a serious scowl might look hostile or threatening to audience members and become a distraction from the message. If you keep the meaning of your speech foremost in your mind, you will more readily find the balance in facial expression.

Another common problem some new speakers have is showing only one expression. One of our coauthors competed in speech in college. After one of his speeches (about how people die on amusement park rides), one of his judges pulled him aside and informed him that his speech was “creepy.” Apparently, while speaking about death, our coauthor smiled the entire time. The incongruity between the speech on death and dying and the coauthor’s smile just left the judge a little creeped out. If you are excited in a part of your speech, you should show excitement on your face. On the other hand, if you are at a serious part of your speech, your facial expressions should be serious.

Dress

While there are no clear-cut guidelines for how you should dress for every speech you’ll give, dress is still a very important part of how others will perceive you (again, it’s all about the first impression). If you want to be taken seriously, you must present yourself seriously. While we do not advocate dressing up in a suit every time you give a speech, there are definitely times when wearing a suit is appropriate.

One general rule you can use for determining dress is the “step-above rule,” which states that you should dress one step above your audience. If your audience is going to be dressed casually in shorts and jeans, then wear nice casual clothing such as a pair of neatly pressed slacks and a collared shirt or blouse. If, however, your audience is going to be wearing “business casual” attire, then you should probably wear a sport coat, a dress, or a suit. The goal of the step-above rule is to establish yourself as someone to be taken seriously. On the other hand, if you dress two steps above your audience, you may put too much distance between yourself and your audience, coming across as overly formal or even arrogant.

Another general rule for dressing is to avoid distractions in your appearance. Overly tight or revealing garments, over-the-top hairstyles or makeup, jangling jewelry, or a display of tattoos and piercings can serve to draw your audience’s attention away from your speech. Remembering that your message is the most important aspect of your speech, keep that message in mind when you choose your clothing and accessories.

Self-Presentation

When you present your speech, you are also presenting yourself. Self-presentation, sometimes also referred to as poise or stage presence, is determined by how you look, how you stand, how you walk to the lectern, and how you use your voice and gestures. Your self-presentation can either enhance your message or detract from it. Worse, a poor self-presentation can turn a good, well-prepared speech into a forgettable waste of time. You want your self-presentation to support your credibility and improve the likelihood that the audience will listen with interest.

Your personal appearance should reflect the careful preparation of your speech. Your personal appearance is the first thing your audience will see, and from it, they will make inferences about the speech you’re about to present.

Variety

One of the biggest mistakes novice public speakers make is to use the same gesture over and over again during a speech. While you don’t want your gestures to look fake, you should be careful to include a variety of different nonverbal components while speaking. You should make sure that your face, body, and words are all working in conjunction with each other to support your message.

Practice Effectively

You might get away with presenting a hastily practiced speech, but the speech will not be as good as it could be. In order to develop your best speech delivery, you need to practice—and use your practice time effectively. Practicing does not mean reading over your notes, mentally running through your speech, or even speaking your speech aloud over and over. Instead, you need to practice with the goal of identifying the weaknesses in your delivery, improving upon them, and building good speech delivery habits.

When you practice your speech, place both your feet in full, firm contact with the floor to keep your body from swaying side to side. Some new public speakers find that they don’t know what to do with their hands during the speech. Your practice sessions should help you get comfortable. When you’re not gesturing, you can rest your free hand lightly on a lectern or simply allow it to hang at your side. Since this is not a familiar posture for most people, it might feel awkward, but in your practice sessions, you can begin getting used to it.

Seek Input from Others

Because we can't see ourselves as others see us, one of the best ways to improve your delivery is to seek constructive criticism from others. This, of course, is an aspect of your public speaking course, as you will receive evaluations from your instructor and possibly from your fellow students. However, by practicing in front of others before it is time to present your speech, you can anticipate and correct problems so that you can receive a better evaluation when you give the speech "for real."

Ask your practice observers to be honest about the aspects of your delivery that could be better. Sometimes students create study groups just for this purpose. When you create a study group of classroom peers, everyone has an understanding of the entire creative process, and their feedback will thus be more useful to you than the feedback you might get from someone who has never taken the course or given a speech.

If your practice observers seem reluctant to offer useful criticisms, ask questions. How was your eye contact? Could they hear you? Was your voice well modulated? Did you mispronounce any words? How was your posture? Were your gestures effective? Did you have any mannerisms that you should learn to avoid? Because peers are sometimes reluctant to say things that could sound critical, direct questions are often a useful way to help them speak up.

If you learn from these practice sessions that your voice tends to drop at the ends of sentences, make a conscious effort to support your voice as you conclude each main point. If you learn that you have a habit of clicking a pen, make sure you don't have a pen with you when you speak or that you keep it in your pocket. If your practice observers mention that you tend to hide your hands in the sleeves of your shirt or jacket, next time wear short sleeves or roll your sleeves up before beginning your speech. If you learn through practice that you tend to sway or rock while you speak, you can consciously practice and build the habit of *not* swaying.

When it is your turn to give feedback to others in your group, assume that they are as interested in doing well as you are. Give feedback in the spirit of helping their speeches be as good as possible.

Use Audio and/or Video to Record Yourself

Technology has made it easier than ever to record yourself and others using the proliferation of electronic devices people are likely to own. Video, of course, allows you the advantage of being able to see yourself as others see you, while audio allows you to concentrate on the audible aspects of your delivery. As we mentioned earlier in the chapter, if neither video nor audio is available, you can always observe yourself by practicing your delivery in front of a mirror.

After you have recorded yourself, it may seem obvious that you should watch and listen to the recording. This can be intimidating, as you may fear that your performance anxiety will be so obvious that everyone will notice it in the recording. But students are often pleasantly surprised when they watch and listen to their recordings, as even students with very high anxiety may find out that they "come across" in a speech much better than they expected.

A recording can also be a very effective diagnostic device. Sometimes students believe they are making strong contact with their audiences, but their cards contain so many notes that they succumb to the temptation of reading. By finding out from the video that you misjudged your eye contact, you can be motivated to rewrite your notecards in a way that doesn't provide the opportunity to do so much reading.

It is most likely that in viewing your recording, you will benefit from discovering your strengths and finding weak areas you can strengthen.

Good Delivery Is a Habit

Luckily, public speaking is an activity that, when done conscientiously, strengthens with practice. As you become aware of the areas where your delivery has room for improvement, you will begin developing a keen sense of what "works" and what audiences respond to.

It is advisable to practice out loud in front of other people several times, spreading your rehearsals out over several days. To do this kind of practice, of course, you need to have your speech be finalized well ahead of the date when you are going to give it. During these practice sessions, you can time your speech to make sure it lasts the appropriate length of time. A friend of ours was the second student on the program in an event where each student's presentation was to last thirty to forty-five minutes. After the first student had been speaking for seventy-five minutes, the professor in charge asked, "Can we speed this up?" The student said yes, and proceeded to continue speaking for another seventy-five minutes before finally concluding his portion of the program. Although we might fault the professor for not "pulling the plug," clearly the student had not timed his speech in advance.

Your practice sessions will also enable you to make adjustments to your notecards to make them more effective in supporting your contact with your audience. This kind of practice is not just a strategy for beginners; it is practiced by many highly placed public figures with extensive experience in public speaking.

Your public speaking course is one of the best opportunities you will have to manage your performance anxiety, build your confidence in speaking extemporaneously, develop your vocal skills, and become adept at self-presentation. The habits you can develop through targeted practice are to build continuously on your strengths and to challenge yourself to find new areas for improving your delivery. By taking advantage of these opportunities, you will gain the ability to present a speech effectively whenever you may be called upon to speak publicly.

Key Takeaways

- Conversational style is a speaker's ability to sound expressive while being perceived by the audience as natural. Conversational quality is a speaker's ability to prepare a speech and rehearse a speech but still sound spontaneous when delivering it.
- Eye contact helps capture and maintain an audience's interest while contributing to the speaker's credibility.
- Vocalics are the nonverbal components of the verbal message. There are six important vocalic components for a speaker to be aware of: volume (loudness or softness), pitch (highness or lowness), rate (fastness or slowness), pauses (use of breaks to add emphasis), vocal variety (use of a range of vocalic strategies), and pronunciation (using conventional patterns of speech formation).
- Physical manipulation is the use of one's body to add meaning and emphasis to a speech. As such, excessive or nonexistent physical manipulation can detract from a speaker's speech.
- Good delivery is a habit that is built through effective practice.

Exercises

1. Find a speech online and examine the speaker's overall presentation. How good was the speaker's delivery? Make a list of the aspects of delivery in this chapter and evaluate the speaker according to the list. In what areas might the speaker improve?
2. Record a practice session of your speech. Write a self-critique, answering the following questions: What surprised you the most? What is an area of strength upon which you can build? What is *one* area for improvement?

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9.5: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Sam wanted to present a speech on medical errors. He has procrastinated. Two days before the speech, he realized that no matter how hard he worked, his speech would be weak, and he could not do it justice. Instead of choosing a less technical topic or narrowing to one specific kind of medical mistake, he decided to push through it. He could make up for the scant and superficial content by wearing hospital scrubs, borrowed from his brother-in-law, and by sliding his glasses down his nose to make it easier to see his notecards and to match the stereotype of a health care provider.

1. Did Sam treat the audience with respect?
2. Name several things Sam should have done differently.
3. What would you do if you were Sam's instructor?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. According to Albert Mehrabian, which is the correct breakdown for how humans interpret a speaker's message?
    1. 55 percent face, 38 percent vocalics, and 7 percent words
    2. 93 percent face, 7 percent vocalics, and 0 percent words
    3. 40 percent face, 40 percent vocalics, and 20 percent words
    4. 7 percent face, 55 percent vocalics, and 38 percent words
    5. 38 percent face, 7 percent vocalics, and 55 percent words
2. Darlene is preparing a speech for her public speaking class. She goes to the library and does her research. She then prepares a basic outline and creates five notecards with basic ideas to use during her speech. What type of delivery is Darlene using?
    1. impromptu
    2. extemporaneous
    3. manuscript
    4. memorized
    5. elocutionist
3. Which form of vocalics is concerned with the highness or lowness of someone's speech?
    1. pitch
    2. rate
    3. volume
    4. pauses
    5. pronunciation
4. In his speech on landscape architecture, Jimmy uses the word "yaad" instead of the word "yard." What type of articulation problem does Jimmy exhibit?
    1. substitution
    2. omission
    3. distortion
    4. addition
    5. surrogate
5. Which of the following is a recommendation for creating and using notes during a speech?
    1. Include only key words to trigger your memory.
    2. Read from your notes as much as possible.
    3. Never show your notes to your audience.
    4. Write in small letters on your notes so that your audience can't see them.
    5. Do not rehearse with your notes or your delivery will become "stale."
6. Effective speech delivery can be summed up in which term?
    1. vocalics
    2. physical manipulation
    3. self-presentation

4. conversational quality
5. paralanguage

Answer Key

1. a
2. b
3. a
4. a
5. a
6. c

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Presentation Aids- Design and Usage

10.1: Functions of Presentation Aids
10.2: Types of Presentation Aids
10.3: Media to Use for Presentation Aids
10.4: Tips for Preparing Presentation Aids
10.5: Chapter Exercises

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10.1: Functions of Presentation Aids

Learning Objectives

1. List four reasons why presentation aids are important in public speaking.
2. Explain two ways in which presentation aids can increase audience understanding of a message.

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, it is also important to recognize that 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. If you are like most people, you can easily remember incidents when you misunderstood a message or when someone else misunderstood what you 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. 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.

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.

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 15.1A (left) 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.

Figure 15.1B (center) 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 (albeit slightly abstract), with the labels of source, channel, message, receivers, and feedback to illustrate the basic linear model of human communication.

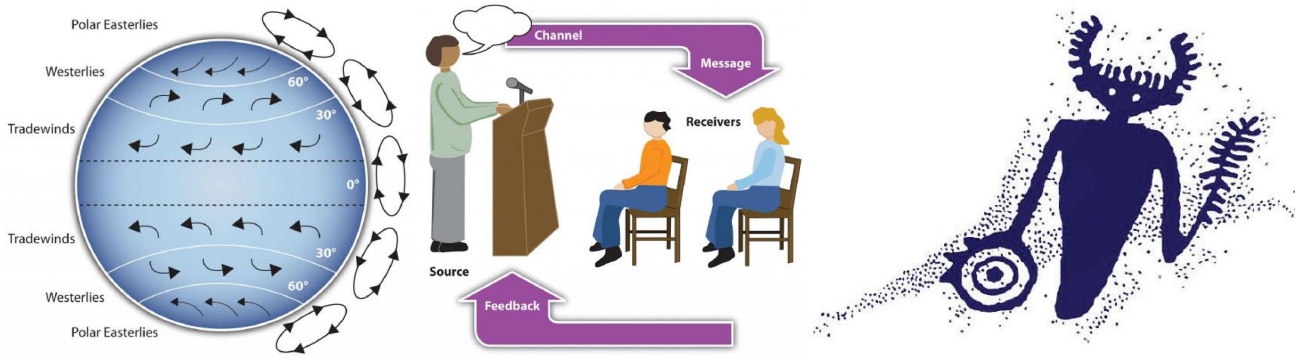


Figure 10.1.1: (left) Coriolis Effect, (middle) Model of Communication, (right) Petroglyph

Another aspect of clarifying occurs when a speaker wants to visually 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 15.1C (right), can more easily help your audience form a clear mental image of your intended meaning.

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 15.4 "Planetary Water Supply", you show that if the world water supply were equal to ten gallons, only ten drops would be available and potable 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.

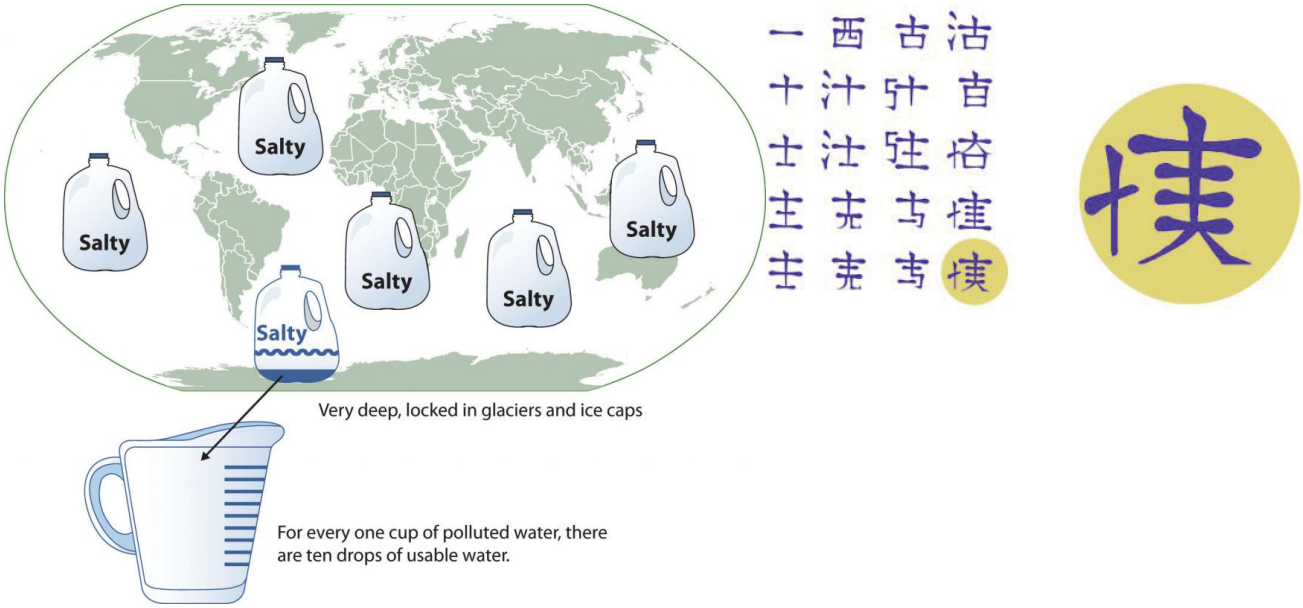


Figure 10.1.2: (left) Planetary Water Supply (right) Chinese Lettering Amplified (Wikimedia Commons – public domain)

Another way of emphasizing that can be done visually is to zoom in on a specific aspect of interest within your speech. In Figure 15.5 "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.

Aiding Retention and Recall

The second function that presentation aids can serve is to increase the audience's chances of remembering your speech. A 1996 article by the US Department of Labor 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" (United States Department of Labor, 1996). Most of how people learn is through seeing things, so the visual component of learning is very important. The article goes on to note that information stored in long-term memory is also affected by how we originally learn the material. In a study of memory, learners were asked to recall information after a three day period. The researchers found that they retained 10 percent of what they heard from an oral presentation, 35 percent from a visual presentation, and 65 percent from a visual and oral presentation (Lockard & Sidowski, 1961). It's amazing to see how the combined effect of both the visual and oral components can contribute to long-term memory.

For this reason, exposure to a visual 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, 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.

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. For example, if you are giving an informative speech about diamonds, you might plan to display a sequence of slides illustrating the most popular diamond shapes: brilliant, marquise, emerald, and so on. As you finish describing one shape and advance to the next slide, seeing the next diamond shape will help you remember the information about it that you are going to deliver.

Adding Variety and Interest

A third function of presentation aids is simply to make your speech more interesting. While it is true that a good speech and a well-rehearsed delivery will already include variety in several aspects of the presentation, in many cases, a speech can be made even more interesting by the use of well-chosen presentation aids.

For example, you may have prepared a very good speech to inform a group of gardeners about several new varieties of roses suitable for growing in your local area. Although your listeners will undoubtedly understand and remember your message very well without any presentation aids, wouldn't your speech have greater impact if you accompanied your remarks with a picture of each rose? You can imagine that your audience would be even more enthralled 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 cooks about Indian spices, you might want to provide tiny samples of spices that they could smell and taste during your speech. Taste researcher Linda Bartoshuk has given presentations in which audience members receive small pieces of fruit and are asked to taste them at certain points during the speech (Association for Psychological Science, 2011).

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. However, even if you give a good speech, you run the risk of appearing unprofessional if your presentation aids are poorly executed. 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. Conversely, a high quality presentation will contribute to your professional image. 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.

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, credible speaker.

Key Takeaways

- Presentation aids should help audiences more thoroughly understand a speaker's basic message.
- There are four basic reasons to use presentation aids. First, they increase audience understanding of a speaker's message. Second, they help audiences retain and recall a speaker's message after the fact. Third, they make a speech more interesting by adding variety. Lastly, by making a speaker's overall speech more polished, presentation aids can increase an audience's perception of the speaker's credibility.
- Presentation aids help an audience more clearly understand a speaker's message in two ways: they help clarify and they help emphasize. Presentation aids can help the audience to understand complex ideas or processes and can also show which ideas are most important in the speech.

Exercises

1. Look at the outline you have prepared for a classroom speech. Where in the speech would it be appropriate to use presentation aids? Why would presentation aids help at the points you identify?

2. Presentational slides from speeches are sometimes available online. Search for and evaluate three sets of presentation slides you find online. Identify three ways that the slides could be improved to be more effective presentation aids.

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10.2: Types of Presentation Aids

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how charts can be used to present information.
2. Explain the importance of using graphs while speaking.
3. Describe four common types of representations.
4. Differentiate between objects and models.
5. Identify why speakers may use people as presentation aids.

As we saw in the case of the orientation presentation at the organic farming conference, using presentation aids can be risky. 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. Although the maxim "less is more" may sound like a cliché, it really does apply in this instance. 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 classroom 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? You must be prepared to adapt to an uncomfortable and scary situation. This is why we urge students to go to the classroom at least fifteen minutes ahead of time to test the equipment and ascertain the condition of things 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 duct tape so you can display your poster even if the easel is gone. Find an extra chair if your table has disappeared. Test the computer setup, and have an alternative plan prepared in case there is some glitch that prevents your computer-based presentation aids from being usable. The more sophisticated the equipment is, the more you should be prepared with an alternative, even in a "smart classroom."

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 because they can distract the audience's attention from your message. 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.

Although there are many useful presentation tools, you should not attempt to use every one of these tools in a single speech. Your presentation aids should be designed to look like a coherent set. For instance, if you decide to use three slides and a poster, all four of these visual aids should make use of the same type font and basic design.

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 10.2.1 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, or the lines along which energy is thought to flow, and the acupuncture points.



Figure 10.2.1: Acupuncture Charts (public domain; Wikimedia Commons)

In the rest of this section, we're going to explore three common types of charts: statistical charts, sequence-of-steps chart, and decision trees.

Statistical Charts

Table 10.2.1: *Birth Weight Chi-Square Source: Woods, S. E., & Raju, U. (2001). Maternal smoking and the risk of congenital birth defects: A cohort study. Journal of the American Board of Family Practitioners, 14, 330–334..*

Congenital Anomalies	Relative Risk	Number of Smokers N = 1,943	Number of Nonsmokers N = 16,073	95% Cl	p-Value
Cardiovascular System	1.56	43	217	1.12-2.19	p <.01</td>
Skeletal System	1.11	19	139	0.68-1.82	NS
Hematologic System	1.39	20	121	0.86-2.25	NS
Nervous System	1.30	4	25	0.91-1.86	NS
Pulmonary System	1.25	7	39	0.55-2.84	NS
Gastrointestinal System	0.54	1	17	0.07-4.11	NS

For most audiences, statistical presentations must be kept as simple as possible, and they must be explained. The statistical chart shown in Table 10.2.1: "Birth Weight Chi-Square" is from a study examining the effects of maternal smoking on a range of congenital birth defects. Unless you are familiar with statistics, this 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 surely an example of a visual aid that, although it delivers a limited kind of information, does not speak for itself.

Sequence-of-Steps Charts

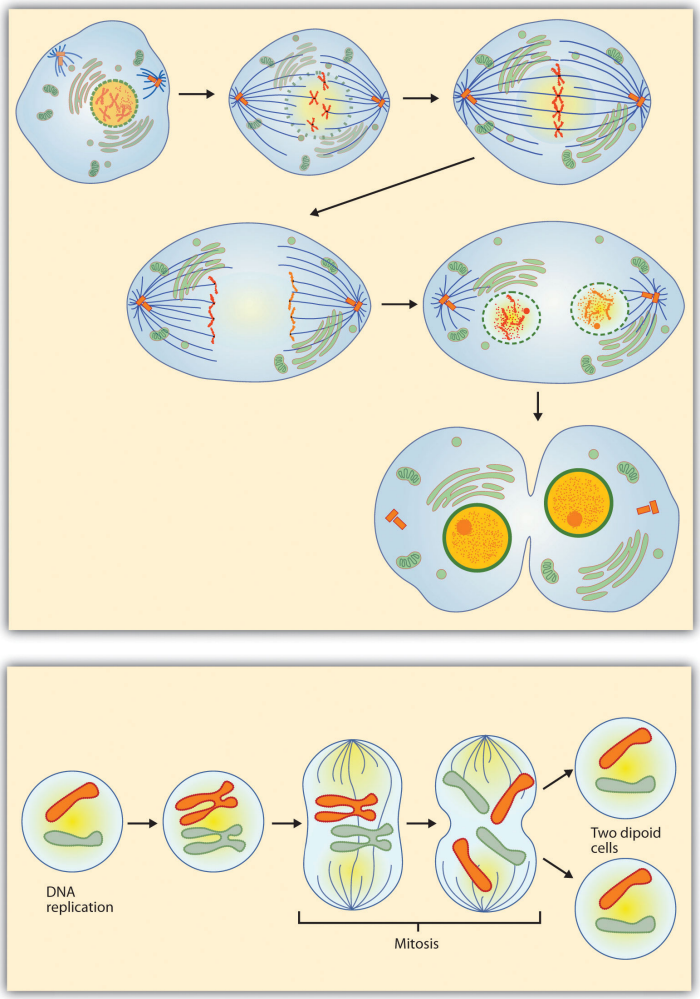


Figure 10.2.2: *Steps in Cell Reproduction Source: Images courtesy of LadyofHats, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MITOSIS_cells_secuence.svg, and the National Institutes of Health, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MajorEventsInMitosis.jpg.*

Charts are also useful when you are trying to explain a process that involves several steps. The two visual aids in Figure 10.2.2 "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 may have more color and look more polished, 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.

Decision Trees

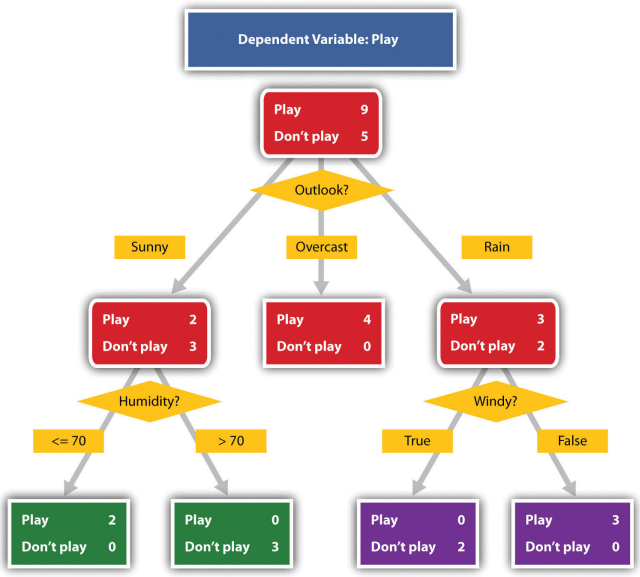


Figure 10.2.3: (a) To Play or Not to Play. Iheartpandas – Wigwams – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. (b) Ship's Rigging Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

Decision trees are useful for showing the relationships between ideas. The example in Figure 15.9 "To Play or Not to Play" shows how a decision tree could be used to determine the appropriate weather for playing baseball. 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.

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 the variation in one variable in comparison with that of one or more other variables. Where 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 show the breakdown of those computers 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, and pie graphs.

Line Graph

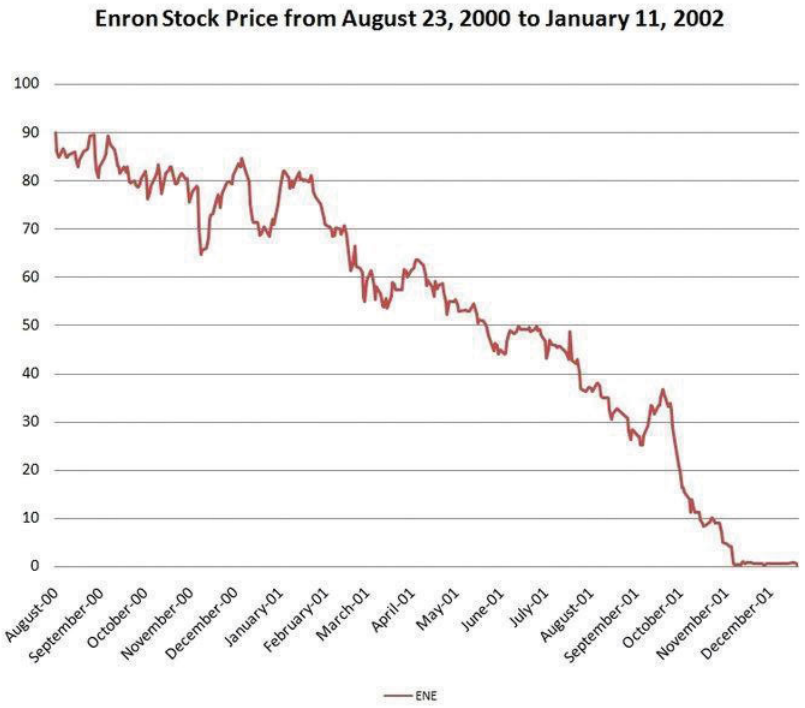


Figure 10.2.4: *Enron's Stock Price Source: Image courtesy of Nehrams 2020, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EnronStockPriceAug00Jan02.jpg.*

A line graph is designed to show trends over time. In Figure 15.10 "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. Showing such a line graph helps the audience see the relationships between the numbers, and audiences can understand the information by seeing the graph much more easily than they could if the speaker just read the numbers aloud.

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 10.2.5: *Natural Death vs. Homicide* is well designed. It is relatively simple and is carefully labeled, making it easy for you to guide your audience through the quantities of each type of death. The bar graph is designed to show the difference between natural deaths and homicides across various age groups. When you look at the data, the first grouping clearly shows that eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds are more likely to die because of a homicide than any of the other age groups.

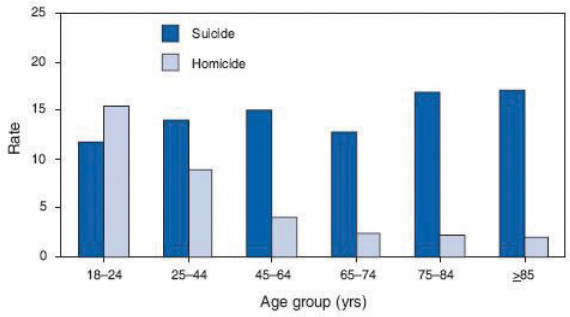


Figure 10.2.5: *Natural Death vs. Homicide Source: Image courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Homicide_suicide_USA.gif.*

The graph in Figure 15.12 "Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States" is a complicated bar graph depicting the disparity between the haves and the have nots within the United States. On the left hand side of the graph you can see that the Top 20% of people within the United States account for 84.7% of all of the wealth and 50.1% of all of the income. On the other hand, those in the bottom 40% account for only 0.2% of the wealth and 12.1% of the actual income.

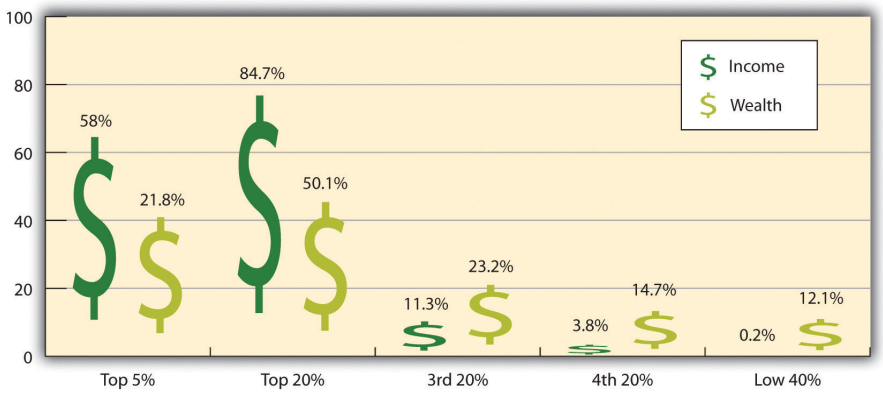


Figure 10.2.6: *Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States Source: Wolff, E. N. (2007). Recent trends in household wealth in the United States: Rising debt and the middle-class squeeze (Working Paper No. 502). Retrieved from the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College website: http://www.levy.org/pubs/wp_502.pdf*

While the graph is very well designed, it presents a great deal of information. 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 15.11 "Natural Death vs. Homicide".

Pie Graph

Pie graphs 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 10.2.7:*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.

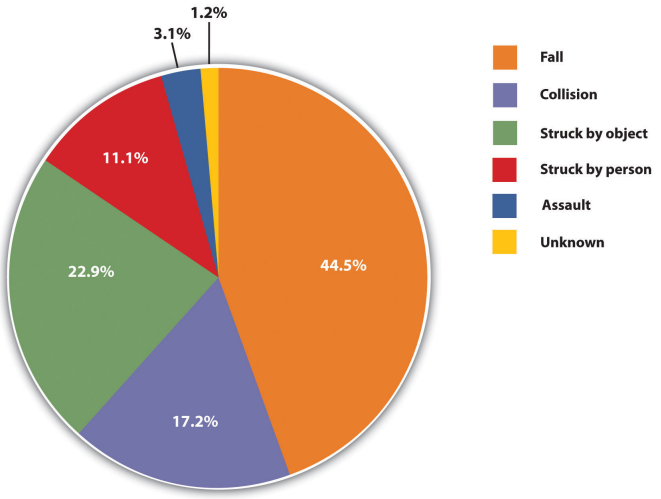


Figure 10.2.7:*Causes of Concussions in Children*

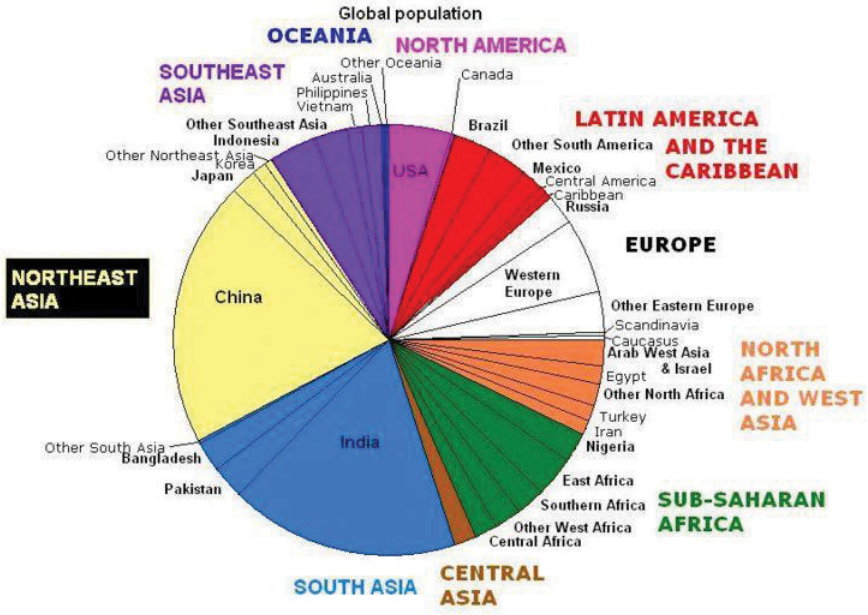


Figure 10.2.8:*World Populations* *Source: Image courtesy of Brutannica, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World_population_pie_chart.JPG.*

The pie graph in Figure 10.2.8:*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.

Representations

In the world of presentation aids, **representations** is the word used to classify a group of aids designed to represent real processes or objects. Often, speakers want to visually demonstrate something that they cannot physically bring with them to the speech. Maybe you're giving a speech on the human brain, and you just don't have access to a cadaver's brain. Instead of bringing in a real brain, you could use a picture of a brain or an image that represents the human brain. In this section we're going to explore four common representations: diagrams, maps, photographs, and video or recordings.

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 organization charts and process flow charts.

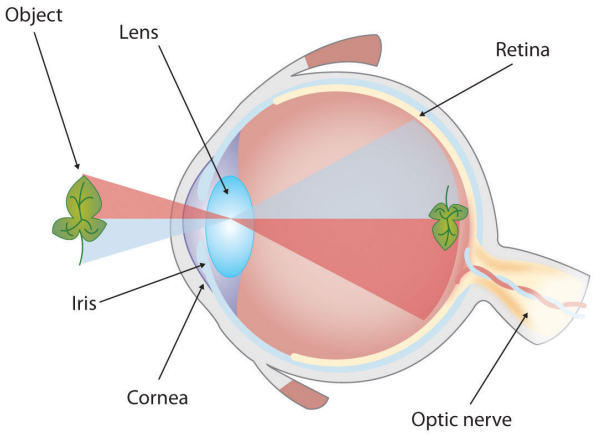


Figure 10.2.9: *The Human Eye*

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 10.2.9: *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.

Maps

Maps are extremely useful if the information is clear and limited. There are all kinds of maps, including population, weather, ocean current, political, and economic maps, but you should be able to 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 10.2.10: *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.



Figure 10.2.10: *African Map with Nigerian Emphasis*



Figure 10.2.11: *Figure 15.17 Rhode Island Map Source: Map courtesy of the National Atlas of the United States*

Figure 10.2.11: *Figure 15.17 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. Although the map does not list the names of the islands, it is helpful in orienting the audience to the direction and distance of the islands to other geographic features, such as the city of Providence and the Atlantic Ocean.

Photographs and Drawings



Figure 10.2.12: To Play or Not to Play. Iheartpandas – Wigwams – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



Figure 10.2.13: *Ship's Rigging* Source: Image courtesy of Mathieu Dréo, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tall_ship_rigging_in_amsterdam_close.jpg

Sometimes a photograph or a drawing is the best way to show an unfamiliar but important detail. Figure 10.2.12: To Play or Not to Play. is a photograph of a wigwam, a wigwam was a living dwelling used by Native Americans in the North East. In this photograph you can see the curved birchbark exterior, which makes this dwelling ideal for a variety of weather conditions. The photograph of the tall ship in Figure 10.2.13: *Ship's Rigging* emphasizes the sheer amount and complexity of the ship's rigging.

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 the following forty-three-second video to demonstrate the medical part of the surgery (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPuThbFMxGg). Maybe you want to include a recording of a real patient explaining why he or she decided to get the Lap-Band. Then you could include a podcast like this one from the Medical University of South Carolina (http://medicaluniversc.http.internapcdn.net/medicaluniversc_vitalstream_com/podcasts/2007/1_Treado_June_22_final.mp3).

There is one major caveat 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 three mistakes that speakers often make when using audio and video clips:

1. Avoid choosing clips that are too long for the overall length of the speech. If you are giving a five-minute speech, then any audio or video clip you use should be under thirty seconds in length.
2. Don't fail to 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.
3. Don't fail to 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.

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. If you're

talking about the percussion family of musical instruments and you own (and can play) several different percussion instruments, you can show your audience in person what they look like and how they sound.

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.

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 a 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.

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.

The third risk is that some locations may have regulations about bringing 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 many speeches, it can be cumbersome and distracting for the speaker to use her or his own body to illustrate a point. In such cases, the best solution is 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 him or her as much as necessary to splint their foot. 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. Use your absolute best judgment about behavior, and make sure that your human presentation aid understands this dimension of the task.

Key Takeaways

- Various types of charts can aid audience understanding of a speaker's message. Statistical charts help audiences see and interpret numerical information. Sequence-of-steps charts show how a process occurs. Decision trees help audience members see how a specific decision can be made in a logical fashion.
- Line graphs, bar graphs, and pie graphs are commonly used by speakers to help present numerical information. The information presented on a graph should be clean and easily understandable from a distance.
- Representations are presentation aids designed to represent a real process or object. Commonly used representations in public speaking include diagrams, maps, photographs, and video or audio recordings.

- Objects are physical items that can be held up and used during a speech. Models, on the other hand, refer to tangible items that can be held during a speech, but are not the actual object but rather a facsimile of it.
- Speakers often will use their own bodies or the bodies of other people to help them illustrate a part of a speech. When using another person, it is very important to coach that person prior to the speech to ensure that he or she will not upstage the speaker. Using animals as presentation aids is generally not recommended.

Exercises

1. Watch the video on gshep1's YouTube channel from Booher Consultants at http://www.youtube.com/user/gshep1. How many mistakes can you identify that this speaker makes in using presentation aids?
2. Find a speech on YouTube and see what types of presentation aids the speaker uses. Does the speaker select appropriate aids? How could you have made them better? Were there any missing presentation aids that should have been in the speech?
3. Create a chart representing the speech creation process. Try using either a sequence-of-steps chart or a decision tree.
4. Think about your next speech. What presentation aids can you use in your speech to enhance your audience's understanding?

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10.3: Media to Use for Presentation Aids

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the range of media choices for presentation aids.
2. Identify advantages and disadvantages of different presentation aid media.
3. Explain the role of careful planning and good execution when using presentation aids.

The venue of your speech should suggest the appropriate selection of presentation aids. In your classroom, you have several choices, including some that omit technology. If you are speaking in a large auditorium, you will almost certainly need to use technology to project text and images on a large screen.

Many students feel that they lack the artistic skills to render their own graphics, so they opt to use copyright-free graphics on their presentation aids. You may do this as long as you use images that are created in a consistent style. For instance, you should not combine realistic renderings with cartoons unless there is a clear and compelling reason to do so. Being selective in this way will result in a sequence of presentation aids that look like a coherent set, thereby enhancing your professionalism.

In keeping with careful choices and effective design, we also have to do a good job in executing presentation aids. They should never look hastily made, dirty, battered, or disorganized. They do not have to be fancy, but they do need to look professional. In this section we will discuss the major types of media that can be used for presentation aids, which include computer-based media, audiovisual media, and low-tech media.

Computer-Based Media

In most careers in business, industry, and other professions for which students are preparing themselves, computer-based presentation aids are the norm today. Whether the context is a weekly department meeting in a small conference room or an annual convention in a huge amphitheater, speakers are expected to be comfortable with using PowerPoint or other similar software to create and display presentation aids.

If your public speaking course meets in a smart classroom, you have probably had the opportunity to see the computer system in action. Many such systems today are nimble and easy to use. Still, “easy” is a relative term. Don’t take for granted someone else’s advice that “it’s really self-explanatory”—instead, make sure to practice ahead of time. It is also wise to be prepared for technical problems, which can happen to even the most sophisticated computer users. When Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple and cofounder of Pixar, introduced a new iPhone 4 in June, 2010, his own visual presentation froze (Macworld, 2010). The irony of a high-tech guru’s technology not working at a public presentation did not escape the notice of news organizations.

The world was first introduced to computer presentations back in the 1970s, but these software packages were expensive and needed highly trained technicians to operate the programs. Today, there are a number of presentation software programs that are free or relatively inexpensive and that can be learned quickly by nonspecialists. Table 15.1 “Presentation Software Packages” lists several of these.

Table 15.1 Presentation Software Packages

Name	Website	Price
Google Presentations	https://www.google.com/slides/about/	Free
Harvard Graphics	http://www.harvardgraphics.com	$
Keynote	http://www.apple.com/keynote	$
OpenOffice Impress	http://www.openoffice.org/product/impress.html	Free
PowerPoint	https://products.office.com/en-us/powerpoint	$
PrezentIt	http://prezentit.com	Free
Prezi	prezi.com	Free/$

Name	Website	Price
ThinkFree Show	http://member.thinkfree.com	Free
Zoho Show	show.zoho.com	Free

In addition to becoming more readily accessible, presentation software has become more flexible over the years. As recently as the mid-2000s, critics such as the eminent graphic expert and NASA consultant Edward Tufte 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, 2005). 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.

What this boils down to is observing the universal principles of good design, which include unity, emphasis or focal point, scale and proportion, balance, and rhythm (Lauer & Pentak, 2000). As we've mentioned earlier, it's generally best to use a single font for the text on your visuals so that they look like a unified set. In terms of scale or proportion, it is essential to make sure the information is large enough for the audience to see; and since the display size may vary according to the monitor you are using, this is another reason for practicing in advance with the equipment you intend to use. 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.

In addition to presentation software such as PowerPoint, speakers sometimes have access to interactive computer-based presentation aids. These are often called "clickers"—handheld units that audience members hold and that are connected to a monitor to which the speaker has access. These interactive aids are useful for tracking audience responses to questions, and they have the advantage over asking for a show of hands in that they can be anonymous. A number of instructors in various courses use "clickers" in their classrooms.

Using computer-based aids in a speech brings up a few logistical considerations. In some venues, you may need to stand behind a high-tech console to operate the computer. You need to be aware that this will physically isolate you from the audience you with whom you are trying to establish a relationship in your speech. When you stand behind presentation equipment, you may feel really comfortable, but you end up limiting your nonverbal interaction with your audience.

If your classroom is not equipped with a computer and you want to use presentation software media in your speech, you may of course bring your computer, or you may be able to schedule the delivery of a computer cart to your classroom. In either case, check with your instructor about the advance preparations that will be needed. At some schools, there are very few computer carts, so it is important to reserve one well in advance. You will also want to see if you can gain access to one ahead of time to practice and familiarize yourself with the necessary passwords and commands to make your slides run properly. On the day of your speech, be sure to arrive early enough to test out the equipment before class begins.

Audiovisual Media

Although audio and video clips are often computer-based, they can be (and, in past decades, always were) used without a computer.

Audio presentation aids are useful for illustrating musical themes. For instance, if you're speaking about how the Polish composer Frederick Chopin was inspired by the sounds of nature, you can convey that meaning only through playing an example. If you have a smart classroom, you may be able to use it to play an MP3. Alternatively, you may need to bring your music player. In that case, be sure the speakers in the room are up to the job. The people in the back of the room must be able to hear it, and the speakers must not sound distorted when you turn the volume up.

Video that clarifies, explains, amplifies, emphasizes, or illustrates a key concept in your speech is appropriate, as long as you do not rely on it to do your presentation for you. There are several things you must do. First, identify a specific section of video that delivers meaning. Second, "cue up" the video so that you can just pop it into the player, and it will begin at the right place. Third, tell your audience where the footage comes from. You can tell your audience, for instance, that you are showing them an example from the 1985 BBC documentary titled "In Search of the Trojan War." Fourth, tell your audience why you're showing the footage.

For instance, you can tell them, “This is an example of storytelling in the Bardic tradition.” You can interrupt or mute the video to make a comment about it, but your total footage should not use more than 20 percent of the time for your speech.

Low-Tech Media

In some speaking situations, of course, computer technology is not available. Even if you have ready access to technology, there will be contexts where computer-based presentation aids are unnecessary or even counterproductive. And in still other contexts, computer-based media may be accompanied by low-tech presentation aids. One of the advantages of low-tech media is that they are very predictable. There’s little that can interfere with using them. Additionally, they can be inexpensive to produce. However, unlike digital media, they can be prone to physical damage in the form of smudges, scratches, dents, and rips. It can be difficult to keep them professional looking if you have to carry them through a rainstorm or blizzard, so you will need to take steps to protect them as you transport them to the speech location. Let’s examine some of the low-tech media that you might use with a speech.

Chalk or 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 marker 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. 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 three simple rules:

1. Write large enough so that everyone in the room can see.
2. Print legibly; don’t write in cursive script.
3. Write short phrases; don’t take time to write complete sentences.

It is also worth mentioning that some classrooms and business conference rooms are equipped with smartboards, or digitally enhanced whiteboards. On a smartboard you can bring up prepared visuals and then modify them as you would a chalk or dry-erase board. The advantage is that you can keep a digital record of what was written for future reference. However, as with other technology-based media, smartboards may be prone to unexpected technical problems, and they require training and practice to be used properly.

Flipchart

A flipchart is useful when you’re trying to convey change over a number of steps. For instance, you could use a prepared flipchart to show dramatic population shifts on maps. In such a case, you should prepare highly visible, identical maps on three of the pages so that only the data will change from page to page. Each page should be neatly titled, and you should actively point out the areas of change on each page. You could also use a flip chart to show stages in the growth and development of the malaria-bearing mosquito. Again, you should label each page, making an effort to give the pages a consistent look.

Organize your flip chart in such a way that you flip pages in one direction only, front to back. It will be difficult to flip large pages without damaging them, and if you also have to “back up” and “skip forward,” your presentation will look awkward and disorganized. Pages will get damaged, and your audience will be able to hear each rip.

In addition, most flip charts need to be propped up on an easel of some sort. If you arrive for your speech only to find that the easel in the classroom has disappeared, you will need to rig up another system that allows you to flip the pages.

Poster Board or Foam Board

Foam board consists of a thin sheet of Styrofoam with heavy paper bonded to both surfaces. It is a lightweight, inexpensive foundation for information, and it will stand on its own when placed in an easel without curling under at the bottom edge. Poster board tends to be cheaper than foam board, but it is flimsier, more vulnerable to damage, and can’t stand on its own.

If you plan to paste labels or paragraphs of text to foam or poster board, for a professional look you should make sure the color of the poster board matches the color of the paper you will paste on. You will also want to choose a color that allows for easy visual

contrast so your audience can see it, and it must be a color that's appropriate for the topic. For instance, hot pink would be the wrong color on a poster for a speech about the Protestant Reformation.

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. Instead, when creating a poster you need to take the time to think about how you are going to lay out your aid and make it look professional. You do not have to spend lots of money to make a very sleek and professional-looking poster.

Some schools also have access to expensive, full-color poster printers where you can create large poster for pasting on a foam board. In the real world of public speaking, most speakers rely on the creation of professional posters using a full-color poster printer. Typically, posters are sketched out and then designed on a computer using a program like Microsoft PowerPoint or Publisher (these both have the option of selecting the size of the printed area).

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 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. There are several reasons this is a bad idea. You will have no control over the speed at which it circulates, or the direction it goes. Moreover, only one listener will be holding it while you're making your point about it and by the time most people see it they will have forgotten why they need to see it. In some case, it might not even reach everybody by the end of your speech. Finally, listeners could still be passing your handout around during the next speaker's speech.

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 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 and interrupts the pace of your presentation.

Like other presentation aids, handouts should include only the necessary information to support your points, and that information should be organized in such a way that listeners will be able to understand it. For example, in a speech about how new health care legislation will affect small business owners in your state, a good handout might summarize key effects of the legislation and include the names of state agencies with their web addresses where audience members can request more detailed information.

If your handout is designed for your audience to follow along, you should tell them so. State that you will be referring to specific information during the speech. Then, as you're presenting your speech, ask your audience to look, for example, at the second line in the first cluster of information. Read that line out loud and then go on to explain its meaning.

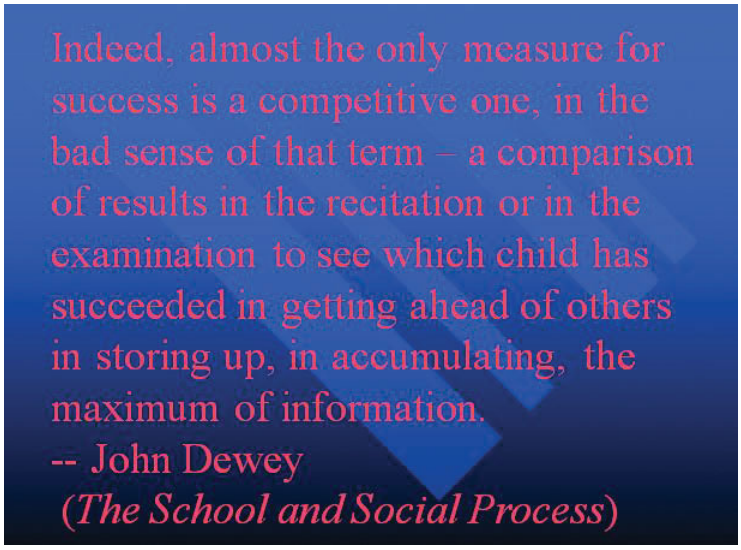
As with any presentation aid, handouts are not a substitute for a well-prepared speech. Ask yourself what information your audience really needs to be able to take with them and how it can be presented on the page in the most useful and engaging way possible.

Key Takeaways

- Speakers in professional contexts are expected to be familiar with presentation software, such as PowerPoint.
- Computer-based media can produce very professional-looking presentation aids, but as with any other media, the universal principles of good design apply.
- Speakers using computer-based media need to practice ahead of time with the computer they intend to use in the speech.
- Each presentation aid vehicle has advantages and disadvantages. As such, speakers need to think through the use of visual aids and select the most appropriate ones for their individual speeches.
- Every presentation aid should be created with careful attention to content and appearance.

Exercises

1. What's wrong with this presentation aid?



2. How would you change it?
3. What kind of presentation aids might you use in a speech on the health benefits of laughter? Why might these be good choice?

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10.4: Tips for Preparing Presentation Aids

Learning Objectives

1. Understand why it is important to keep presentation aids organized and simple.
2. Explain how to make presentation aids easy to see, hear, and understand.
3. Make sure your presentation aids work together as a cohesive set.

As we've seen earlier in this chapter, impressive presentation aids do not take the place of a well-prepared speech. Although your presentation aids should be able to stand on their own in delivering information, do not count on them to do so. Work toward that goal, but also plan on explaining your presentation aids so that your audience will know why you're using them.

One mistake you should avoid is putting too much information on an aid. You have to narrow the topic of your speech, and likewise, you must narrow the content of your presentation aids to match your speech. Your presentation aids should not represent every idea in your speech. Whatever presentation aids you choose to use, they should fulfill one or more of the functions described at the beginning of this chapter: to clarify or emphasize a point, to enhance retention and recall of your message, to add variety and interest to your speech, and to enhance your credibility as a speaker.

As a practical matter in terms of producing presentation aids, you may not be aware that many college campuses have a copy service or multimedia lab available to students for making copies, enlargements, slides, and other presentation aids. Find out from your instructor or a librarian what the resources on your campus are. In the rest of this section, we will offer some tips for designing good-quality presentation aids.

Easily Seen or Heard by Your Audience

The first rule of presentation aids is that they must be accessible for every audience member. If those in the back of the room cannot see, hear, or otherwise experience a presentation aid, then it is counterproductive to use it. Graphic elements in your presentation aids must be large enough to read. Audio must be loud enough to hear. If you are passing out samples of a food item for audience members to taste, you must bring enough for everyone.

Do not attempt to show your audience a picture by holding up a book open to the page with the photograph. Nobody will be able to see it. It will be too small for your listeners in the back of the room, and the light will glare off of the glossy paper usually used in books with color pictures so that the listeners in front won't be able to see it either.

Text-based visuals, charts, and graphs need to be executed with strong, clean lines and blocks of color. Weak lines in a graph or illustration do not get stronger with magnification. You must either strengthen those lines by hand or choose another graphic element that has stronger lines. On a poster or a slide, a graphic element should take up about a third of the area. This leaves room for a small amount of text, rendered in a large, simple font. The textual elements should be located closest to the part of your graphic element that they are about.

Carefully limit the amount of text on a presentation aid. If a great deal of text is absolutely necessary, try to divide it between two slides or posters. Many students believe that even small text will magnify amply when it's projected, but we find that this is rarely the case. We can't recommend a specific point size because that refers to the distance between the baselines of two lines of text, not to the size of the type itself.

We recommend two things: First, use a simple, easy-to-read type style. It doesn't have to be utterly devoid of style, but it should be readable and not distracting. Second, we recommend that you print your text in three or four sizes on a sheet of paper. Place the printed sheet on the floor and stand up. When you look at your printed sheet, you should be able to make a choice based on which clusters of type you are able to read from that distance.

Easily Handled

You should be able to carry your presentation aids into the room by yourself. In addition, you should be skilled in using the equipment you will use to present them. Your presentation aids should not distract you from the delivery of your speech.

Aesthetically Pleasing

For our purposes, aesthetics refers to the beauty or good taste of a presentation aid. Earlier we mentioned the universal principles of good design: unity, emphasis or focal point, scale and proportion, balance, and rhythm. Because of wide differences in taste, not everyone will agree on what is aesthetically pleasing, and you may be someone who does not think of yourself as having much artistic talent. Still, if you keep these principles in mind, they will help you to create attractive, professional-looking visuals.

The other aesthetic principle to keep in mind is that your presentation aids are intended to support your speech, not the other way around. The decisions you make in designing your visuals should be dictated by the content of your speech. If you use color, use it for a clear reason. If you use a border, keep it simple. Whatever you do, make certain that your presentation aids will be perceived as carefully planned and executed elements of your speech.

Tips for Text Aids

Use text only when you must. For example, if you're presenting an analysis of the First Amendment, it is permissible to display the text of the First Amendment, but not your entire analysis. The type must be big, simple, and bold. It needs white space around it to separate it from another graphic element or cluster of text that might be on the same presentation aid. When you display text, you must read it out loud before you go on to talk about it. That way, you won't expect your listeners to read one thing while trying to listen to something else. However, under no circumstances should you merely read what's on your text aids and consider that a speech.

Tips for Graphic Aids

If you create your graphic images, you will have control over their size and the visible strength of the lines. However, you might want to show your listeners an illustration that you can't create yourself. For instance, you might want to display a photograph of a portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls. First, find a way to enlarge the photograph. Then, to show integrity, cite your source. You should cite your source with an added caption, and you should also cite the source out loud as you display the graphic, even if your photograph is considered to be in the public domain. The NASA photograph "Spaceship Earth" is such an example. Many people use it without citing the source, but citing the source boosts your credibility as a speaker, and we strongly recommend doing so.

Rules for Computer Presentations

Mark Stoner, a professor in the Department of Communication Studies at California State University, Sacramento, has written a useful assessment of the uses and abuses of PowerPoint. Stoner observes that

PowerPoint is a hybrid between the visual and the written. When we pay attention to the design of our writing—to whether we are putting key word at the beginning or end of a sentence, for instance—we are likely to communicate more effectively. In the same way, it makes sense to understand the impact that PowerPoint's design has on our ability to communicate ideas to an audience (Stoner, 2007).

While this article is specifically about PowerPoint, Stoner's advice works for all presentation software formats. Presentation aids should deliver information that is important or is difficult to present with spoken words only. Although many speakers attempt to put their entire speech on PowerPoint slides or other visual aids, this is a bad idea for several reasons. First, if you try to put your entire speech on PowerPoint, you will lose contact with your audience. Speakers often end up looking at the projected words or directly at the computer screen instead of at their audience. Second, your vocal delivery is likely to suffer, and you will end up giving a boring reading, not a dynamic speech. Third, you will lose credibility, as your listeners question how well you really know your topic. Fourth, you are not using the presentation aids to clarify or emphasize your message, so all the information may come across as equally important.

No matter what presentation software package you decide to utilize, there are some general guidelines you'll need to follow.

Watch Your Font

One of the biggest mistakes novice users of presentational software make is thinking that if you can read it on the screen, your audience will be able to read it in their seats. While this may be the case if you're in a close, intimate conference room, most of us will be speaking in situations where audience members are fifteen feet away or more. Make sure each slide is legible from the back of the room where you will be speaking.

Don’t Write Everything Out

In addition to watching your font size, you also need to watch how you use words on the screen. Do not try to put too much information on a slide. Make sure that your slide has the appropriate information to support the point you are making and no more. We strongly recommend avoiding complete sentences on a slide unless you need to display a very important direct quotation.

Don’t Bow Down to the Software

Remember, presentation software is an aid, so it should aid and not hinder your presentation. We have seen too many students who only end up reading the slides right off the screen instead of using the slides to enhance their presentations. When you read your slides right off the projector screen, you’re killing your eye contact. As a general word of advice, if you ever find yourself being forced to turn your back to the audience to read the screen, then you are not effectively using the technology. On the flip side, you also shouldn’t need to hide behind a computer monitor to see what’s being projected.

Slide Color

Color is very important and can definitely make a strong impact on an audience. However, don’t go overboard or decide to use unappealing combinations of color. For example, you should never use a light font color (like yellow) on a solid white background because it’s hard for the eye to read.

You should also realize that while colors may be rich and vibrant on your computer screen at home, they may be distorted by a different monitor. While we definitely are in favor of experimenting with various color schemes, always check your presentation out on multiple computers to see if the slide color is being distorted in a way that makes it hard to read.

Slide Movement

Everyone who has had an opportunity to experiment with PowerPoint knows that animation in transitions between slides or even on a single slide can be fun, but often people do not realize that too much movement can actually distract audience members. While all presentation software packages offer you very cool slide movements and other bells and whistles, they are not always very helpful for your presentation. If you’re going to utilize slide transitions or word animation, stick to only three or four different types of transitions in your whole presentation. Furthermore, do not have more than one type of movement on a given slide. If you’re going to have all your text come from the right side of the screen in a bulleted list, make sure that all the items on the bulleted list come from the right side of the screen.

Practice, Practice, Practice

It is vital to practice using the technology. Nothing is worse than watching a speaker stand up and not know how to turn on the computer, access the software, or launch his or her presentation. When you use technology, audiences can quickly see if you know what you are doing, so don’t give them the opportunity to devalue your credibility because you can’t even get the show going.

Always Have a Backup Plan

Lastly, always have a backup plan. Unfortunately, things often go wrong. One of the parts of being a professional is keeping the speech moving in spite of unexpected problems. Decide in advance what you will do if things break down or disappear right when you need them. Don’t count on your instructor to solve such predicaments; it is your responsibility. If you take this responsibility seriously and check the room where you will be presenting early, you will have time to adapt. If the computer or audiovisual setup does not work on the first try, you will need time to troubleshoot and solve the problem. If an easel is missing, you will need time to experiment with using a lectern or a chair to support your flip chart. If you forgot to bring your violin for a speech about music—don’t laugh, this actually happened to a friend of ours!—you will need time to think through how to adapt your speech so that it will still be effective.

Key Takeaways

- Presentation aids must be organized and simple. The universal principles of good design can be a useful guide.
- Material in presentation aids must be limited in quantity. Remember, presentation aids are supposed to aid a speech, not become the speech itself.
- Presentation aids must visually look like they were designed as a set. When presentation aids look unprofessional, they can decrease a speaker’s credibility.
- Always practice with your presentation aids, and be prepared for unexpected problems.

Exercises

1. Examine Figure 15.14 “World Populations” in this chapter. How could you go about making this visual aid more understandable?
2. Create a new presentation aid for a previous speech given in your public speaking class. How could that aid have helped your overall speech?
3. Take some time to explore the presentation software packages discussed in Table 15.1 “Presentation Software Packages” What do you see as some of the advantages and disadvantages of the different software packages?

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10.5: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

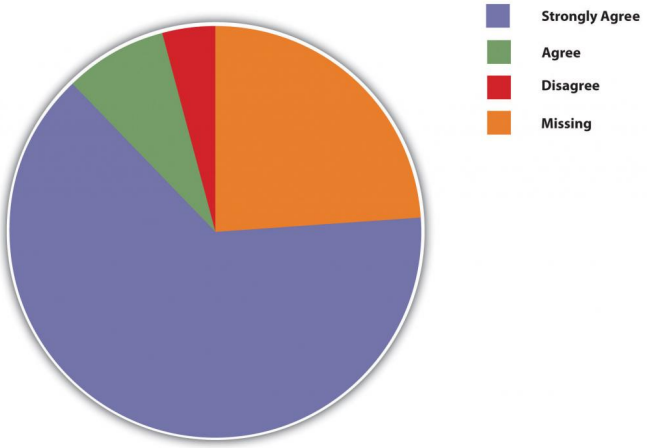
Janet knew that her argument was really weak. She kept looking at the data trying to find a way around the weakness. Finally, it hit her. She realized that she could hide the weakest part of her argument in a really complex presentation aid. *If the people can't understand it, they can't use it against me*, she thought to herself.

While she was nervous during her presentation, she was confident that no one would notice what she did. Thankfully, at the end of her presentation everyone applauded. During the question and answer period that followed, no one questioned the weak information. In fact, no one seemed to even remember the presentation aid at all.

1. Is hiding weak information in a complex presentation aid ethical?
2. Are complex aids that don't lead to audience understanding ever ethical?
3. If you were Janet's boss and you found out what she had done, would you think she was an unethical person or just a good, albeit manipulative, speaker?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Polly was in the middle of her speech about the importance of climate change. The presentation aid she shows is a picture outlining where the hole in the earth's ozone is located. What aspect of audience understanding is Polly hoping to impact with her aid?
    1. clarifying
    2. explaining
    3. amplifying
    4. emphasizing
    5. illustrating
2. Benny conducted a simple survey of his fraternity members to see what their thoughts were on instituting a no-hazing policy. During his presentation to the group he used the following aid to discuss his findings. What type of aid is Benny using?



    1. representation
    2. object
    3. graph
    4. decision tree
    5. chart
3. Which form of presentation aids are drawings that outline and explain the parts of an object, process, or phenomenon that cannot be readily seen.
    1. representations
    2. diagrams
    3. objects

4. charts
5. graphs

4. Which of the following is *not* true about using black/dry-erase boards as presentation aids?
    1. Don’t write in complete sentences.
    2. Never write in cursive.
    3. Write large enough so everyone in the room can see.
    4. Make sure your handwriting is legible.
    5. Black/dry-erase boards are appropriate for every speech context.
5. Which of the following *is* a tip for effectively using presentation aids?
    1. Always pass around presentation aids so your audience can view them up close.
    2. If something happens to your aid, there’s no reason to keep going.
    3. Speakers don’t need to worry about presentation aid’s aesthetics.
    4. Aids need to be large enough to be seen by your entire audience.
    5. Every slide, graphic, and word on a computer presentation should be animated.

Answer Key

1. e
2. c
3. b
4. e
5. d

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Informative Speaking

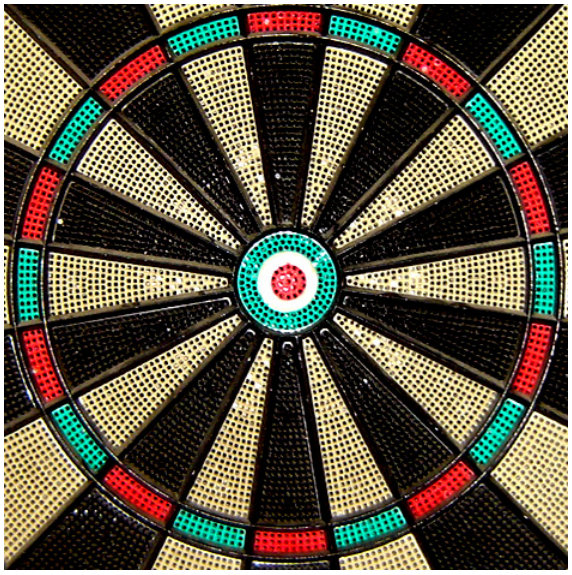
11.1: Informative Speaking Goals
11.2: Types of Informative Speeches
11.3: Guidelines for Selecting an Informative Speech Topic
11.4: Giving Informative Speeches in Groups
11.5: Sample Outline- Informative Speech on Haunted Places in Gettysburg
11.6: Chapter Exercises

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11.1: Informative Speaking Goals

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the importance of accuracy, clarity, and listener interest in informative speaking.
2. Discuss why speaking to inform is important. Identify strategies for making information clear and interesting to your speaking audience.



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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 your effectiveness as a speaker. If information is inaccurate, incomplete, or unclear, it will be of limited usefulness to the audience. There is no topic about which you can give complete information, and therefore, we strongly recommend careful narrowing. With a carefully narrowed topic and purpose, it is possible to give an accurate picture that isn't misleading.

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 need to verify the accuracy and completeness of what you know. Most people understand that technology changes rapidly, so you need to update your information almost constantly, but the same is true for topics that, on the surface, may seem to require less updating. For example, the American Civil War occurred 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, you need to carefully check your information to be sure it's accurate and up to date.

In order for your listeners to benefit from your speech, you must convey your ideas in a fashion that your audience can understand. The clarity of your speech relies on logical organization and understandable word choices. You should not assume that something that's obvious to you will also be obvious to the members of your audience. Formulate your work with the objective of being understood in all details, and rehearse your speech in front of peers who will tell you whether the information in your speech makes sense.

In addition to being clear, your speech should be interesting. Your listeners will benefit the most if they can give sustained attention to the speech, and this is unlikely to happen if they are bored. This often means you will decide against using some of the topics you know a great deal about. Suppose, for example, that you had a summer job as a veterinary assistant and learned a great deal about canine parasites. This topic might be very interesting to you, but how interesting will it be to others in your class? In order to make it interesting, you will need to find a way to connect it with their interests and curiosities. Perhaps there are certain canine parasites that also pose risks to humans—this might be a connection that would increase audience interest in your topic.

Why We Speak to Inform

Informative speaking is a means for the delivery of knowledge. In informative speaking, we avoid expressing opinion.

This doesn't mean you may not speak about controversial topics. However, if you do so, you must deliver a fair statement of each side of the issue in debate. If your speech is about standardized educational testing, you must honestly represent the views both of its proponents and of its critics. You must not take sides, and you must not slant your explanation of the debate in order to influence the opinions of the listeners. You are simply and clearly defining the debate. If you watch the evening news on a major network television (ABC, CBS, or NBC), you will see newscasters who undoubtedly have personal opinions about the news, but are trained to avoid expressing those opinions through the use of loaded words, gestures, facial expressions, or vocal tone. Like those newscasters, you are already educating your listeners simply by informing them. Let them make up their own minds. This is probably the most important reason for informative speaking.

Making Information Clear and Interesting for the Audience

A clear and interesting speech can make use of description, causal analysis, or categories. With description, you use words to create a picture in the minds of your audience. You can describe physical realities, social realities, emotional experiences, sequences, consequences, or contexts. For instance, you can describe the mindset of the Massachusetts town of Salem during the witch trials. You can also use causal analysis, which focuses on the connections between causes and consequences. For example, in speaking about health care costs, you could explain how a serious illness can put even a well-insured family into bankruptcy. You can also use categories to group things together. For instance, you could say that there are three categories of investment for the future: liquid savings, avoiding debt, and acquiring properties that will increase in value.

There are a number of principles to keep in mind as a speaker to make the information you present clear and interesting for your audience. Let's examine several of them.

Adjust Complexity to the Audience

If your speech is too complex or too simplistic, it will not hold the interest of your listeners. How can you determine the right level of complexity? Your audience analysis is one important way to do this. Will your listeners belong to a given age group, or are they more diverse? Did they all go to public schools in the United States, or are some of your listeners international students? Are they all students majoring in communication studies, or is there a mixture of majors in your audience? The answers to these and other audience analysis questions will help you to gauge what they know and what they are curious about.

Never assume that just because your audience is made up of students, they all share your knowledge set. If you base your speech on an assumption of similar knowledge, you might not make sense to everyone. If, for instance, you're an intercultural communication student discussing multiple identities, the psychology students in your audience will most likely reject your message. Similarly, the term "viral" has very different meanings depending on whether it is used with respect to human disease, popular response to a website, or population theory. In using the word "viral," you absolutely must explain specifically what you mean. You should not hurry your explanation of a term that's vulnerable to misinterpretation. Make certain your listeners know what you mean before continuing your speech. Stephen Lucas (2004) explains, "You cannot assume they will know what you mean. Rather, you must be sure to explain everything so thoroughly that they cannot help but understand". Define terms to help listeners understand them the way you mean them to. Give explanations that are consistent with your definitions, and show how those ideas apply to your speech topic. In this way, you can avoid many misunderstandings.

Similarly, be very careful about assuming there is anything that "everybody knows." Suppose you've decided to present an informative speech on the survival of the early colonists of New England. You may have learned in elementary school that their survival was attributable, in part, to the assistance of Squanto. Many of your listeners will know which states are in New England, but if there are international students in the audience, they might never have heard of New England. You should clarify the term either by pointing out the region on a map or by stating that it's the six states in the American northeast. Other knowledge gaps can still confound the effectiveness of the speech. For instance, who or what was Squanto? What kind of assistance did the settlers get? Only a few listeners are likely to know that Squanto spoke English and that fact had greatly surprised the settlers when they landed. It was through his knowledge of English that Squanto was able to advise these settlers in survival strategies during that first harsh winter. If you neglect to provide that information, your speech will not be fully informative.

Beyond the opportunity to help improve your delivery, one important outcome of practicing your speech in front of a live audience of a couple of friends or classmates is that you can become aware of terms that are confusing or that you should define for your audience.

Avoid Unnecessary Jargon

If you decide to give an informative speech on a highly specialized topic, limit how much technical language or jargon you use. Loading a speech with specialized language has the potential to be taxing on the listeners. It can become too difficult to “translate” your meanings, and if that happens, you will not effectively deliver information. Even if you define many technical terms, the audience may feel as if they are being bombarded with a set of definitions instead of useful information. Don’t treat your speech as a crash course in an entire topic. If you must, introduce one specialized term and carefully define and explain it to the audience. Define it in words, and then use a concrete and relevant example to clarify the meaning.

Some topics, by their very nature, are too technical for a short speech. For example, in a five-minute speech you would be foolish to try to inform your audience about the causes of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear emergency that occurred in Japan in 2011. Other topics, while technical, can be presented in audience-friendly ways that minimize the use of technical terms. For instance, in a speech about Mount Vesuvius, the volcano that buried the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, you can use the term “pyroclastic flow” as long as you take the time to either show or tell what it means.

Create Concrete Images

As a college student, you have had a significant amount of exposure to abstract terms. You have become comfortable using and hearing a variety of abstract ideas. However, abstract terms lend themselves to many interpretations. For instance, the abstract term “a lot” can mean many things and does not specify a number when talking about data. For example, if you state in your speech: "a lot of people have died from the COVID-19 pandemic." Your audience may wonder how many is a lot? And what one person considers a lot, may not seem like a lot to another person. It is better to be specific and say: According to the *Our World in Data* dashboard "1.3 million people have died from COVID-19 in the United States."

To illustrate the differences between abstract and concrete language, let’s look at a few pairs of terms:

Abstract	Concrete
transportation	air travel
success	completion of project
discrimination	exclusion of women
athletic	physically fit
profound	knowledgeable

By using an abstraction in a sentence and then comparing the concrete term in the sentence, you will notice the more precise meanings of the concrete terms. Those precise terms are less likely to be misunderstood. In the last pair of terms, “knowledgeable” is listed as a concrete term, but it can also be considered an abstract term. Still, it’s likely to be much clearer and more precise than “profound.”

Keep Information Limited

When you developed your speech, you carefully narrowed your topic in order to keep information limited yet complete and coherent. If you carefully adhere to your own narrowing, you can keep from going off on tangents or confusing your audience. If you overload your audience with information, they will be unable to follow your narrative. Use the definitions, descriptions, explanations, and examples you need in order to make your meanings clear, but resist the temptation to add tangential information merely because you find it interesting.

Link Current Knowledge to New Knowledge

Certain sets of knowledge are common to many people in your classroom audience. For instance, most of them know what Wikipedia is. Many have found it a useful and convenient source of information about topics related to their coursework. Because many Wikipedia entries are lengthy, greatly annotated, and followed by substantial lists of authoritative sources, many students have relied on information acquired from Wikipedia in writing papers to fulfill course requirements. All this is information that virtually every classroom listener is likely to know. This is the current knowledge of your audience.

Because your listeners are already familiar with Wikipedia, you can link important new knowledge to their already-existing knowledge. Wikipedia is an "open source," meaning that anyone can supplement, edit, correct, distort, or otherwise alter the information in Wikipedia. In addition to your listeners' knowledge that a great deal of good information can be found in Wikipedia, they must now know that it isn't authoritative. Some of your listeners may not enjoy hearing this message, so you must find a way to make it acceptable.

One way to make the message acceptable to your listeners is to show what Wikipedia does well. For example, some Wikipedia entries contain many good references at the end. Most of those references are likely to be authoritative, having been written by scholars. In searching for information on a topic, a student can look up one or more of those references in full-text databases or in the library. In this way, Wikipedia can be helpful in steering a student toward the authoritative information they need. Explaining this to your audience will help them accept, rather than reject, the bad news about Wikipedia.

Make It Memorable

If you've already done the preliminary work in choosing a topic, finding an interesting narrowing of that topic, developing and using presentation aids, and working to maintain audience contact, your delivery is likely to be memorable. Now you can turn to your content and find opportunities to make it appropriately vivid. You can do this by using explanations, comparisons, examples, or language.

Let's say that you're preparing a speech on the United States' internment of Japanese American people from the San Francisco Bay area during World War II. Your goal is to paint a memorable image in your listeners' minds. You can do this through a dramatic contrast, before and after. You could say, "In 1941, the Bay area had a vibrant and productive community of Japanese American citizens who went to work every day, opening their shops, typing reports in their offices, and teaching in their classrooms, just as they had been doing for years. But on December 7, 1941, everything changed. Within six months, Bay area residents of Japanese ancestry were gone, transported to internment camps located hundreds of miles from the Pacific coast."

This strategy rests on the ability of the audience to visualize the two contrasting situations. You have alluded to two sets of images that are familiar to most college students, images that they can easily visualize. Once the audience imagination is engaged in visualization, they are likely to remember the speech.

Your task of providing memorable imagery does not stop after the introduction. While maintaining an even-handed approach that does not seek to persuade, you must provide the audience with information about the circumstances that triggered the policy of internment, perhaps by describing the advice that was given to President Roosevelt by his top advisers. You might depict the conditions faced by Japanese Americans during their internment by describing a typical day one of the camps. To conclude your speech on a memorable note, you might name a notable individual—an actor, writer, or politician—who is a survivor of the internment.

Such a strategy might feel unnatural to you. After all, this is not how you talk to your friends or participate in a classroom discussion. Remember, though, that public speaking is not the same as talking. It's prepared and formal. It demands more of you. In a conversation, it might not be important to be memorable; your goal might merely be to maintain friendship. But in a speech, when you expect the audience to pay attention, you must make the speech memorable.

Make It Relevant and Useful

When thinking about your topic, it is always very important to keep your audience members center stage in your mind. For instance, if your speech is about air pollution, ask your audience to imagine feeling the burning of eyes and lungs caused by smog. This is a strategy for making the topic more real to them, since it may have happened to them on a number of occasions; and even if it hasn't, it easily could. If your speech is about Mark Twain, instead of simply saying that he was very famous during his lifetime, remind your audience that he was so prominent that their own great-grandparents likely knew of his work and had strong opinions about it. In so doing, you've connected your topic to their own forebears.

Personalize Your Content

Giving a human face to a topic helps the audience perceive it as interesting. If your topic is related to the Maasai rite of passage into manhood, the prevalence of drug addiction in a particular locale, the development of a professional filmmaker, or the treatment of a disease, putting a human face should not be difficult. To do it, find a case study you can describe within the speech, referring to the human subject by name. This conveys to the audience that these processes happen to real people.

Make sure you use a real case study, though—don't make one up. Using a fictional character without letting your audience know that the example is hypothetical is a betrayal of the listener's trust, and hence, is unethical.

Key Takeaways

- One important reason for informative speaking is to provide listeners with information so that they can make up their own minds about an issue.
- Informative speeches must be accurate, clear, and interesting for the listener.
- Strategies to make information clear and interesting to an audience include adjusting the complexity of your information to the audience, avoiding jargon, creating concrete images, limiting information only to what is most relevant, linking information to what the audience already knows, and making information memorable through language or personalization.

Exercises

1. Identify concrete terms with which to replace the following abstractions: motivational, development, fair, natural, and dangerous.
2. Make a list of the arguments both for and against gun control. Make them informative, not persuasive. Your goal is to describe the debate that currently exists without taking a clear position.
3. How might you go about personalizing a speech about water conservation for your classroom audience?

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11.2: Types of Informative Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Identify several categories of topics that may be used in informative speaking.
2. Describe several approaches to developing a topic.



Erica minton – Late Night Dry Erase Board Session – CC BY-NC 2.0.

For some speakers, deciding on a topic is one of the most difficult parts of informative speaking. The following subsections begin by discussing several categories of topics that you might use for an informative presentation. Then we discuss how you might structure your speech to address potential audience difficulties in understanding your topic or information.

Objects

The term “objects” encompasses many topics we might not ordinarily consider to be “things.” It’s a category that includes , substances, and inanimate things. The following are some of these topics:

- Mitochondria
- Dream catchers
- Sharks
- Hubble telescope
- Silicon chip
- Spruce Goose
- Medieval armor
- DDT insecticide
- Soy inks

You will find it necessary to narrow your topic about an object because, like any topic, you can’t say everything about it in a single speech. In most cases, there are choices about how to narrow the topic. Here are some specific purpose statements that reflect ways of narrowing a few of those topics:

- To inform the audience about the role of soy inks in reducing toxic pollution
- To inform the audience about the current uses of the banned insecticide DDT
- To inform the audience about what we’ve learned from the Hubble telescope
- To describe the significance of the gigantic Spruce Goose, the wooden airplane that launched an airline

These specific purposes reflect a narrow, but interesting, approach to each topic. These purposes are precise, and they should help you maintain your focus on a narrow but deep slice of knowledge.

People

This category applies both to specific individuals and also to roles. The following are some of these topics:

- Dalai Lamas
- Astronauts
- Tsar Nicholas II
- Modern midwives
- Mata Hari
- Catherine the Great
- Navajo code talkers
- Mahatma Gandhi
- Justice Thurgood Marshall
- Madame Curie
- Leopold Mozart
- Aristotle
- The Hemlock Society
- Sonia Sotomayor
- Jack the Ripper

There is a great deal of information about each one of these examples. In order to narrow the topic or write a thesis statement, it's important to recognize that your speech should focus on an aspect of the person's life or if you are giving a biographical speech, to make sure you don't go too in depth and go over your speech's time requirement. To capture and hold your audience's interest, you must narrow to a focus on a feature, event, achievement, or secret about your human topic.

Here are some purpose statements that reflect a process of narrowing:

- To inform the audience about the training program undergone by the first US astronauts to land on the moon
- To inform the audience about how a young Dalai Lama is identified
- To inform the audience about why Gandhi was regarded as a mahatma, or "great heart"
- To inform the audience about the extensive scientific qualifications of modern midwives

Without a limited purpose, you will find, with any of these topics, that there's simply too much to say. Your purpose statement will be a strong decision-making tool about what to include in your speech.

Events

An event can be something that occurred only once, or an event that is repeated:

- The murder of Emmett Till
- The Iditarod Dogsled Race
- The Industrial Revolution
- The discovery of the smallpox vaccine
- The Bikini Atoll atomic bomb tests
- The Bay of Pigs
- The Super Bowl
- The Academy Awards

Again, we find that any of these topics must be carefully narrowed in order to build a coherent speech. Failure to do so will result in a shallow speech. Here are a few ways to narrow the purpose:

- To explain how the murder of Emmett Till helped energize the civil rights movement
- To describe how the Industrial Revolution affected the lives of ordinary people
- To inform the audience about the purpose of the Iditarod dogsled race

There are many ways to approach any of these and other topics, but again, you must emphasize an important dimension of the event. Otherwise, you run the risk of producing a time line in which the main point gets lost. In a speech about an event, you may use a chronological order, but if you choose to do so, you can't include every detail. The following is an example:

Specific Purpose: To inform the audience about the purpose of the Iditarod dogsled race.

Central Idea: The annual Iditarod commemorates the heroism of Balto, the sled dog that led a dog team carrying medicine 1150 miles to save Nome from an outbreak of diphtheria.

Main Points:

1. Diphtheria broke out in a remote Alaskan town.
2. Dogsleds were the only transportation for getting medicine.
3. The Iditarod Trail was long, rugged, and under siege of severe weather.
4. Balto the dog knew where he was going, even when the musher did not.
5. The annual race commemorates Balto's heroism in saving the lives of the people of Nome.

In this example, you must explain the event. However, another way to approach the same event would describe it. The following is an example:

Specific Purpose: To describe the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Central Idea: It's a long and dangerous race.

Main Points:

1. The 1150-mile, ten- to seventeen-day race goes through wilderness with widely spaced checkpoints for rest, first aid, and getting fresh dogs.
2. A musher, or dogsled driver, must be at least fourteen years old to endure the rigors of severe weather, exhaustion, and loneliness.
3. A musher is responsible for his or her own food, food for twelve to sixteen dogs, and for making sure they don't get lost.
4. Reaching the end of the race without getting lost, even in last place, is considered honorable and heroic.
5. The expense of participation is greater than the prize awarded to the winner.

By now you can see that there are various ways to approach a topic while avoiding an uninspiring time line. In the example of the Iditarod race, you could alternatively frame it as an Alaskan tourism topic, or you could emphasize the enormous staff involved in first aid, search and rescue, dog care, trail maintenance, event coordination, financial management, and registration.

Concepts

Concepts are abstract ideas that exist independent of whether they are observed or practiced, such as the example of social equality that follows. Concepts can include hypotheses and theories.

- The glass ceiling
- Ethnocentrism
- Honor codes
- Autism
- Karma
- Wellness
- Fairness theory
- Bioethics
- The American Dream
- Social equality

Here are a few examples of specific purposes developed from the examples:

- To explain why people in all cultures are ethnocentric
- To describe the Hindu concept of karma
- To distinguish the differences between the concepts of wellness and health
- To show the resources available in our local school system for children with autism
- To explain three of Dr. Stephen Suranovic's seven categories of fairness

Here is one possible example of a way to develop one of these topics:

Specific Purpose: To explain why people in all cultures are ethnocentric.

Central Idea: There are benefits to being ethnocentric.

Main Points:

1. Ethnocentrism is the idea that one's own culture is superior to others.
2. Ethnocentrism strongly contributes to positive group identity.
3. Ethnocentrism facilitates the coordination of social activity.
4. Ethnocentrism contributes to a sense of safety within a group.
5. Ethnocentrism becomes harmful when it creates barriers.

In an example of a concept about which people disagree, you must represent multiple and conflicting views as fully and fairly as possible. For instance:

Specific Purpose: To expose the audience to three different views of the American Dream.

Central Idea: The American Dream is a shared dream, an impossible dream, or a dangerous dream, depending on the perspective of the individual.

Main Points:

1. The concept of the American Dream describes a state of abundant well-being in which an honest and productive American can own a home; bring up a family; work at a permanent, well-paying job with benefits; and retire in security and leisure.
2. Many capitalists support the social pattern of working hard to deserve and acquire the material comforts and security of a comfortable life.
3. Many sociologists argue that the American Dream is far out of reach for the 40 percent of Americans at the bottom of the economic scale.
4. Many environmentalists argue that the consumption patterns that accompany the American Dream have resulted in the depletion of resources and the pollution of air, water, and soil.

Processes

If your speech topic is a process, your goal should be to help your audience understand it, or be able to perform it. In either instance, processes involve a predictable series of changes, phases, or steps.

- Soil erosion
- Cell division
- Physical therapy
- Volcanic eruption
- Paper recycling
- Consumer credit evaluations
- Scholarship money searches
- Navy Seal training
- Portfolio building
- The development of Alzheimer's disease

For some topics, you will need presentation aids in order to make your meaning clear to your listeners. Even in cases where you don't absolutely need a presentation aid, one might be useful. For instance, if your topic is evaluating consumer credit, instead of just describing a comparison between two different interest rates applied to the same original amount of debt, it would be helpful to show a graph of the difference. This might also be the sort of topic that would strongly serve the needs of your audience before they find themselves in trouble. Since this will be an informative speech, you must resist the impulse to tell your listeners that one form of borrowing is good and another is bad; you must simply show them the difference in numbers. They can reach their own conclusions.

Organizing your facts is crucially important when discussing a process. Every stage of a process must be clear and understandable. When two or more things occur at the same time, as they might in the development of Alzheimer's disease, it is important to make it clear that several things are occurring at once. For example, as plaque is accumulating in the brain, the patient is likely to begin exhibiting various symptoms.

Here's an example of the initial steps of a speech about a process:

Specific Purpose: To inform the audience about how to build an academic portfolio.

Central Idea: A portfolio represents you and emphasizes your best skills.

Main Points:

1. A portfolio is an organized selection containing the best examples of the skills you can offer an employer.
2. A portfolio should contain samples of a substantial body of written work, print and electronically published pieces, photography, and DVDs of your media productions.
3. A portfolio should be customized for each prospective employer.
4. The material in your portfolio should be consistent with the skills and experience in your résumé.

In a speech about the process of building a portfolio, there will be many smaller steps to include within each of the main points. For instance, creating separate sections of the portfolio for different types of creative activities, writing a table of contents, labeling and dating your samples, making your samples look attractive and professional, and other steps should be inserted where it makes the most sense, in the most organized places, in order to give your audience the most coherent understanding possible.

You've probably noticed that there are topics that could be appropriate in more than one category. For instance, the 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helen's could be legitimately handled as an event or as a process. If you approach the eruption as an event, most of the information you include will focus on human responses and the consequences on humans and the landscape. If you approach the eruption as a process, you will be using visual aids and explanations to describe geological changes before and during the eruption. You might also approach this topic from the viewpoint of a person whose life was affected by the eruption. This should remind you that there are many ways to approach most topics, and because of that, your narrowing choices and your purpose will be the important foundation determining the structure of your informative speech.

Developing Your Topic for the Audience

One issue to consider when preparing an informative speech is how best to present the information to enhance audience learning. Katherine Rowan suggests focusing on areas where your audience may experience confusion and using the likely sources of confusion as a guide for developing the content of your speech. Rowan (1995) identifies three sources of audience confusion: difficult concepts or language, difficult-to-envision structures or processes, and ideas that are difficult to understand because they are hard to believe. The following subsections will discuss each of these and will provide strategies for dealing with each of these sources of confusion.

Difficult Concepts or Language

Sometimes audiences may have difficulty understanding information because of the concepts or language used. For example, they may not understand what the term "organic food" means or how it differs from "all-natural" foods. If an audience is likely to experience confusion over a basic concept or term, Rowan suggests using an elucidating explanation composed of four parts. The purpose of such an explanation is to clarify the meaning and use of the concept by focusing on essential features of the concept.

The first part of an elucidating explanation is to provide a typical exemplar, or example that includes all the central features of the concept. If you are talking about what is fruit, an apple or orange would be a typical exemplar.

The second step Rowan suggests is to follow up the typical exemplar with a definition. Fruits might be defined as edible plant structures that contain the seeds of the plant.

After providing a definition, you can move on to the third part of the elucidating explanation: providing a variety of examples and nonexamples. Here is where you might include less typical examples of fruit, such as avocados, squash, or tomatoes, and foods, such as rhubarb, which is often treated as a fruit but is not by definition.

Fourth, Rowan suggests concluding by having the audience practice distinguishing examples from nonexamples. In this way, the audience leaves the speech with a clear understanding of the concept.

Difficult-to-Envision Processes or Structures

A second source of audience difficulty in understanding, according to Rowan, is a process or structure that is complex and difficult to envision. The blood circulation system in the body might be an example of a difficult-to-envision process. To address this type of audience confusion, Rowan suggests a quasi-scientific explanation, which starts by giving a big-picture perspective on the process. Presentation aids or analogies might be helpful in giving an overview of the process. For the circulatory system, you could show a video or diagram of the entire system or make an analogy to a pump. Then you can move to explaining relationships among the components of the process. Be sure when you explain relationships among components that you include transition and linking words like "leads to" and "because" so that your audience understands relationships between concepts. You may remember the childhood song describing the bones in the body with lines such as, "the hip bone's connected to the thigh bone; the thigh bone's

connected to the knee bone." Making the connections between components helps the audience to remember and better understand the process.

Difficult to Understand Because It's Hard to Believe

A third source of audience confusion, and perhaps the most difficult to address as a speaker, is an idea that's difficult to understand because it's hard to believe. This often happens when people have implicit, but erroneous, theories about how the world works. For example, the idea that science tries to disprove theories is difficult for some people to understand; after all, shouldn't the purpose of science be to prove things? In such a case, Rowan suggests using a transformative explanation. A transformative explanation begins by discussing the audience's implicit theory and showing why it is plausible. Then you move to showing how the implicit theory is limited and conclude by presenting the accepted explanation and why that explanation is better. In the case of scientists disproving theories, you might start by talking about what science has proven (e.g., the causes of malaria, the usefulness of penicillin in treating infection) and why focusing on science as proof is a plausible way of thinking. Then you might show how the science as proof theory is limited by providing examples of ideas that were accepted as "proven" but were later found to be false, such as the belief that diseases are caused by miasma, or "bad air"; or that bloodletting cures diseases by purging the body of "bad humors." You can then conclude by showing how science is an enterprise designed to disprove theories and that all theories are accepted as tentative in light of existing knowledge.

Rowan's framework is helpful because it keeps our focus on the most important element of an informative speech: increasing audience understanding about a topic.

Ethics

Honesty and credibility must undergird your presentation; otherwise, they betray the trust of your listeners. Therefore, if you choose a topic that turns out to be too difficult, you must decide what will serve the needs and interests of the audience. Shortcuts and oversimplifications are not the answer.

Being ethical often involves a surprising amount of work. In the case of choosing too ambitious a topic, you have some choices:

- Narrow your topic further.
- Narrow your topic in a different way.
- Reconsider your specific purpose.
- Start over with a new topic.

Your goal is to serve the interests and needs of your audience, whoever they are and whether you believe they already know something about your topic.

Key Takeaways

- A variety of different topic categories are available for informative speaking.
- One way to develop your topic is to focus on areas that might be confusing to the audience. If the audience is likely to be confused about language or a concept, an elucidating explanation might be helpful. If a process is complex, a quasi-scientific explanation may help. If the audience already has an erroneous implicit idea of how something works then a transformative explanation might be needed.

Exercises

1. Choose a topic such as "American Education in the Twenty-First Century." Write a new title for that speech for each of the following audiences: financial managers, first-year college students, parents of high school students, nuns employed in Roman Catholic schools, psychotherapists, and teamsters. Write a specific purpose for the speech for each of these audiences.
2. Think about three potential topics you could use for an informative speech. Identify where the audience might experience confusion with concepts, processes, or preexisting implicit theories. Select one of the topics and outline how you would develop the topic to address the audience's potential confusion.

References

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11.3: Guidelines for Selecting an Informative Speech Topic

While some of the guidelines for selecting a topic were discussed in previous chapters, this section will more specifically focus on informative speech topics and problems that can arise when choosing them.

Pick a specific or focused topic

Perhaps one of the biggest and most common misconceptions students have about informative speech topics is that the topic needs to be broad in order to fill the time requirements for the speech. It is not uncommon for a student to propose an informative speech topic such as "To inform my audience about the history of music." How is that topic even possible? When does the history of music even begin? The thinking here is that this speech will be easy to research and write since there is so much information available. But the opposite is actually true. A topic this broad makes doing research even harder.

Let's consider the example of a student who proposes the topic "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. How will you choose which ones are best suited to use for your speech?

The better approach in this case is to be as specific as possible. 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.

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.



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.

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11.4: Giving Informative Speeches in Groups

There are instances where you will be called upon to give an informative speech as part of a group of other informative speakers. This situation may be referred to as a panel or as a symposium. The difference is that in a panel, the focus is on a discussion by experts in front of an audience. The expert speakers may start with an opening statement, but typically the panelists are seated and their opening remarks are designed to present their basic position or stance and the bulk of time is spent in question-and-answer from the audience, from the moderator, or from each other. Some tips for panels are given here. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo)

A symposium is more formal and the experts or presenters have put together prepared speeches on different aspects of an overall topic. For example, they may all be experts on juveniles in the criminal justice system, but they have chosen or been assigned a specific informative topic for the audience, who are probably also professionals in that field. One might speak on challenges with legal representation for juveniles, another on family reconciliation, another on educational opportunities, and so on. While there may be time for question and answers at the end, the bulk of the time is taken up by the prepared speeches.

The author has used the symposium format in her teaching of the informative speech for over 25 years. The students at first are skeptical, but usually afterward they see the benefit of the experience in the classroom. For one thing, instead of a class of 25-30 separate and unrelated informative speeches in the class, there are four sets of related speeches that explore a topic in more depth. Some popular topics have been physical and mental health issues (diabetes, breast cancer, pets, schizophrenia, phobias), the arts (musical genres, history of film), travel, and food. In those years, there have been topics that didn't work. Serial killers and sexually transmitted infections were two of them. One speech on that is acceptable. Six or seven, not so much. Just to clarify, the author always assigns the groups but the students pick the topics.

Here are some pointers if you are assigned to give a symposium-style informative speech.

1. Spend ample time discussing the topics so that everyone is supportive of the overall topic and the way the topic is broken down into separate speech topics. Do not let one person run the show and insist on a specific topic. A strong personality can sway the rest of the group and then later the other members become unhappy about the topic and resentful of the persuasive member.
2. Try to develop topics in different ways; for example, let's take the overall topic of phobias. The temptation is for each separate speech to be a specific phobia. While this is all right, it becomes repetitive to the audience. There are other ways to develop the subtopics (origins, different treatment options, phobias related to certain demographic groups) instead of six or seven speeches on different phobias.
3. Be in constant communication with your peers so that you know exactly what their topics are and how they are being developed. You don't want one or two co-presenters to "go rogue" and change their topics without the knowledge of the others in the group. You also do not want to end up overlapping, so that part of your speech is actually in someone else's speech. Share phone numbers so you can text or call each other, if the members are willing.
4. You should appoint a moderator who will introduce the speeches and speakers and close or call for questions when the speeches are completed, and possibly summarize the set of speeches at the end. This member does not have to be the first or last speaker in the group.
5. Be sure the order of speeches is logical, not random.
6. Be sure to get to the class early so you can set up and feel secure that your team members are present.
7. If you are required to have a question-and-answer session at the end, the moderator should try to make sure that the participation is balanced and one talkative person doesn't answer all the questions. There will be questions you cannot answer, so just be honest and say, "I didn't find that answer in my research."

Many instructors use this format because it not only teaches informative speaking skills, but because it emphasizes team work. You will be expected to do many team projects in your educational and professional careers, and this is a good way to start learning effective teamwork skills.

Conclusion

Learning how to give informative speeches will serve you well in your college career and your future work. Keep in mind the principles in this chapter but also those of the previous chapters: relating to the informational needs of the audience, using clear structure, and incorporating interesting and attention-getting supporting evidence.

Something to Think About

Here are three general topics for informative speeches. Write specific purposes for them and explain how you would answer the WIIFM question.

1. Type 1 diabetes
2. The psychological effects of using social media
3. Guitars

Two outlines for informative speeches are provided on the following pages. They utilize slightly different formats; other outline formats are included in one of the appendices. Your instructor will let you know which one he or she prefers or will provide examples of another format.

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11.5: Sample Outline- Informative Speech on Haunted Places in Gettysburg

Specific Purpose

Introduction

Thesis/Preview:

I. The Devil's Den is considered a site for paranormal activity.

A. The Devil's Den has historical significance retained during the American Civil War.

1. Location held heavy fighting during battle that took place on July 2, of 1863.

2. The total death toll estimated during battle consisted of 800 for the Union and more than 1,800 for the Confederates.

B. Some reported paranormal activity at the Devil's Den.

1. According to author, consultant, and lecturer Dennis William Hauck, he states in his book Haunted Places that if you stand outside at the Devil's Den there can be the sounds of drum rolls and gunshots heard.

2. According to many visitors there have been many people that claim to have seen and/or taken pictures of and had conversations with a friendly soldier who either disappears or doesn't show up in photographs. Transition: Spooky, unexplainable things happen at the Devil's Den but there is also paranormal activity in another area of Gettysburg, Little Round Top.

II. Another location said to be haunted is Little Round Top.

A. Little Round Top's historical significance.

1. A site where Union soldiers held up to maintain an advantage over the Confederate soldiers.

2. According to James Brann, an author from Civil War Magazine, this was a site Union Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain led his 20th Maine Regiment in perhaps the most famous counterattack of the Civil War.

B. Manifestations at Little Round Top.

1. During filming of the movie Gettysburg (1993), extras portraying Union soldiers were greeted by a man in the uniform of a Union private.

a. Handed them musket rounds.

b. Actual rounds that dated back to the Civil War.

2. Ghostly solders can still be seen marching in formation and riding horses in the fight against their enemy.

Transition

III. Hummelbaugh House is a non-battlefield place for ghost-sightings.

A. Historical significance of Hummelbaugh House.

1. The house is located on the east side of the city and was just behind the Union lines.

2. It was used for a hospital and because of the times amputated limbs would be thrown out the windows resulting in a huge pile of body parts.

B. Paranormal activity at the house.

1. The windows in the house often startle people with loud vibrations.

2. The calls for help from soldiers can still be heard in and around the house.

Conclusion

References

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11.6: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Imagine that you have somehow learned a way of bypassing a security system located in many banks. The information you have addresses not only access to the bank itself but also the computers used in the storage of information and the transmission of funds. You are certain that you understand the process well enough to successfully do it. Can you use this as your topic for an informative speech? Explain your answer fully.

- Now let's imagine a different topic: You are going to speak about receiving medical care in a hospital emergency room. You intend to describe the long wait, the need for an insurance card, and the many personal details that the patient must give orally to the emergency department receptionist, who sits on the other side of a glass barrier typing the information into a computer. For your introduction, you have created a vivid picture of an emergency room scenario, and you want it to be realistic. Must you say that the scenario is hypothetical rather than actual? Can you say that you witnessed the scenario? Explain your answer. List some alternatives.

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Rob is preparing a speech on the D-day invasion during World War II. By researching in the library and online, he has found a really cool book by a British general published soon after the war and a bunch of old pictures. He thinks this is all he needs as source material. By relying only on potentially outdated sources, Rob is likely to sacrifice which important element of informative speaking?

    1. listener interest
    2. clarity
    3. immediacy
    4. accuracy
    5. transformation

2. Rita is struggling to make her speech on wind energy interesting for the audience. You suggest that she consider including pictures of windmills located a few miles from campus and talk about how those windmills help provide power for the lights and heat in your classroom and across campus. Your suggestion focuses on which technique for making information clear and interesting to your audience?

    1. Personalize the information.
    2. Limit use of jargon.
    3. Narrow the topic.
    4. Adjust the complexity to the audience.
    5. Use abstract language.

3. Brooks is thinking of speaking about the National Baseball Hall of Fame and wants to focus on the big induction weekend at the end of July. Brooks is using which topic category?

    1. people
    2. objects
    3. events
    4. processes
    5. concepts

4. Connie wants to speak about the local school budget. She knows most of her audience thinks that their local property taxes pay for all the educational expenses in the community, but she wants to show them that the state actually pays for more than 30 percent of the costs. According to Rowan, Connie should strongly consider using which type of explanation to develop her topic?

    1. elucidating explanation
    2. quasi-scientific explanation
    3. transformative explanation
    4. concrete explanation

5. abstract explanation

Answer Key

1. d
2. a
3. c
4. c

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Persuasive Speaking

12.1: Persuasion - An Overview
12.2: Types of Persuasive Speeches
12.3: Organizing Persuasive Speeches
12.4: Chapter Exercises

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12.1: Persuasion - An Overview

Learning Objectives

1. Define and explain persuasion.
2. Explain the three theories of persuasion discussed in the text: social judgment theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and the elaboration likelihood model.



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In his text *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century*, Perloff (2003) noted that the study of persuasion today is extremely important for five basic reasons:

1. The sheer number of persuasive communications has grown exponentially.
2. Persuasive messages travel faster than ever before.
3. Persuasion has become institutionalized.
4. Persuasive communication has become more subtle and devious.
5. Persuasive communication is more complex than ever before.

Since 2003 (a year before Facebook was founded) when Perloff argued these reasons, we have seen an explosion in persuasive messages with the advent and growth of social media. The social media phenomenon has supercharged the reasons outlined by Perloff. In essence, the nature of persuasion has changed over the last fifty years as a result of the influx of various types of technology. People are bombarded by persuasive messages in today's world, so thinking about how to create persuasive messages effectively is very important for modern public speakers. A century (or even half a century) ago, public speakers had to contend only with the words printed on paper for attracting and holding an audience's attention. Today, public speakers must contend with laptops, tablets, smartphones, billboards, television sets, and many other tools that can send a range of persuasive messages immediately to a target audience. Thankfully, scholars who study persuasion have kept up with the changing times and have found a number of persuasive strategies that help speakers be more persuasive.

What Is Persuasion?

Persuasion is an attempt to get a person to behave in a manner, or embrace a point of view related to values, attitudes, and beliefs, that they would not have done otherwise.

Change Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

The first type of persuasive public speaking involves a change in someone's attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Attitude is defined as an individual's general predisposition toward something. This predisposition can be positive (good, right, etc.), negative (bad, wrong, etc.), or neutral. For example, maybe you believe that local curfew laws for people under the age of 18 are a bad idea, so you want to persuade others to adopt a negative attitude toward such laws.

Value refers to an individual's perception of the usefulness, importance, or worth of something. We can assign a value to college education, technology, or freedom. You can attempt to persuade an individual to change their value toward something. Values, as a general concept, are fairly ambiguous and tend to be very lofty ideas. Ultimately, what we place a high value on in life, actually

motivates us to engage in a range of behaviors. For example, if you highly value technology, you are more likely to seek out new technology or software on your own. On the contrary, if you do not place a high value on technology, you are less likely to seek out new technology or software unless someone, or some circumstance, requires you to.

Beliefs are propositions or positions that an individual holds as true or false without positive knowledge or proof. You can attempt to get people to change their personal beliefs. Typically, beliefs are divided into two basic categories: core and dispositional. **Core beliefs** are beliefs that people have actively engaged in and created over the course of their lives (e.g., belief in a higher power, belief in extraterrestrial life forms). **Dispositional beliefs**, on the other hand, are beliefs that people have not actively engaged in but rather judgments that they make, based on their knowledge of related subjects, when they encounter a proposition. For example, imagine that you were asked the question, "Can stock cars reach speeds of one thousand miles per hour on a one-mile oval track?" Even though you may have never attended a stock car race or even seen one on television, you can make split-second judgments about your understanding of automobile speeds and say with a fair degree of certainty that you believe stock cars cannot travel at one thousand miles per hour on a one-mile track. We sometimes refer to dispositional beliefs as virtual beliefs (Frankish, 1998).

It is no surprise then that persuading audiences to change their core beliefs is more difficult than persuading them to change their dispositional beliefs. For this reason, you are very unlikely to persuade people to change their deeply held core beliefs about a topic in a five- to ten-minute speech. However, if you give a persuasive speech on a topic related to an audience's dispositional beliefs, you may have a better chance of success. While core beliefs may seem to be exciting and interesting, persuasive topics related to dispositional beliefs are generally better for novice speakers with limited time allotments.

Change Behavior

The second type of persuasive speech is one in which the speaker attempts to persuade an audience to change their behavior. Behaviors come in a wide range of forms, so finding one you think people should start, increase, or decrease shouldn't be difficult at all. Speeches encouraging audiences to vote for a candidate, sign a petition opposing a tuition increase, or drink tap water instead of bottled water are all behavior-oriented persuasive speeches. In all these cases, the goal is to change the behavior of individual listeners.

Why Persuasion Matters

Frymier and Nadler (2007) enumerate three reasons why people should study persuasion:

First, when you study and understand persuasion, you will be more successful at persuading others. If you want to be a persuasive public speaker, then you need to have a working understanding of how persuasion functions.

Second, when people understand persuasion, they will be better consumers of information. As previously mentioned, we live in a society where numerous message sources are constantly fighting for our attention. Unfortunately, most people just let messages wash over them like a wave, making little effort to understand or analyze them. As a result, they are more likely to fall for half-truths, illogical arguments, and lies. When you start to understand persuasion, you will have the skill set to actually pick apart the messages being sent to you and see why some of them are good and others are simply not.

Lastly, when we understand how persuasion functions, we'll have a better grasp of what happens around us in the world. We'll be able to analyze why certain speakers are effective persuaders and others are not.

In addition to Frymier and Nadler's reasons, we believe it is an ethical imperative in the twenty-first century to be persuasively literate. We believe that persuasive messages that aim to manipulate, coerce, and intimidate people are unethical, as are messages that distort information. As ethical listeners, we have a responsibility to analyze messages that manipulate, coerce, and/or intimidate people or distort information. We also then have the responsibility to combat these messages with the truth, which will ultimately rely on our own skills and knowledge as effective persuaders.

Theories of Persuasion

Understanding how people are persuaded is very important to the discussion of public speaking. Thankfully, a number of researchers have created theories that help explain why people are persuaded. While there are numerous theories that help to explain persuasion, we are only going to examine three of them in this chapter: Social Judgment Theory, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Social Judgment Theory

Sherif and Hovland (1961) created Social Judgment Theory in an attempt to determine what types of communicative messages and under what conditions will lead to a change in someone's behavior. In essence, Sherif and Hovland found that people's perceptions of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors exist on a continuum, including latitude of rejection, latitude of noncommitment, and latitude of acceptance (Figure 17.1 "Latitudes of Judgments").

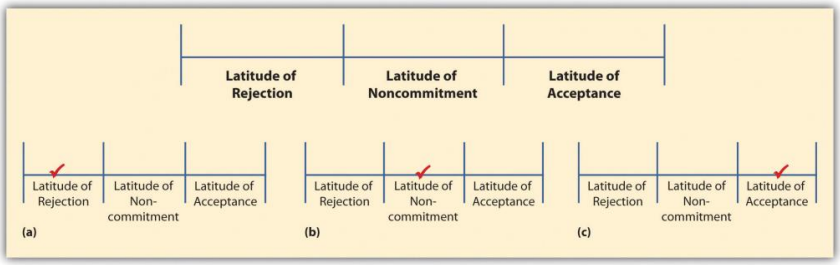


Figure 17.1 Latitudes of Judgments

Imagine that you're planning to persuade your peers to major in a foreign language in college. Some of the students in your class are going to disagree with you right off the bat (latitude of rejection, part (a) of Figure 17.1 "Latitudes of Judgments"). Other students are going to think majoring in a foreign language is a great idea (latitude of acceptance, part (c) of Figure 17.1 "Latitudes of Judgments"). Others may really have no opinion either way (latitude of noncommitment, part (b) of Figure 17.1 "Latitudes of Judgments"). Now in each of these different latitudes, there is a range of possibilities. For example, one of your listeners may be perfectly willing to accept the idea of minoring in a foreign language, but when asked to major or even double major in a foreign language, he or she may end up in the latitude of noncommitment or even rejection.

Not surprisingly, Sherif and Hovland (1961) found that persuasive messages were the most likely to succeed when they fell into an individual's latitude of acceptance. For example, if you are giving your speech on majoring in a foreign language, people who are in favor of majoring in a foreign language are more likely to positively evaluate your message, assimilate your advice into their own ideas, and engage in the desired behavior. On the other hand, people who reject your message are more likely to negatively evaluate your message, not assimilate your advice, and not engage in the desired behavior.

In an ideal world, we'd always be persuading people who agree with our opinions, but that's not reality. Instead, we often find ourselves in situations where we are trying to persuade others to attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors with which they do not agree. To help us persuade others, what we need to think about is the range of possible attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that exist. For example, in our foreign language case, we may see the following possible opinions from our audience members:

1. **Complete agreement.** Where is the paperwork for me to change my major?
2. **Strong agreement.** I won't major in a foreign language, but I will double major in a foreign language.
3. **Agreement in part.** I won't major in a foreign language, but I will minor in a foreign language.
4. **Neutral.** While I think studying a foreign language can be worthwhile, I also think a college education can be complete without it. I really don't feel strongly one way or the other.
5. **Disagreement in part.** I will only take the foreign language classes required by my major.
6. **Strong disagreement.** I don't think I should have to take any foreign language classes.
7. **Complete disagreement.** Majoring in a foreign language is a complete waste of a college education.

These seven possible opinions on the subject do not represent the full spectrum of choices but give us various degrees of agreement with the general topic. So what does this have to do with persuasion? Well, Sherif and Hovland (1961) theorized that persuasion was a matter of knowing how great the discrepancy or difference was between the speaker's viewpoint and that of the audience. If the speaker's point of view was similar to that of audience members, then persuasion was more likely. If the discrepancy between the idea proposed by the speaker and the audience's viewpoint is too great, then the likelihood of persuasion decreases dramatically.

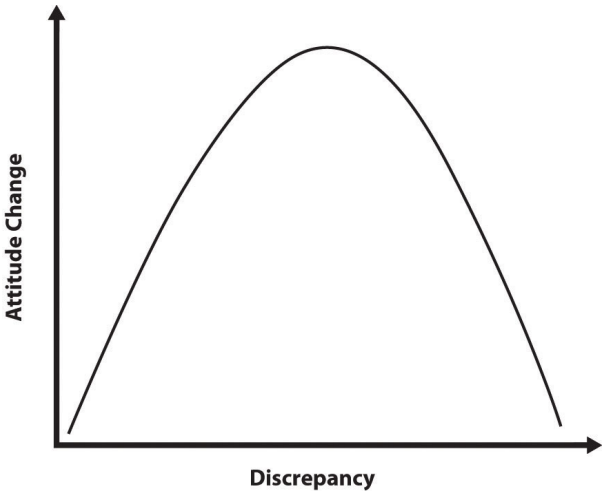


Figure 17.2 Discrepancy and Attitude Change

Furthermore, Sherif and Hovland (1961) predicted that there was a threshold for most people where attitude change wasn't possible and they slipped from the latitude of acceptance into the latitude of noncommitment or rejection. Figure 17.2 represents this process. All the area covered by the left side of the curve represents options with which a person would agree, even if there is an initial discrepancy between the speaker and audience member at the start of the speech. However, there comes a point where the discrepancy between the speaker and audience member becomes too large, which moves into the options that will be automatically rejected by the audience member. In essence, it becomes essential for you to know which options are realistic for you to persuade your audience in, and which options will never happen. Maybe there is no way for you to persuade your audience to major or double major in a foreign language, but perhaps you can get them to minor in a foreign language. While you may not be achieving your complete end goal, it's better than getting nowhere at all.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Festinger (1957) proposed another theory for understanding how persuasion functions, called Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Cognitive dissonance is an aversive motivational state that occurs when an individual entertains two or more contradictory attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors simultaneously. For example, people who have a strong belief in bodily autonomy and also believe in vaccine mandates can experience competing beliefs that cause cognitive dissonance. The goal of persuasion is to induce enough dissonance in the listener that they will change their attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Frymier and Nadler (2007) noted that for cognitive dissonance to work effectively the following three necessary conditions must be met: 1) Aversive consequences, 2) Freedom of choice, and 3) Insufficient external justification. First, for cognitive dissonance to work, there needs to be a strong enough aversive consequence, or punishment, for *not* changing one's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. For example, maybe you're giving a speech on why people need to eat more apples. If your aversive consequence for not eating apples is that your audience will not get enough fiber, most people will simply not be persuaded, because the punishment isn't severe enough. Instead, for cognitive dissonance to work, the punishment associated with not eating apples needs to be significant enough to change their behavior. If you convince your audience that without enough fiber in their diet they are at higher risk for heart disease or colon cancer, they might fear the aversive consequences enough to change their behavior.

The second condition necessary for cognitive dissonance to work is that people must have freedom of choice. If listeners feel that they are being coerced into doing something, then dissonance will not be aroused. They may alter their behavior in the short term, but as soon as the coercion is gone, the original behavior will reemerge. It's like the person who drives more slowly when a police officer is nearby but ignores speed limits once officers are no longer present. As a speaker, if you want to increase cognitive dissonance, you need to make sure that your audience doesn't feel coerced or manipulated, but rather that they can clearly see that they have a choice of whether to be persuaded.

The final condition necessary for cognitive dissonance to work is related to external and internal justifications. **External justification** refers to the process of identifying reasons outside of one's control to support one's behavior, beliefs, and attitudes. **Internal justification** refers to the process of identifying reasons within ones control (e.g., one's character, personal traits, or beliefs) to justify changes to behavior, belief, or attitude to reduce cognitive dissonance. When it comes to creating change through persuasion, external justifications are less likely to result in change than internal justifications (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

Imagine that you're giving a speech with the specific purpose of persuading college students to use condoms whenever they engage in sexual intercourse. Your audience analysis, in the form of an anonymous survey, indicates that a large percentage of your listeners do not consistently use condoms. Which would be the more persuasive argument: (a) "Failure to use condoms inevitably results in unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including AIDS"—or (b) "If you think of yourself as a responsible adult, you'll use condoms to protect yourself and your partner"? With the first argument, you have provided external justification for using condoms (i.e., terrible things will happen if you don't use condoms). Listeners who reject this external justification (e.g., who don't believe these dire consequences are inevitable) are unlikely to change their behavior. With the second argument, however, if your listeners think of themselves as responsible adults and they don't consistently use condoms, the conflict between their self-image and their behavior will elicit cognitive dissonance. In order to reduce this cognitive dissonance, they are likely to seek internal justification for the view of themselves as responsible adults by changing their behavior (i.e., using condoms more consistently). In this case, according to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, the second persuasive argument would be the one more likely to lead to a change in behavior.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The last of the three theories of persuasion discussed here is the **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)** created by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). The basic ELM model has a continuum from high elaboration (high thought process) to low elaboration (low thought process). For the purposes of Petty and Cacioppo's model, the term elaboration refers to the amount of thought or cognitive energy someone uses to directly analyze the content of a message. High elaboration uses the **central route** of cognition and is designed for analyzing the content of a message. As such, when people use the central route, they examine the merits of the argument by applying critical thinking methods to weigh the pros and cons of the argument carefully. In an ideal world, everyone would process information through this central route. Unfortunately, many people often use the **peripheral route** for attending to persuasive messages, which is a result of low elaboration or thought process. Low elaboration occurs when people do not analyze the message for its content and use cues that are unrelated to the argument to make their decision. The attitudes and beliefs formed by the central route are stronger than those formed by the peripheral route.

The question then becomes, how do people select one route or the other when attending to persuasive messages? Petty and Cacioppo (1986) noted that there are two basic factors for determining whether someone centrally processes a persuasive message:

1. **Ability:** First, audience members must be able to process the persuasive message. If the language or message is too complicated, then people will not highly elaborate on it because they will not understand the persuasive message;
2. **Motivation**. Motivation, on the other hand, refers to whether the audience member chooses to elaborate on the message.

Frymier and Nadler (2007) discussed five basic factors that can lead to high elaboration: 1) Personal relevance and personal involvement, 2) Accountability, 3) Personal responsibility, 4) Incongruent information, and 5) The need for cognition. we will discuss each of them below.

1) Personal Relevance and Personal Involvement

The first reason people are motivated to take the central route or use high elaboration when faced with persuasive messages involves personal relevance and involvement. Personal relevance refers to whether the audience member feels that they are actually directly affected by the topic of the message. For example, if someone is listening to a speech on why cigarette smoking is harmful, and that listener has never smoked cigarettes, they are likely to think the speech topic simply isn't relevant to them. Obviously, as a speaker, you should always think about how your topic is relevant to your listeners and make sure to highlight its importance throughout your speech. Personal involvement, on the other hand, asks whether the individual is actively engaged with the issue at hand. Does the person sends letters of support, gives speeches on the topic, has a bumper sticker, and so forth? If an audience member is an advocate who is constantly denouncing tobacco companies for the harm they do to society, then they would be highly involved (i.e., would engage in high elaboration) in a speech that attempts to persuade listeners that smoking is harmful.

2) Accountability

The second condition under which people are likely to process information using the central route is when they feel that they will be held accountable for the information after the fact. With accountability, there is the perception of the receiver that they will be evaluated on the information later. We've all witnessed this phenomenon when one student asks the question "will this be on the test?" If the teacher says "no," you can almost immediately see the glazed eyes in the classroom as students tune out the information. As a speaker, it's often hard to hold your audience accountable for the information given in a speech.

3) Personal Responsibility

When people feel that they are going to be held responsible, without a clear external accounting, for the evaluation of a message or the outcome of a message, they are more likely to critically think through the message using the central route. For example, maybe you're asked to evaluate fellow students in your public speaking class. If only one or two students are asked to evaluate any one speaker at a time, the quality of the evaluations for that speaker will be better than if everyone in the class is asked to evaluate every speaker. When people feel that their evaluation is important, they take more responsibility and therefore are more critical of the message delivered.

4) Incongruent Information

Some people are motivated to centrally process information when it does not adhere to their own ideas. Maybe you're a highly progressive liberal, and one of your peers delivers a speech on the importance of the Tea Party movement in United States politics. The information presented during the speech will most likely be in direct contrast to your personal ideology, which causes incongruence because the Tea Party ideology is opposed to a progressive liberal ideology. As such, you are more likely to pay attention to the speech, specifically looking for flaws in the speaker's argument.

5) Need for Cognition

The final reason some people centrally process information is that they have a personality characteristic called need for cognition. Need for cognition refers to a personality trait characterized by an internal drive or need to engage in critical thinking and information processing. People who have a high need for cognition simply enjoy thinking about complex ideas and issues. Even if the idea or issue being presented has no personal relevance, people with a high need for cognition are more likely to process information using the central route.

Key Takeaways

- Persuasion is the use of verbal and nonverbal messages to get a person to behave in a manner or embrace a point of view related to values, attitudes, and beliefs that they would not have done otherwise. Studying persuasion is important today because it helps us become more persuasive individuals, become more observant of others' persuasive attempts, and have a more complete understanding of the world around us.
- Social Judgment theory says that persuaders need to be aware of an audience's latitudes of acceptance, noncommitment, and rejection in order to effectively persuade an audience. Cognitive Dissonance theory reasons that people do not like holding to ideas that are contrary and will do what is necessary to get rid of the dissonance caused by the two contrary ideas. Lastly, the Elaboration Likelihood Model posits that persuaders should attempt to get receivers to think about the arguments being made (going through the central route) rather than having receivers pay attention to nonargument related aspects of the speech.

Exercises

1. Imagine you're giving a speech to a group of college fraternity and sorority members about why hazing shouldn't be tolerated. Explain the persuasive process using each of the three theories of persuasion discussed in this chapter.
2. Make a list of strategies that you could employ to ensure that your audience analyzes your message using the central route and not the peripheral route. According to Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model, which of these strategies are most likely to be effective? Why?

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12.2: Types of Persuasive Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among the four types of persuasive claims.
2. Understand how the four types of persuasive claims lead to different types of persuasive speeches.
3. Explain the two types of policy claims.



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Obviously, there are many different persuasive speech topics you could select for a public speaking class. Anything from localized claims like changing a specific college or university policy to larger societal claims like adding more enforcement against the trafficking of women and children in the United States could make for an interesting persuasive speech. You'll notice in the previous sentence we referred to the two topics as claims. In this use of the word "claim," we are declaring the goodness or desirability of an attitude, value, belief, or behavior that others may dispute. As a result of the dispute between our perceptions of the desirability of an attitude, value, belief, or behavior and the perceptions of others, we attempt to persuade others by supporting our claim with some sort of evidence and logic. There are four common claims that can be made: definitional, factual, policy, and value.

Definitional Claims

The first type of claim that a persuasive speaker can make is a definitional (or classification) claim. Definitional claims are claims over the denotation or classification of what something is. In essence, we are trying to argue for what something is or what something is not. Most definitional claims fall to a basic argument formula:

Y has features **A**, **B**, and **C**. **X** is (or is not) a **Y** because it has (or does not have) features **A**, **B**, or **C**.

For example, maybe you're trying to persuade your classmates that while therapeutic massage is often performed on nude clients, it is not a form of prostitution. You could start by explaining what therapeutic massage is and then look at the legal definition of prostitution and demonstrate to your peers that therapeutic massage does not fall into the legal definition of prostitution because it does not involve the behaviors characterized by that definition.

Factual Claims

Factual claims set out to argue the truth or falsity of an assertion. Some factual claims are simple to answer: Barack Obama is the first African American President of the United States; the tallest man in the world, Robert Wadlow, was eight feet and eleven inches tall; Facebook wasn't profitable until 2009. All these factual claims are well documented by evidence and can be easily supported with some research.

However, many factual claims cannot be answered absolutely. It is difficult to determine the truth or falsity of some factual claims because the final answer on the subject has not been discovered (e.g., when does life begin). Probably the most historically interesting and consistent factual claim is the existence of a higher power, God, or other religious deities. The simple fact of the matter is that there is not enough evidence to clearly answer this factual claim in any specific direction.

Other factual claims that may not be easily answered using evidence are predictions of what may or may not happen. For example, you could give a speech on the future of climate change or the future of terrorism in the United States. While there may be evidence that something may happen in the future, you can't actually say with 100% certainty that it will happen in the future.

When thinking of factual claims, it often helps to pretend that you're putting a specific claim on trial, and as the speaker it is your job to defend your claim as a lawyer would defend a client. Ultimately, your job is to be more persuasive than your audience members who act as both opposition attorneys and judges.

Policy Claims

The third type of persuasive claim is the policy claim—a statement about the nature of a problem and the solution that should be implemented. Policy claims are probably the most common form of persuasive speaking because we are surrounded by problems and people who have ideas about how to fix these problems. Let's look at a few examples of possible policy claims:

- The United States should stop capital punishment.
- The United States should become independent from the use of foreign oil by allowing more offshore drilling off its coasts.
- The United States should make human cloning for organ donation illegal.
- The U.S. Congress should change sentencing laws so nonviolent drug offenders are sent to rehabilitation centers instead of prison.
- The U.S. Congress should require the tobacco industry to pay 100% of the medical bills for individuals dying of smoking-related cancers.
- The United States should divert the funding from United States Agency for International Development (U.S. AID) to prevent poverty in the United States rather than feeding the starving people around the world.

Each of these claims has a clear perspective that is being advocated. Policy claims will always have a clear and direct opinion on what should occur and what needs to change. When examining policy claims, we generally talk about two different persuasive goals: passive agreement and immediate action.

1) Gain Passive Agreement

When we attempt to gain the passive agreement of our audience, our goal is to get them to agree with our specific policy without asking them to do anything to enact the policy. For example, maybe your speech is on why the Federal Communications Commission should regulate violence on television like it does foul language (i.e., no violence until after 9 p.m.). Your goal as a speaker is to get your audience to agree that it is in our best interest as a society to prevent violence from being shown on television before 9 p.m., but you are not seeking to have your audience run out and call their senators or congressmen or even sign a petition. Often the first step in larger political change is simply getting a large portion of the population to agree with your policy perspective.

Let's look at a few more passive agreement claims:

- Racial profiling of individuals suspected of belonging to known terrorist groups is a way to make the United States safer.
- Requiring U.S. citizens to "show their papers" is a violation of democracy and resembles the tactics of Nazi Germany and communist Russia.
- Colleges and universities should implement a standardized testing program to ensure student learning outcomes are similar across different institutions.

In each of these claims, the goal is to sway one's audience to a specific attitude, value, or belief, but not necessarily to get the audience to enact any specific behaviors.

2) Gain Immediate Action

The alternative to passive agreement is immediate action or persuading your audience to start engaging in a specific behavior. Many passive agreement topics can become immediate action topics as soon as you tell your audience what behavior they should engage in (e.g., sign a petition, call a senator, vote). While it is much easier to elicit passive agreement than to get people to do something, you should always try to get your audience to act and do so quickly. A common mistake that speakers make is telling people to do something that will occur in the future. The longer it takes for people to engage in the action you desire, the less likely it is that your audience will engage in that behavior.

Here are some examples of good claims with immediate calls to action:

- College students should eat more fruit, so I am encouraging everyone to eat the apple I have provided you and start getting more fruit in your diet.
- Teaching a child to read is one way to ensure that the next generation will be stronger than those that have come before us, so please sign up right now to volunteer one hour a week to help teach a child to read.
- The United States should reduce its nuclear arsenal by 20 percent over the next five years. Please sign the letter provided encouraging the president to take this necessary step for global peace. Once you've signed the letter, hand it to me, and I'll fax it to the White House today.

Each of these three examples starts with a basic claim and then tags on an immediate call to action. Remember, the faster you can get people to engage in a behavior, the more likely they actually will.

Value Claims

The final type of claim is a value claim, which is a claim where the speaker is making a judgment claim about something (e.g., it's good or bad, it's right or wrong, it's beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral).

Let's look at three value claims. We've italicized the evaluative term in each claim:

- Dating people on the Internet is an *immoral* form of dating.
- The Lincoln statue in Washington D.C. is *ugly*.
- It's *unfair* for pregnant women to have special parking spaces at malls, shopping centers, and stores.

Each of these three claims could definitely be made by a speaker and other speakers could say the exact opposite. When making a value claim, it's hard to ascertain why someone has chosen a specific value stance without understanding her or his criteria for making the evaluative statement. For example, if someone finds all forms of technology immoral, then it's really no surprise that he or she would find Internet dating immoral as well. As such, you need to clearly explain your criteria for making the evaluative statement. For example, when we examine the claim about Lincoln's statue, if your criteria for the term "ugly" is its style of carving or its proportion compared to its location then your evaluative statement can be more easily understood and evaluated by your audience. If, however, you state that your criterion is that Lincoln was a bad person because of what he did to the first nation people of America, then your statement takes on a slightly different meaning. Ultimately, when making a value claim, you need to make sure that you clearly label your evaluative term and provide clear criteria for how you came to that evaluation.

Key Takeaways

- There are four types of persuasive claims. Definition claims argue the denotation or classification of what something is. Factual claims argue the truth or falsity of an assertion being made. Policy claims argue the nature of a problem and the solution that should be taken. Lastly, value claims argue a judgment about something (e.g., it's good or bad, it's right or wrong, it's beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral).
- Each of the four claims leads to different types of persuasive speeches. As such, public speakers need to be aware of the type of claim they are advocating for, in order to understand the best methods of persuasion.
- In policy claims, persuaders attempt to convince their audiences to either passively accept or actively act. When persuaders attempt to gain passive agreement from an audience, they hope that an audience will agree with what is said about a specific policy without asking the audience to do anything to enact that policy. Gaining immediate action, on the other hand, occurs when a persuader gets the audience to actively engage in a specific behavior.

Exercises

1. Look at the list of the top one hundred speeches in the United States during the twentieth century compiled by Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst (http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html). Select a speech and examine the speech to determine which type of claim is being made by the speech.
2. Look at the list of the top one hundred speeches in the United States during the twentieth century compiled by Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst and find a policy speech (http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html). Which type of policy outcome was the speech aimed at achieving—passive agreement or immediate action? What evidence do you have from the speech to support your answer?

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12.3: Organizing Persuasive Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Understand three common organizational patterns for persuasive speeches.
2. Explain the steps utilized in Monroe's motivated sequence.
3. Explain the parts of a problem-cause-solution speech.
4. Explain the process utilized in a comparative advantage persuasive speech.



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Previously we discussed general guidelines for organizing speeches. In this section, we are going to look at three organizational patterns ideally suited for persuasive speeches:

1. Monroe's motivated sequence;
2. Problem-cause-solution; and
3. Comparative advantages.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

One of the most commonly cited and discussed organizational patterns for persuasive speeches is Monroe's motivated sequence. The purpose of Monroe's motivated sequence is to help speakers "sequence supporting materials and motivational appeals to form a useful organizational pattern for speeches as a whole" (German et al., 2010, p. 279).

While Monroe's motivated sequence is commonly discussed in most public speaking textbooks, we do want to provide one minor caution. Thus far, almost no research has been conducted that has demonstrated that Monroe's motivated sequence is any more persuasive than other structural patterns. In the only study conducted experimentally examining Monroe's motivated sequence, the researchers did not find the method more persuasive but did note that audience members found the pattern more organized than other methods (Micciche, Pryor, & Butler, 2000). We cautioned you so you do not think that Monroe's motivated sequence is a magic persuasive bullet (there exists no such thing in persuasion). At the same time, research does support that organized messages are perceived as more persuasive as a whole, so using Monroe's motivated sequence to think through one's persuasive argument could still be very beneficial.

Table 17.1 "Monroe's Motivated Sequence" lists the basic steps of Monroe's motivated sequence and the subsequent reaction a speaker desires from his or her audience.

Steps	Audience Response
Attention: Getting the attention of the audience	I want to listen to the speaker.
Need: a) Describing the problem, and b) Showing the need to solve the problem	Something needs to be done about the problem.
Satisfaction: Presenting the Solution	In order to satisfy the need or fix the problem this is what I need to do.

Steps	Audience Response
Visualization: Visualizing the results of applying the solution to the problem	I can see myself enjoying the benefits of taking action.
Action: Requesting audience's action or approval	I will act in a specific way or approve a decision or behavior.

Attention

The first step in Monroe's motivated sequence is the attention step, in which a speaker attempts to get the audience's attention. To gain an audience's attention, we recommend that you think through three specific parts of the attention step. First, you need to have a strong attention-getting device. As discussed in the chapter, "Introductions Matter: How to Begin a Speech Effectively", a strong attention getter at the beginning of your speech is very important. Second, you need to make sure you introduce your topic clearly. If your audience doesn't quickly know what your topic is, they are more likely to stop listening. Lastly, you need to explain to your audience why they should care about your topic.

Needs

In the need step of Monroe's motivated sequence, the speaker establishes that there is a specific need or problem. Monroe (1935) specified the following four steps as part of the need:

1. **Statement**: a speaker needs to give a clear and concise statement of the problem. This part of a speech should be crystal clear for the audience.
2. **Illustration**: the speaker needs to provide one or more examples to illustrate the need. The illustration is an attempt to make the problem concrete for the audience.
3. **Ramification**: a speaker needs to provide some kind of evidence (e.g., statistics, examples, testimony) that shows the ramifications or consequences of the problem.
4. **Pointing**: a speaker needs to show exactly how the problem relates to the audience personally.

Satisfaction

In the satisfaction step, the speaker sets out to satisfy the need or solve the problem that was set out in the "Needs" section. Within this step, Monroe (1935) proposed a five-step plan for satisfying a need:

1. **Statement**: a speaker needs to clearly state the attitude, value, belief, or action they want the audience to accept. The purpose of this statement is to clearly tell the audience what the speaker's ultimate goal is.
2. **Explanation**: a speaker should make sure that they clearly explain to the audience why they should accept the attitude, value, belief, or action that the speaker is proposing. Just telling the audience they should do something isn't strong enough to actually get them to change. Instead, the speaker really needs to provide a solid argument for why the audience should accept their proposed solution.
3. **Theoretical demonstration**: a speaker needs to show how the solution they have proposed meets the need or the problem. Monroe (1935) calls this link between the speaker's solution and the need, a theoretical demonstration because the speaker cannot prove that their solution will work. Instead, the speaker theorizes based on research and good judgment that their solution will meet the need or solve the problem.
4. **Reference to practical experience**: to help with this theoretical demonstration, the speaker needs to reference practical experience, which should include examples demonstrating that your proposal has worked elsewhere. Research, statistics, and expert testimony are all great ways of referencing practical experience.
5. **Meeting objections**: Monroe (1935) recommends that a speaker should respond to possible objections. One of the responsibilities of a persuasive speaker is to think through the speech and see what counterarguments could be made against it and then revise the speech to rebut those arguments within the speech. When the speaker offers rebuttals for arguments against their speech, it shows the audience that the speaker has done their homework and educated themselves about multiple sides of the issue.

Visualization

The next step of Monroe's motivated sequence is the visualization step, in which you ask the audience to visualize a future where the need has been met or the problem solved. In essence, the visualization stage is where a speaker can show the audience why accepting a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior can positively affect the future. When helping people to picture the future,

the more concrete your visualization, the easier it will be for your audience to see the possible future and be persuaded by it. You also need to make sure that you clearly show how accepting your solution will directly benefit your audience.

According to Monroe (1935), visualization can be conducted in one of three ways:

1. **Positive**: a speaker shows how adopting a proposal leads to a better future (e.g., recycle, and we'll have a cleaner and safer planet).
2. **Negative**: a speaker shows how not adopting the proposal will lead to a worse future (e.g., don't recycle, and our world will become polluted and uninhabitable).
3. **Contrast**: Monroe also acknowledged that visualization can include a combination of both positive and negative visualization. In essence, you show your audience both possible outcomes and have them decide which one they would rather have.

Action

The final step in Monroe's motivated sequence is the action step, in which a speaker asks an audience to approve the speaker's proposal. For understanding purposes, we break "Action" into two distinct parts: audience action and approval.

1. **Audience action** refers to direct physical behaviors a speaker wants from an audience (e.g., flossing their teeth twice a day, signing a petition, wearing seat belts).
2. **Approval**, on the other hand, involves an audience's consent or agreement with a speaker's proposed attitude, value, or belief.

When preparing an action step, it is important to make sure that the action, whether audience action or approval, is realistic for your audience. Asking your peers in a college classroom to donate $250 to a charity isn't realistic. Asking your peers to donate one dollar is considerably more realistic. In a persuasive speech based on Monroe's motivated sequence, the action step will end with the speech's concluding device. As discussed elsewhere in this text, you need to make sure that you conclude your speech in a vivid way so that the speech ends on a high point and the audience has a sense of energy as well as a sense of closure.

Now that we've walked through Monroe's motivated sequence, let's look at how you could use Monroe's motivated sequence to outline a persuasive speech:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classroom peers that the United States should have stronger laws governing the use of for-profit medical experiments.

Main Points:

- **Attention:** Want to make nine thousand dollars for just three weeks of work lying around and not doing much? Then be a human guinea pig. Admittedly, you'll have to have a tube down your throat most of those three weeks, but you'll earn three thousand dollars a week.
- **Need:** Every day many uneducated and lower socioeconomic-status citizens are preyed on by medical and pharmaceutical companies for use in for-profit medical and drug experiments. Do you want one of your family members to fall prey to this scheme?
- **Satisfaction:** The United States should have stronger laws governing the use of for-profit medical experiments to ensure that uneducated people and those from lower socioeconomic status are protected.
- **Visualization:** If we enact tougher experiment oversight, we can ensure that medical and pharmaceutical research is conducted in a way that adheres to good ethical standards. If we do not enact tougher experiment oversight, we could find ourselves in a world where the lines between research subject, guinea pig, and patient become increasingly blurred.
- **Action:** In order to prevent the atrocities associated with for-profit medical and pharmaceutical experiments, please sign this petition asking the US Department of Health and Human Services to pass stricter regulations on an industry that is out of control.

This example shows how you can take a basic speech topic and use Monroe's motivated sequence to clearly and easily outline your speech efficiently and effectively.

Table 17.2 "Monroe's Motivated Sequence Checklist" also contains a simple checklist to help you make sure you hit all the important components of Monroe's motivated sequence.

Step in the Sequence	Yes	No
Attention Step		
Gained the audience's attention	☐	☐

Step in the Sequence	Yes	No
Introduced the topic clearly	☐	☐
Showed the importance of the topic to the audience	☐	☐
Need Step		
The need is summarized in a clear statement	☐	☐
The Need is adequately illustrated	☐	☐
The Need has clear ramifications	☐	☐
The Need clearly points to the audience	☐	☐
Satisfaction Step		
The Plan is clearly stated	☐	☐
The Plan is plainly explained	☐	☐
The Plan and solution are theoretically demonstrated	☐	☐
The Plan has clear references to practical experience	☐	☐
The Plan can meet possible objections	☐	☐
Visualization Step		
The practicality of the plan shown	☐	☐
The benefits of the plan are tangible	☐	☐
The benefits of the plan relate to the audience	☐	☐
A specific type of visualization chosen (positive method, negative method, method of contrast)	☐	☐
Action Step		
Call of specific action by the audience	☐	☐
Action is realistic for the audience	☐	☐
The concluding device is vivid	☐	☐

Problem-Cause-Solution

Another format for organizing a persuasive speech is the problem-cause-solution format. In this specific format, you discuss what a problem is, what you believe is causing the problem, and then what the solution should be to correct the problem.

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classroom peers that our campus should adopt a zero-tolerance policy for hate speech.

Main Points:

1. Demonstrate that there is distrust among different groups on campus that has led to unnecessary confrontations and violence.
2. Show that the confrontations and violence are a result of hate speech that occurred prior to the events.
3. Explain how instituting a campus-wide zero-tolerance policy against hate speech could stop unnecessary confrontations and violence.

In this speech, you want to persuade people to support a new campus-wide policy calling for zero-tolerance of hate speech. Once you have shown the problem, you then explain to your audience that the cause of the unnecessary confrontations and violence is prior incidents of hate speech. Lastly, you argue that a campus-wide zero-tolerance policy could help prevent future unnecessary confrontations and violence. Again, this method of organizing a speech is as simple as its name: problem-cause-solution.

Comparative Advantages

The final method for organizing a persuasive speech is called the comparative advantages speech format. The goal of this speech is to compare items side-by-side and show why one of them is more advantageous than the other. For example, let's say that you're giving a speech on which e-book reader is better: Amazon.com's Kindle or Barnes and Nobles' Nook. Here's how you could organize this speech:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that the Nook is more advantageous than the Kindle.

Main Points:

1. 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.
2. The Nook has a color-touch screen, while the Kindle's screen is black and grey, and non-interactive.
3. The Nook's memory can be expanded through microSD, while the Kindle's memory cannot be upgraded.

As you can see from this speech's organization, the simple goal of this speech is to show why one thing has more positives than something else. Obviously, when you are demonstrating comparative advantages, the items you are comparing need to be functional equivalents—or, as the saying goes, you cannot compare apples to oranges.

Key Takeaways

- There are three common patterns that persuaders can utilize to help organize their speeches effectively: Monroe's motivated sequence, problem-cause-solution, and comparative advantage. Each of these patterns can effectively help a speaker think through their thoughts and organize them in a manner that will be more likely to persuade an audience.
- Monroe's (1935) motivated sequence is a commonly used speech format to effectively organize persuasive messages. The pattern consists of five basic stages: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action. In the first stage, a speaker gets the audience's attention. In the second stage, the speaker shows an audience that a need exists. In the third stage, the speaker shows how their persuasive proposal could satisfy the need. The fourth stage shows how the future could be if the persuasive proposal is or is not adopted. Lastly, the speaker urges the audience to take some kind of action to help enact the speaker's persuasive proposal.
- The problem-cause-solution proposal is a three-pronged speech pattern. The speaker starts by explaining the problem the speaker sees. The speaker then explains what he or she sees as the underlying causes of the problem. Lastly, the speaker proposes a solution to the problem that corrects the underlying causes.
- The comparative advantages speech format is utilized when a speaker is comparing two or more things or ideas and shows why one of the things or ideas has more advantages than the other(s).

Exercises

1. Create a speech using Monroe's motivated sequence to persuade people to recycle.
2. Create a speech using the problem-cause-solution method for a problem you see on your college or university campus.
3. Create a comparative advantages speech comparing two brands of toothpaste.

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12.4: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Doreen is delivering a speech on the topic of donating money to help feed the children of AIDS victims in Africa. She set up her speech using Monroe's motivated sequence. She sails through attention, need, and satisfaction. She starts delivering her visualization step, and she goes a little overboard by claiming that if more people would donate to this cause, the world would be devoid of hunger, children in Africa could all get an education, and we could establish world peace. She then makes claims that not feeding the children of AIDS victims in Africa could lead to world chaos and nuclear war.

1. Is it ethical to create unrealistic expectations during the visualization step?
2. Should you try to exaggerate the visualization stage if you know, realistically, that the possible outcomes are not that impressive?
3. If Doreen was your friend, how would you respond to this section of her speech? Should you point out that her argument is unethical?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Which of the following is one of the reasons why Perloff (2003) believes students should study public speaking today, more so than in the past?
    1. The number of persuasive communications has decreased with media consolidation.
    2. Persuasive messages take longer to travel today.
    3. Persuasion has become less institutionalized.
    4. Persuasive communication has become more subtle and devious.
    5. Persuasive communication is more obvious and blatant today.
2. Which theory of persuasion poses that if the discrepancy between the idea proposed by the speaker and the opinion of an audience member is too great, then the likelihood of persuasion decreases dramatically?
    1. social judgment theory
    2. social exchange theory
    3. cognitive dissonance theory
    4. psychodynamic theory
    5. elaboration likelihood model
3. While attempting to persuade an audience, Anne realizes that some of her audience members really like to engage in critical thinking and information processing. Knowing this, Anne makes sure her speech has very sound arguments that are completely supported by relevant research. Which of the five factors that lead to high elaboration discussed by Frymier and Nadler (2007) is shown here?
    1. personal relevance
    2. accountability
    3. personal responsibility
    4. incongruent information
    5. need for cognition
4. Jose gives a speech in which he argues that laws applying to traveling carnivals should not be the same as laws applying to amusement parks because the two are clearly different entities. What type of claim is Jose making?
    1. definitional claim
    2. factual claim
    3. policy claim
    4. value claim
    5. attitude claim
5. During a speech, Paula states, "If my plan is enacted, our community will simply be safer. Families will be able to walk with their children without fear of gang violence. Parents and children will be able to go to the park without fear of drug dealers." What part of Monroe's motivated sequence is Paula using?
    1. attention

2. need
3. satisfaction
4. visualization
5. action

Answer Key

1. 4
2. 1
3. 5
4. 1
5. 4

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Special Occasion Speaking

13.1: Understanding Entertaining Speeches
13.2: Special-Occasion Speeches
13.3: Keynote Speaking
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13.1: Understanding Entertaining Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the purpose of entertaining speeches.
2. Explain the four ingredients of a good entertaining speech.



Figure 13.1.1: Acceptance Speech (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0; Chris Hill via Chris Hoy – Acceptance Speech)

In broad terms, an entertaining speech is a speech designed to captivate an audience's attention and regale or amuse them while delivering a message. Like more traditional informative or persuasive speeches, entertaining speeches should communicate a clear message, but the manner of speaking used in an entertaining speech is typically different. Entertaining speeches are often delivered on special occasions (e.g., a toast at a wedding, an acceptance speech at an awards banquet, a motivational speech at a conference), which is why they are sometimes referred to as special-occasion speeches. However, they can also be given on more mundane occasions, where their purpose is primarily to amuse audience members or arouse them emotionally in some way. Remember, when we use the word "entertain," we are referring not just to humor but also to drama. The goal of an entertaining speech is to stir an audience's emotions.

Of all the types of speeches we come in contact with during our lives, the bulk of them will probably fall into the category of entertainment. If you spend just one evening watching a major awards show (e.g., the Grammys, the Tonys, the Oscars), you'll see dozens of acceptance speeches. While some of these acceptance speeches are good and others may be terrible, they all belong in the category of speaking to entertain.

Other speeches that fall into the entertaining category are designed to inspire or motivate an audience to do something. These are, however, different from a traditional persuasive speech. While entertaining speeches are often persuasive, we differentiate the two often based on the rhetorical situation itself. Maybe your school has hired a speaker to talk about his or her life story in an attempt to inspire the audience to try harder in school and reach for the best that life has to offer. You can imagine how this speech would be different from a traditional persuasive speech focusing on, say, the statistics related to scholastic achievement and success later in life.

Entertaining speeches are definitely very common, but that doesn't mean they don't require effort and preparation. A frequent trap is that people often think of entertaining speeches as corny. As a result, they don't prepare seriously but rather stand up to speak with the idea that they can "wing it" by acting silly and telling a few jokes. Instead of being entertaining, the speech falls flat. To help us think through how to be effective in delivering entertaining 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 an entertaining speech is to underprepare or simply not prepare at all. We've stressed the need for preparation throughout this text, so 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. Remember, when you get

anxious, as it inevitably happens in front of an audience, your brain doesn't function as well as when you are having a relaxed conversation with friends. You often forget information. By writing down some simple notes, you'll be less likely to deliver a bad speech.

Be Adaptive 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 school shooting, 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 are receiving a Most Valuable Player award in your favorite sport.
- You are a sales representative speaking to a group of clients after a mistake has been discovered.
- You are a cancer survivor speaking at a high school student assembly.

How might you adapt your message and speaking style to successfully entertain these various audiences?

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.

Be Adaptive 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 entertaining speeches successfully is to be mindful of your time. Different entertaining speech situations have their own conventions and rules with regard to time. Acceptance speeches and toasts, for example, should be relatively short (typically under five minutes). 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 and speeches to commemorate events can run ten to twenty minutes in length.

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 and fulfill the goal of entertaining, 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, either ask the person who has invited you to speak or do some quick research to see what the average speech times in the given context tend to be.

Key Takeaways

- Entertaining speeches are speeches designed to captivate an audience's attention and regale or amuse them while delivering a clear message. Speakers engage in entertaining speeches generally at special occasions (e.g., weddings, funerals) or are asked to deliver a keynote address.
- Entertaining speeches should include four key considerations: preparation, adaptation to the occasion, adaptation to the audience, and mindfulness of the time. As with all speeches, speakers need to prepare the speech. Second, speakers need to think about the specific occasion. Third, speakers need to adapt their speeches to the specific audience. Lastly, speakers need to think about how long they should speak.

Exercises

1. Type in the word “roast” into YouTube and watch a few minutes of a roast. Did the speaker clearly exhibit the four clear ingredients of an entertaining speech?
2. Watch several toasts and acceptance speeches on YouTube. Can you identify specific ways in which each speaker adapts the speech to the occasion and the audience?

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13.2: Special-Occasion Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the different types of ceremonial speaking.
2. Describe the different types of inspirational speaking.



Figure 13.2.1: Birthday Speech (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0; M+MD via Flickr)

Many entertaining speeches fall under the category of special-occasion speeches. All the speeches in this category are given to mark the significance of particular events. Common events include weddings, bar mitzvahs, awards ceremonies, funerals, and political events. In each of these different occasions, speakers are asked to deliver speeches relating to the event. For purposes of simplicity, we've broken special-occasion speeches into two groups: ceremonial speaking and inspirational speaking.

Ceremonial Speaking

Ceremonial speeches are speeches given during a ceremony or a ritual marked by observance of formality or etiquette. These ceremonies tend to be very special for people, so it shouldn't be surprising that they are opportunities for speech making. Let's examine each of the eight types of ceremonial speaking: introductions, presentations, acceptances, dedications, toasts, roasts, eulogies, and farewells.

Speeches of Introduction

The first type of speech is called the speech of introduction, which is a minispeech given by the host of a ceremony that introduces another speaker and his or her speech. Few things are worse than when the introducer or a speaker stands up and says, "This is Joe Smith, 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 Joe's speech.

Just like any other speech, a speech of introduction should be a complete speech and have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion—and you should do it all in under two minutes. This brings up another "few things are worse" scenario: an introductory speaker who rambles on for too long or who talks about himself or herself instead of focusing on the person being introduced.

For an introduction, think of a hook that will make your audience interested in the upcoming speaker. Did you read a news article related to the speaker's topic? Have you been impressed by a presentation you've heard the speaker give in the past? 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 introductory speech 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 body points). First, tell your audience in general terms about the overarching topic of the speech. Most of the time as an introducer, you'll only have a speech title and maybe a paragraph of information to help guide this part of your speech. That's all right. You don't need to know all the ins and outs of the main speaker's speech; you just need to know enough to whet the audience's appetite. Next, you need to tell the audience why the speaker is a credible speaker 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 final part of a good introduction is the conclusion, which is generally designed to welcome the speaker to the lectern. Many introducers will conclude by saying something like, “I am looking forward to hearing how Joe Smith’s advice and wisdom can help all of us today, so please join me in welcoming Mr. Joe Smith.” We’ve known some presenters who will even add a notation to their notes to “start clapping” and “shake speakers hand” or “give speaker a hug” depending on the circumstances of the speech.

Now that we’ve walked through the basic parts of an introductory speech, let’s see one outlined:

Specific Purpose: To entertain the audience while preparing them for Janice Wright’s speech on rituals.

Introduction: Mention some common rituals people in the United States engage in (Christmas, sporting events, legal proceedings).

Main Points:

1. Explain that the topic was selected because understanding how cultures use ritual is an important part of understanding what it means to be human.
2. Janice Wright is a cultural anthropologist who studies the impact that everyday rituals have on communities.
3. All of us engage in rituals, and we often don’t take the time to determine how these rituals were started and how they impact our daily routines.

Conclusion: I had the opportunity to listen to Dr. Wright at the regional conference in Springfield last month, and I am excited that I get to share her with all of you tonight. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Wright (start clapping, shake speaker’s hand, exit stage).

Speeches of Presentation

The second type of common ceremonial speech is the speech of presentation. A speech of presentation is a brief speech given to accompany a prize or honor. Speeches of presentation can be as simple as saying, “This year’s recipient of the Schuman Public Speaking prize is Wilhelmina Jeffers,” or could last up to five minutes as the speaker explains why the honoree was chosen for the award.

When preparing a speech of presentation, it’s always important to ask how long the speech should be. Once you know the time limit, then you can set out to create the speech itself. First, you should explain what the award or honor is and why the presentation is important. Second, 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 winner (as Kanye West did to Taylor Swift during the 2009 MTV Music Video Awards, for example www.mtv.com/videos/misc/435995/taylor-swift-wins-best-female-video.jhtml#id=1620605), 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. For example, in the above video clip from the 2009 MTV Music Video Awards, Taylor Swift starts by expressing her appreciation, gets interrupted by Kanye West, and ends by saying, “I would like to thank the fans and MTV, thank you.” While obviously not a traditional acceptance speech because of the interruption, she did manage to get in the important parts.

There are three typical components of a speech of acceptance: thank the givers of the award or honor, thank those who helped you achieve your goal, and put the award or honor into perspective. First, you want to thank the people who have given you the award or honor and possibly those who voted for you. We see this done every year during the Oscars, “First, I’d like to thank the academy and all the academy voters.” 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 families and 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, put the award in perspective. Tell the people listening to your speech why the award is meaningful to you.

Speeches of Dedication

The fourth ceremonial 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. Maybe your great-uncle has died and left

your college tons of money, so the college has decided to rename one of the dorms after your great-uncle. In this case, you may be asked to speak at the dedication.

When preparing the 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 that the building is being named after your great-uncle who bestowed a gift to his alma mater. Second, you want to explain what is being dedicated. If the dedication is a new building or a preexisting building, you want to explain what is being dedicated and 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 preexisting structure, talk about the people who put together and decided on the dedication. Lastly, explain why the structure is important for the community where it's 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 they've 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 some kind 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, while you are speaking you need to focus your attention to the people being toasted, both by physically looking at them and by keeping your message about them. You should also 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 Joan 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

The roast speech is a very interesting and peculiar speech because it is designed to both praise and good-naturedly insult a person being honored. 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.

In this clip, watch as Stephen Colbert, television host of *The Colbert Report*, roasts President George W. Bush.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSE_saVX_2A

Let's pick this short clip apart. You'll notice that the humor doesn't pull any punches. The goal of the roast is to both praise and insult in a good-natured manner. You'll also see that the roaster, in this case Stephen Colbert, is standing behind a lectern while the roastee, President George W. Bush, is clearly on display for the audience to see, and periodically you'll see the camera pan to President Bush to take in his reactions. Half the fun of a good roast is watching the roastee's reactions during the roast, so it's important to have the roastee clearly visible by the audience.

How does one prepare for a roast? First, you want to really think about the person who is being roasted. Do they have any strange habits or amusing stories in their past that you can discuss? When you think through these things 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, not massacre them. 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 the majority of people in the audience can relate to the jokes being made. If you have an inside joke with the roastee, bringing it up during 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 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. (Don't confuse "eulogy" with "elegy," a poem or song of mourning.) Unless you are a minister, priest, rabbi, imam, or other form of religious leader, you'll probably not deliver too many eulogies in your lifetime. However, when the time comes to deliver a eulogy, it's good to know what you're doing and to

adequately prepare your remarks. Watch the following clip of then-Senator Barack Obama delivering a eulogy at the funeral of civil rights activist Rosa Parks in November of 2005.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRsH92sJCr4

In this eulogy, Senator Obama delivers the eulogy by recalling Rosa Parks importance and her legacy in American history.

When preparing a eulogy, first you need to know as much information about the deceased as possible. The more information you have about the person, the more personal you can make the eulogy. While you can rely on your own information if you were close to the deceased, it is always a good idea to ask friends and relatives of the deceased for their memories, as these may add important facets that may not have occurred to you. Of course, if you were not very close to the deceased, you will need to ask friends and family for information. Second, although eulogies are delivered on the serious and sad occasion of a funeral or memorial service for the deceased, 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 will expect the eulogy to be highly entertaining and amusing. While eulogies are not roasts, one 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. Lastly, remember to tell the deceased's story. Tell the audience about who this person was and what the person stood for in life. The more personal you can make a eulogy, the more touching it will be for the deceased's friends and families. The eulogy should remind the audience to celebrate the person's life as well as mourn their death.

Speeches of Farewell

A speech of farewell allows someone to say good-bye to one part of his or her life as he or she is moving on to the next part of life. Maybe you've accepted a new job and are leaving your current job, or you're graduating from college and entering the work force. Whatever the case may be, periods of transition are often marked by speeches of farewell. Watch the following clip of Derek Jeter's 2008 speech saying farewell to Yankee Stadium, built in 1923, before the New York Yankees moved to the new stadium that opened in 2009.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJrlTpQm0to

In this speech, Derek Jeter is not only saying good-bye to Yankee Stadium but also thanking the fans for their continued support.

When preparing a speech of farewell, the goal should be to thank the people in your current position and let them know how much you appreciate them as you make the move to your next position in life. In Derek Jeter's speech, he starts by talking about the history of the 1923 Yankee Stadium and then thanks the fans for their support. Second, you want to express to your audience how much the experience has meant to you. A farewell speech is a time to commemorate and think about the good times you've had. As such, you should avoid negativity during this speech. Lastly, you want to make sure that you end on a high note. Derek Jeter concludes his speech by saying, "On behalf of this entire organization, we just want to take this moment to salute you, the greatest fans in the world!" at which point Jeter and the other players take off their ball caps and hold them up toward the audience.

Inspirational Speaking

The goal of an inspirational speech is to elicit or arouse an emotional state within an audience. In Section 18.2.1 "Ceremonial Speaking", we looked at ceremonial speeches. Although some inspirational speeches are sometimes tied to ceremonial occasions, there are also other speaking contexts that call for inspirational speeches. For our purposes, we are going to look at two types of inspirational speeches: goodwill and speeches of commencement.

Speeches to Ensure Goodwill

Goodwill is an intangible asset that is made up of the favor or reputation of an individual or organization. Speeches of goodwill are often given in an attempt to get audience members to view the person or organization more favorably. Although speeches of goodwill are clearly persuasive, they try not to be obvious about the persuasive intent and are often delivered as information-giving speeches that focus on an individual or organization's positives attributes. There are three basic types of speeches of goodwill: public relations, justification, and apology.

Speeches for Public Relations

In a public relations speech, the speaker is speaking to enhance one's own image or the image of his or her organization. You can almost think of these speeches as cheerleading speeches because the ultimate goal is to get people to like the speaker and what he or she represents. In the following brief speech, the CEO of British Petroleum is speaking to reporters about what his organization is doing during the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCfa6AxmUHw

Notice that he keeps emphasizing what his company is doing to fix the problem. Every part of this speech is orchestrated to make BP look caring and attempts to get some amount of goodwill from the viewing public.

Speeches of Justification

The second common speech of goodwill is the speech of justification, which is given when someone attempts to defend why certain actions were taken or will be taken. In these speeches, speakers have already enacted (or decided to enact) some kind of behavior, and are now attempting to justify why the behavior is or was appropriate. In the following clip, President Bill Clinton discusses his decision to bomb key Iraqi targets after uncovering a plot to assassinate former President George H. W. Bush.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mpWa7wNr5M

In this speech, President Clinton outlines his reasons for bombing Iraq to the American people and the globe. Again, the goal of this speech is to secure goodwill for President Clinton's decisions both in the United States and on the world stage.

Speeches of Apology

The final speech of goodwill is the speech of apology. Frankly, these speeches have become more and more commonplace. Every time we turn around, a politician, professional athlete, musician, or actor/actress is doing something reprehensible and getting caught. In fact, the speech of apology has quickly become a fodder for humor as well. Let's take a look at a real apology speech delivered by professional golfer Tiger Woods.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs8nseNP4s0

When you need to make an apology speech, there are three elements that you need to include: be honest and take responsibility, say you're sorry, and offer restitution. First, a speaker needs to be honest and admit to doing something wrong. The worst apology speeches are those in which the individual tries to sidestep the wrongdoing. Even if you didn't do anything wrong, it is often best to take responsibility from a public perception perspective. Second, say that you are sorry. People need to know that you are remorseful for what you've done. One of the problems many experts saw with Tiger Woods's speech is that he doesn't look remorseful at all. While the words coming out of his mouth are appropriate, he looks like a robot forced to read from a manuscript written by his press agent. Lastly, you need to offer restitution. Restitution can come in the form of fixing something broken or a promise not to engage in such behavior in the future. People in society are very willing to forgive and forget when they are asked.

Speeches for Commencements

The second type of inspirational speech is the speech of commencement, which is designed to recognize and celebrate the achievements of a graduating class or other group of people. The most typical form of commencement speech happens when someone graduates from school. Nearly all of us have sat through commencement speeches at some point in our lives. And if you're like us, you've heard good ones and bad ones. Numerous celebrities and politicians have been asked to deliver commencement speeches at colleges and universities. One famous and well-thought-out commencement speech was given by famed *Harry Potter* author J. K. Rowling at Harvard University in 2008.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkREt4ZB-ck

J. K. Rowling's speech has the perfect balance of humor and inspiration, which are two of the main ingredients of a great commencement speech.

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 advantages 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.

Key Takeaways

- There are eight common forms of ceremonial speaking: introduction, presentation, acceptance, dedication, toast, roast, eulogy, and farewell. Speeches of introduction are designed to introduce a speaker. Speeches of presentation are given when an individual is presenting an award of some kind. Speeches of acceptance are delivered by the person receiving an award or honor. Speeches of dedication are given when a new building or other place is being opened for the first time. Toasts are given to acknowledge and honor someone on a special occasion (e.g., wedding, birthday, retirement). Roasts are speeches designed to both praise and good-naturedly insult a person being honored. Eulogies are given during funerals and memorial services. Lastly, speeches of farewell are delivered by an individual who is leaving a job, community, or organization, and wants to acknowledge how much the group has meant.
- Inspirational speeches fall into two categories: goodwill (e.g., public relations, justification, and apology) and speeches of commencement. Speeches of goodwill attempt to get audience members to view the person or organization more favorably. On the other hand, speeches of commencement are delivered to recognize the achievements of a group of people.

Exercises

1. Imagine you've been asked to speak before a local civic organization such as the Kiwanis or Rotary Club. Develop a sample speech of introduction that you would like someone to give to introduce you.
2. You've been asked to roast your favorite celebrity. Develop a two-minute roast.
3. Develop a speech of commencement for your public speaking class.

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13.3: Keynote Speaking

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the purpose of keynote speeches in society.
2. Explain the basic objective of an after-dinner speech.
3. Describe the purpose and types of motivational speeches.



Figure 13.3.1: Keynote Speech (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0; Acumen)

The last type of entertaining speech we will examine is the keynote speech. A keynote speech is delivered to set the underlying tone and summarize the core message of an event. Keynotes are often given at the end of an event; there can also be a number of keynote speeches delivered throughout a longer event that lasts for several days. People who deliver keynote speeches are typically experts in a given area who are invited to speak at a conference, convention, banquet, meeting, or other kind of event for the purpose of setting a specific tone for the occasion. Some keynote speakers will actually work for a speakers bureau, an agency that represents celebrity and professional speakers. One very important organization for all aspiring keynote speakers is the National Speaker's Association (NSA, http://www.nsaspeaker.org). NSA also publishes a widely respected magazine for professional speakers called *Speaker* magazine, which can be accessed for free from their website (http://www.nsaspeaker-magazine.org).

In the world of professional public speaking, there are two common types of keynotes: after-dinner speeches and motivational speeches. Let's look at each of these unique speeches.

After-Dinner Speaking

After-dinner speaking gets its name from the idea that these speeches historically followed a meal of some kind. After-dinner speakers are generally asked to speak (or hired to speak) because they have the ability both to speak effectively and to make people laugh. First and foremost, after-dinner speeches are speeches and not stand-up comedy routines. 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.

After-dinner speaking is probably the hardest type of speaking to do well because it is an entertaining speech that depends on the successful delivery of humor. People train for years to develop comic timing, or the verbal and nonverbal delivery used to enhance the comedic value of a message. But after-dinner speaking is difficult, not impossible. Here is the method we recommend for developing a successful after-dinner speech.

First, use all that you have learned about informative or persuasive speeches to prepare a real informative or persuasive speech roughly two-thirds the length of what the final speech will become. That is, if you're going to be giving a ten-minute speech, then your "real" informative or persuasive speech should be six or seven minutes in length.

Next, go back through the speech and look for opportunities to insert humorous remarks. Table 18.1 "Forms of Verbal Humor" lists various forms of verbal humor that are often used in the textual portion of a speech.

Table 18.1 Forms of Verbal Humor

Type of Humor	Example

Type of Humor	Example
Acronym/Abbreviation	CIA—Certified Idiots Anonymous
	LAPD—Lunatics And Punishment Dispensers
Humorous Advertisement or News Headline	“Tiger Woods Plays with Own Balls, Nike Says”
	“A-Rod Goes Deep, Wang Hurt”
	“Federal Agents Raid Gun Shop, Find Weapons”
Aside	They are otherwise known as oxymorons, which are not people who don’t know how to use acne medication.
	Colostomy, wasn’t he one of the Greek Gods?
Definition	“A banker is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining and wants it back the minute it begins to rain.” Mark Twain
	Spoiled rotten, or what happens to kids after spending just ten minutes with their grandparents.
Oxymoron	Scheduled emergency
	Gourmet spam
	Recreational hospital
Pleonasm	Frozen ice
	Sharp point
	Killed dead
Malapropism	He’s a vast suppository of information (*suppository* should be *repository*).
	This is bound to create dysentery in the ranks (*dysentery* should be *dissent*).
One-Liner or Quotation	Better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt. —Abraham Lincoln
	A computer once beat me at chess, but it was no match for me at kick boxing. —Emo Philips
	Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened. —Winston Churchill
	In the first place God made idiots; this was for practice. Then he made school boards. —Mark Twain
Self-Effacing Humor	I looked over at my clock and it said 7:30, and I had to be at work by 8:00. I got up, got dressed, and sped to the office. Only then did I realize that it was 7:30 p.m. and not 7:30 a.m.
	“Thomas Jefferson once said, ‘One should not worry about chronological age compared to the ability to perform the task.’… Ever since Thomas Jefferson told me that I stopped worrying about my age.” —Ronald Reagan
Word Combination with Unusual Visual Effects	That kid was about as useful as a football bat.
	He was finer than frog hair.

Each of these is a possible humor device that could be implemented in a speech. Read the following speech delivered by Mark Twain on his seventieth birthday for a good example of an after-dinner speech (etext.lib.virginia.edu/railton/onstage/70bday.html).

Once you've looked through your speech, examining places for verbal humor, think about any physical humor or props that would enhance your speech. Physical humor is great if you can pull it off without being self-conscious. One of the biggest mistakes any humorist makes is to become too aware of what his or her body is doing because it's then harder to be free and funny. As for props, after-dinner speakers have been known to use everything from oversize inflatable baseball bats to rubber clown noses. The goal for a funny prop is that it adds to the humor of the speech without distracting from its message.

Last, and probably most important, try the humor out on real, live people. This is important for three reasons.

First, the success of humor depends heavily on delivery, and especially timing in delivery. You will need practice to polish your delivery so that your humor comes across. If you can't make it through one of your jokes without cracking up, you will need to either incorporate the self-crackup into your delivery or forgo using that joke.

Second, 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 drone on once you start telling it out loud. Furthermore, remember there is a difference between written and verbal language, and this also translates to how humor is interpreted.

Third, you 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.

The following are some other tips for using humor from people who have professionally given after-dinner speeches and learned the hard way what to do and what to avoid:

- Personalize or localize humor when possible.
- Be clear about which words need emphasis with verbal humor.
- Be sure the punch line is at the end. Don't let on where the joke is going.
- Don't announce, "This is funny." or "I'm not very good at telling jokes, but…"
- Don't try to use humor that you don't know well.
- Don't use humor that you personally don't find funny.
- Don't apologize if others don't laugh.
- Don't try to explain the humor if it fails—just move on.
- Don't drag it out! Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.
- Know when to stop joking and be serious.
- Be natural and have fun!

Motivational Speaking

The second common form of keynote speaking is motivational speaking. 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. Whereas a traditional persuasive speech may want listeners to purchase product X or agree with ideology Y, 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, and club or group contexts. *The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking* lists four types of motivational speeches: hero, survivor, religious, and success (Slutsky & Aun, 1997).

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). Just type "motivational speech" into YouTube and you'll find many motivational speeches given by individuals who can be considered heroes or role models. The following clip presents a speech by Steve Sax, a former major league baseball player.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4ITFlbcu8g

In this speech, Sax talks about his life as a baseball player, along with issues related to leadership, overcoming obstacles, and motivation.

The survivor speech is a speech given by someone who has survived a personal tragedy or who has faced and overcome serious adversity. In the following clip, cancer survivor Becky M. Olsen discusses her life as a cancer survivor.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuo1u_C9_3g

Becky Olsen goes all over the country talking with and motivating cancer survivors to beat the odds.

The religious speech is fairly 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. One highly sought-after religious speaker in the United States is Joel Osteen, head minister at Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. In this clip, Joel is talking about finding and retaining joy in life.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp8KixxAk60

The crux of Osteen's speech is learning how to take responsibility of one's own life and let others take responsibility for their 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. In the following clip the then CEO of Xerox, Anne Mulcahy, speaks before a group of students at Dartmouth College discussing the spirit of entrepreneurship.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IlnLfKWAPnw

In this speech, Mulcahy shares the leadership lessons she had learned as the CEO of Xerox.

Key Takeaways

- Keynote speeches are delivered to set the underlying tone and summarize the core message of an event.
- After-dinner speeches are real informative or persuasive speeches with a secondary objective of making the audience laugh. Effective after-dinner speakers must first know how to effectively write a speech and then find appropriate humor to add to the presentation.
- Motivational speeches are designed not only to make an audience experience emotional arousal (fear, sadness, joy, excitement) but also to ask the audience to do something with that emotional arousal. There are four types of motivational speeches: the hero, the survivor, the religious, and the success.

Exercises

1. Take one of the speeches you've delivered in class and think of ways to add humor to it. Ultimately, you'll turn your original speech in to an after-dinner speech.
2. Think about your own life. If you were asked to give a motivational speech, which type of motivational speaker would you be: hero, survivor, religious, or success? What would the specific purpose of your speech be?

References

Slutsky, J., & Aun, M. (1997). *The Toastmasters International® guide to successful speaking: Overcoming your fears, winning over your audience, building your business & career*. Chicago, IL: Dearborn Financial Publishing.

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13.4: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Virginia is asked to roast one of her bosses at the annual company meeting. Virginia collects a range of stories from people about her boss and a few of them are definitely quite embarrassing. She finds out about her boss's ex-husband and some of the marital difficulties they had that are quite funny. She also finds out that when her boss broke her leg, it actually happened while sliding down a slide and not on a ski trip as she had told her office. As Virginia prepares her speech, she starts questioning what information she should use and what information is going too far.

1. How should a roaster ethically go about collecting funny stories for his or her roast?
2. What type of information would be ethical for a roaster to use? What type of information would be unethical for a roaster to use?
3. At what point does a roast go from being good-natured to being meanspirited?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Which type of speech is designed to captivate an audience's attention and regale or amuse them while delivering a clear message?
    1. informative
    2. actuation
    3. persuasive
    4. indoctrination
    5. entertaining
2. "Darla has been a great asset to our community. She has worked on numerous projects including the housing beautification project, the community advancement project, and the community action league. As such, it is with great honor that I present Darla with the Citizen of the Year award." This is an example of what type of speech?
    1. presentation
    2. introduction
    3. acceptance
    4. goodwill
    5. dedication
3. Sarah, a representative to a state legislature, has been forced to explain her reasoning behind voting for a new law. While she realizes the law isn't perfect, she really believes that the benefits of the law truly outweigh the problems. Sarah is going to deliver what type of goodwill speech?
    1. speech of public relations
    2. speech of justification
    3. speech of apology
    4. speech of trusting
    5. speech of competence
4. "That guy was an inept expert" is an example of which type of humorous language?
    1. pleonasm
    2. malapropism
    3. oxymoron
    4. eulogy
    5. simile
5. When presidents finish their presidency, they are often hired by a speakers bureau to speak for various groups. What type of motivational speeches would ex-presidents most likely give?
    1. hero
    2. survivor
    3. religious
    4. success

5. inspirational

Answer Key

1. e
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. a

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California Polytechnic State University

14: Mediated Communication

Brooke-Ashley Lipson Pool

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14.1: Introduction to Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and Speaking Online

The world of technology is constantly evolving and reaching every aspect of our lives and public speaking is no different. We now communicate just as much online as we do in person. In the Communication discipline we refer to speaking through mediated platforms (Zoom, Instagram, online dating apps, texting, etc.) as “computer mediated communication” or CMC. It is important to differentiate between these channels and face-to-face (F2F) because of the difference in communicative skills needed for each channel. When communicating F2F, the message is richer; meaning, we can see the person’s body language, pick up subtle cues, and there is no delay in receiving messages. When communicating through mediated channels, we may miss out on body language, cues, and even through video messaging, there may be a delay or interruption. As a public speaker you need to be aware of how your presentation will change depending on the medium through which you are communicating.

If you were a student during 2020, you were part of the huge shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only were students and educators forced to move their classes online, but many businesses and employees went remote and had to adapt to doing their job through a computer screen. Although communicating online is not new, it certainly gained more importance and became our main channel of communication during this time. Now that communication technologies like, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, and many others, became the new norm for how students, teachers, and employees communicated during the pandemic, this technology shows no sign of leaving our communicative practices. Even though some classes and businesses transitioned or will transition back to face-to-face communication, many have opted to keep communicating through these technologies. Therefore, it is important for students to not only be comfortable presenting in-person but also across mediated platforms. These skills will not only help if you are in an online class, but also in the workforce, as this seems to be the future of doing business. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss the similarities and differences between public speaking F2F and through CMC and how to give a successful presentation via mediated technologies.

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14.2: Public Speaking Online Vs. Face-to-Face

There are two basic types of online speeches, synchronous and asynchronous.

Types of Online Speeches

Synchronous speeches are where you give your speech online in real time to a live online audience. Typically, with synchronous speeches, the speaker and audience are using some kind of web conferencing or virtual communication software such as Zoom, Skype, or Google Hangouts to be virtually present together for the speech. The audience may be all physically located in a single space such as a classroom or conference room to view the speech or they may not be gathered together and instead be watching from a computer or mobile device in their home or office.

When giving a synchronous speech, a speaker may have the ability to get feedback from the audience in real time and adapt their speech as a result of that feedback.

Asynchronous speeches are not delivered in real time to a live online audience but are instead recorded for viewing at a later time convenient for the audience. Typically, asynchronous speeches will be delivered straight to a camera with no audience present. In an asynchronous speaking situation, the speaker cannot receive feedback from their virtual audience and so must prepare their speech accordingly.

There are some types of speeches that **combine synchronous and asynchronous** elements. For instance, in some cases a speaker talks in front of a live audience and a recording of the speech is posted online for a virtual audience to view. The best-known example of this kind of speech delivered to a live audience and posted online would be a TED Talk. More commonly, online meetings or webinars are recorded so that they can be viewed later, hence both synchronous and asynchronous.

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Online

Verbal Communication

Do you like to listen to podcasts or audio books? If so, think about the way a speaker or reader's voice helps to keep your attention and interest in what you are hearing. People who make a living using their voices to communicate, whether it be in podcasting, radio, voice over work, etc., know that having a voice that is interesting to listen to both helps them keep their audience's attention and communicate more effectively.

Elsewhere in this class we have discussed vocal variety (also called vocal variation), the idea that it is important when speaking to an audience for a speaker to vary aspects of his or her voice, such as rate, volume, and pitch. This variation will help a speaker sound more conversational, and it will also help hold the audience's attention.

When you speak online, your voice is crucial to keeping your audience engaged. When you're speaking into your webcam, particularly if you're explaining something on the screen (such as a slide deck), it can be easy to speak too fast or to slip into a monotone delivery. After all, without the cue of a live audience in front of us, it's easy to forget to enunciate, use pauses, and vary vocal pitch. Don't be fooled! Just because you might feel like you're talking to yourself, don't forget that there is an audience waiting to hear what you'll say.

The University of Melbourne has developed some tips to help students succeed when speaking online. When it comes to verbal communication, students are encouraged to do the following:

- **Vary the pace of your speaking**. It is better to speak a little slower than you usually would rather than faster.
- **Pause occasionally**. Use short, half-second stops between phrases to help the audience keep up with you.
-

Additionally, the University of Melbourne also suggests you practice by recording yourself doing your presentation and then watch it to get a sense of your voice.

Nonverbal Communication

One of the biggest differences between speaking in person and speaking online involves the use of nonverbal communication.

When speaking in person, we want to be mindful of nonverbal cues like eye contact, gestures, and how we dress. These cues are important as well when we speak online, but online we also have the added dimension of the physical environment we are speaking from and how it may help or hinder our success as a speaker.

These are some nonverbal and technical aspects to be aware of when speaking online:

- **Awareness of the environment** you are speaking in. What does the room you are speaking in look like? It's best to choose a quiet room where you won't be interrupted by friends, family, or pets. Be aware of objects that will appear in the video frame with you. If things look messy or cluttered behind you in the frame they may detract from your effectiveness as a speaker. You might consider using a backdrop to hide the contents of the room from which you are speaking.
- Typically, online we **speak while seated** instead of standing. Speakers most often sit when they speak online because they are speaking to a computer placed on a desk. When we sit and speak, we often have to work **harder to convey energy and enthusiasm** than when we are standing.
- Be aware of how **what you wear** will look online. Generally, when speaking to a camera online it is best to **avoid clothes with stripes or busy prints** as they can be distracting. Instead, stick to solids as they tend to show up better. White is generally not recommended as it tends to be the brightest thing on screen.
- Make **eye contact with the webcam** and not to the screen. Try and talk through the camera to your audience. To do this, focus your eyes on the camera rather than the screen. If you look at the screen, you won't be looking at your audience! Also try to place the camera at eye level rather than above or below your face.
- Use planned-out and **deliberate hand gestures**. Try to avoid too much hand movement as it can be distracting. When you do use gestures, try to make them intentional but as natural looking as possible.

1.

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14.3: Technical Considerations

Along with the usual verbal and nonverbal considerations for public speaking in F2F settings, you also need to consider some extra elements when presenting online. When presenting online, you not only have to think about your speech, but also the lighting in the room, how your camera is set up and microphone are set up, and any external noise happening around you. Read below for the specific considerations you should take for each of these elements in order to give a successful online presentation.

Lighting

One of the technical elements you should be concerned with is lighting. How light is the room in which you are speaking? **Avoid having windows or a light source behind you** as they will lighten the background but place your face in shadow. If possible, speak in front of a window to or another light source so you have light on your face. Natural light is best if you have it. If not, use a light source like a lamp placed in front of you or a ring light.



Backlighting obscures your face and turns you into a silhouette.

Camera

If you are using a camera that is built into your computer or mobile device, sit at **eye level to the camera** with your face in the middle of the frame so you can make eye contact with your audience through your camera. If you are using a stand-alone video camera instead, place it on a tripod or other solid, steady surface so it stays stable. If you are using a phone or tablet to record yourself, consider using a tripod so it stays stable. Also, place your device so it records in horizontal or landscape mode rather than in vertical mode.

Sound



All it takes to speak online is a computer (or mobile device). An external microphone or headset isn't always necessary, but it can help ensure better sound and eliminate background noise.

For best sound quality, either **use a headset or earbuds** with a microphone **or a wired or wireless microphone** to better capture your voice and also dampen background noises. If you cannot do that and are using the microphone in your computer or mobile device, make sure you are **close enough** to your computer so you can be heard clearly. Be sure to double-check the input volume settings for your computer microphone to be sure your voice is sufficiently audible.

Test your system out by recording a couple practice speeches. Make sure your voice is loud enough to be heard, you are making good eye contact, and your face is well lit.

Remember: sound is actually more important than image in most online speaking situations. This is something that documentary filmmakers have known for a long time. As nearly any documentary filmmaker will tell you: "If you must choose between a

visually pleasing interview set-up and a good-sounding one, always choose good sound. The audience will forgive a flawed shot but will tune out if it can't hear the dialogue."[1]

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14.4: Presentation Aids Online

Previously we have discussed strategies for using presentation aids during speeches. Those same strategies apply to the use of presentation aids in online speeches.

When using presentation aids online, the slide show will usually fill the whole screen. When presenting online, try to have your face visible as much as possible, and use slides for emphasis or clarification. It's hard for your audience to connect with a slide!

One key difference between speaking in person compared to speaking online is that if you are using a digital presentation tool such as a video or presentation slides, you generally have the option online to make your digital presentation aids the only thing that appears onscreen for your audience.

Most commonly, we see this option when speakers use presentation slides like PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi. A speaker may start by talking to their camera so their audience can see them before switching to showing their slides in full screen mode as they narrate or talk over their slides. Webinars often use this format because they are often heavily focused on providing information to the audience.

There are pros and cons to using digital presentation aids in this manner. Whatever is on screen will be what the audience focuses on. Would you prefer your audience to focus on you and your message or on your presentation aids?

We would generally recommend that for speeches you give online in a public speaking class, you try to have your face on camera as much as possible and use your slides to supplement, add emphasis, and clarify what you are saying rather than allowing them to become the main focus of the presentation. This method will help you stay more engaged with your audience.

You will want to make sure you get plenty of practice using your presentation aids before you give your speech. Be particularly attentive to practicing how to transition between the view of yourself on your webcam and your slides and vice versa.

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14.5: Checklist for Your Online Presentation

Use this checklist as you prepare for your next online presentation!

- *Webcam & Microphone*. Make sure your camera is set at a good angle and the picture is clear. Make sure your microphone is picking up sound clearly.
- *Presentation software* (Zoom, GoogleMeet, Teams, etc). Make sure you test out the software ahead of your presentation to make sure you are familiar with it, and everything works correctly.
- Any *presentational aids* you plan to use. Double check them with your presentation software.
- *Speaking Notes.* You should still be using notecards or a form of speaking notes that allow you to keep good eye contact with your audience.
- You are in a well-lit, quiet area.
- The camera is set up at a good angle—we should be able to see you from about the waist up and camera should be at about eye level.
- Remember to look at your webcam, not your screen or elsewhere.
- Project your voice and speak clearly—even more so than when you are in person.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Ethics in Public Speaking

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand the legal, cultural, philosophical, and social origins of ethics in public speaking;
- Explain the difference between plagiarism and correct appropriation of source materials;
- Understand the value of ethics in building a solid reputation as a speaker;
- Correctly use source material in a presentation

15.1: Sources of Ethical Stances on Communication and Public Speaking
15.2: Credibility and Ethics
15.3: Plagiarism

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15.1: Sources of Ethical Stances on Communication and Public Speaking

Public speaking has a social as well as a personal purpose and function. For that reason, the ethics of public speaking and communication in general should be addressed in any study of public speaking. A public speaker, whether delivering a speech in a classroom, board room, civic meeting, or in any other venue must uphold certain ethical standards to allow the audience to make informed choices, to uphold credibility as a source of information, and to avoid repercussions of bad ethical choices.

To this end, this chapter will deal with the subject of ethics. Ethics refers to the branch of philosophy that involves determinations of what is right and moral. On a personal level, it is your own standard of what you should and should not do in the various situations or in all situations. Although ethics are personal decisions, they are influenced by factors outside of you. Over the next few pages, we will look at various ways ethics, particularly ethics related to speech, have been thought about. In reading, you should seek to determine how you would explain your own ethical standard for communication. Along with being able to articulate what you would not do, you should have an appreciation for why doing the right thing is important to you.

One of "right things" and most important ways that we speak ethically is to use material from others correctly. Occasionally we hear in the news media about a political speaker who uses the words of other speakers without attribution or of scholars who use pages out of another scholar's work without consent or citation. Usually the discussion of plagiarism stays within the community where it occurred, but there is still damage done to the "borrower's" reputation as an ethical person and scholar.

Why does it matter if a speaker or writer commits plagiarism? Why and how do we judge a speaker as ethical? Why, for example, do we value originality and correct citation of sources in public life as well as the academic world, especially in the United States? These are not new questions, and some of the answers lie in age-old philosophies of communication.

Legal Origins of Ethics in Public Speaking

The First Amendment to the Constitution is one of the most cherished and debated in the Bill of Rights. "Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech . . . or of the press" has been discussed in many contexts for over two hundred and thirty years. Thomas Emerson, a Constitutional scholar and Yale Law Professor, asserted that freedom of expression is more than just a right. It is a necessity for having the kind of society we want as Americans. Although we think of "freedom of the press" today as referring to mass media and journalism, "press" here refers to publishing of books, magazines, or pamphlets by anyone.

One of the bases of the First Amendment is an essay written by John Milton in the 1600s, Aereopagitica. This essay on freedom of speech is where the phrases "free marketplace of ideas" and "truth will arise from debate of all ideas" originated. Milton lived in a time when the King of England or Parliament could "censor" published material or speakers, either by keeping it from being published and distributed (called "prior restraint") or by punishing the producers of the content.

In the twentieth century, "freedom of speech" has been generalized into a freedom of expression. This was especially true in the important Supreme Court cases on the First Amendment in the 1950s through 1970s. According to Emerson (1970), such expression is important to our development as human beings individually and in a democracy. Thanks to these historical precedents, we can express ourselves freely in our communities and classrooms, keeping in mind ethical responsibilities to present serious, honest, factual, and well-supported speeches as a matter of respect to your listeners. Additionally, although the First Amendment to the Constitution is usually interpreted by the Supreme Court and lower courts to mean almost no restrictions on freedom of expression, there are a few instances in which the government is held to have a "compelling interest" in controlling, stopping, or preventing certain types of free expression.

One of these instances has to do with threats on the life of the President of the United States, although threats of physical harm against anyone might result in penalties. Another instance of restrictions on freedom of expression is in those cases where the speaker has the opportunity and means and likelihood of inciting an audience to violence (this is the old "yelling 'fire' in a crowded theatre" example). The government has also allowed local governments to have reasonable requirements to avoid mobs or public danger or to uphold community standards, such as permits for parades or limiting how many people can meet in a certain size of building. "Reasonable" is sometimes a matter of debate, as history of Supreme Court cases on the First Amendment shows.

Another type of restriction on freedom of speech is **defamatory speech**, which is defined in the United States as:

> *a false statement of fact that damages a person's character, fame or reputation. It must be a false statement of fact; statements of opinion, however insulting they may be, cannot be defamation under U.S. law. Under U.S. defamation law, there are different standards for public officials [and public figures] and private individuals. (U.S. Department of State, 2013)*

With the Internet and social media, these issues become more complicated, of course. In the past someone could express himself or herself only in limited ways: standing on a street corner, attending a public meeting, putting the words on paper and distributing them, or maybe getting on radio or television (if allowed or if wealthy). Today, almost anyone with a laptop, a webcam, an ISP, and technical know-how can be as powerful in getting a message to the masses as someone owning a newspaper one hundred years ago. While most people use technology and the Internet for fun, profit, or self-expression, some use it for hurt—bullying, defamation, even spreading terrorism. The judicial system is trying to keep up with the challenges that the digital age brings to protecting free expression while sheltering us from the negative consequences of some forms of free expression.

Cultural and Religious Origins of Ethics in Communication

It is hard to separate life aspects such as legal, cultural, religious, and social. Many Americans would say they hold to the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.” The Golden Rule is seen as a positive expression of fairness, equity, and trust. Even if there is no legal ruling hanging over us, we expect honest communication and return it. The Golden Rule is related to and a step beyond the “Law of Reciprocity” that determines so much of our social interaction. We also value straightforwardness; respect for the individual’s freedom of choice; getting access to full information; consistency between action and words; taking responsibility for one’s own mistakes (sometimes necessitating an apology and accepting consequences); and protection of privacy. We fear public humiliation and do not want to violate community norms.

Today many of us hold to the Platinum Rule: "Do unto others as they would want done." Essentially, treat others the way in which they would want to be treated. Implementing this rule requires we know our audience well.

What matters is how a person internalizes the norms and makes them work for him or her. Upbringing and family teachings, religious values, experiences, peers, and just plain old “gut reaction” contribute to and are sometimes far more important to the individual than the First Amendment or historical values.

Philosophers and Communication Ethics

Philosophers throughout history have also written on the subject of communication and public speaking ethics. In fact, one of the first philosophers, Plato, objected to the way rhetoric was practiced in his day, because “it made the worse case appear the better.” In other words, the professional public speakers, who could be hired to defend someone in court or the assembly, knew and used techniques that could deceive audiences and turn them from truth. Aristotle responded to this concern from his teacher Plato in his work, Rhetoric. Later, Quintilian, a Roman teacher of rhetoric, wrote that rhetoric was “the good man speaking well,” meaning the speaker must meet the Roman Republic’s definition of a virtuous man.

In more modern times, English philosophers John Stuart Mill (1806- 1873) and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) introduced utilitarianism, which presents the ethic of “The greatest good for the greatest number;” that is, whatever benefits the most people is right. A related philosophy, pragmatism, was first discussed by Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914). Pragmatists judge actions by their practical consequences. Some ethicists would differ with the pragmatic position, claiming it supports an “ends justify the means” philosophy. When we say “the ends justify the means,” we are saying that a generally unethical action (intentional misstatement of truth, withholding information, or taking any someone’s freedom of choice) is ethical as long as something good comes from it. Many scholars of ethical communication would disagree with the “ends justify the means” philosophy.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) proposed what was been called the Categorical Imperative: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it would become a universal law.” To paraphrase, any behavior we engage in should be what we think everyone else on the planet should do ethically. In the twentieth century, JeanPaul Sartre and others called “existentialists” emphasized that the ability and necessity to freely choose our actions is what makes us human, but we are accountable for all our choices. Jurgen Habermas, a more recent scholar, emphasizes the “equal opportunity for participation” of the communication partners (Johannessen, Valde, & Whedbe, 2008).

This very brief overview of ethics in general and in communication specifically is designed to let you know that the best minds have grappled with what is right and wrong when it comes to expression. But what is the practical application? We believe it is respect for your audience: in this case, your classmates, peers, and your instructor. Whether you take the Categorical Imperative approach, the pragmatic philosophy, the Judeo-Christian view of “thou shalt not lie” and “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), the Golden Rule, freedom with accountability, or some other view, respect for your audience means that you will do your best to present factual, well-documented information designed to improve their lives and help them make informed, intelligent decisions with it.

In addition to respect for the humanity, intelligence, and dignity of your audience, you should be conscious of two other aspects related to ethics of communication: credibility and plagiarism.

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15.2: Credibility and Ethics

When Aristotle used the term ethos in the 5th century B.C.E. to describe one of the means of persuasion, he defined it as the "wisdom, sagacity, and character of the rhetor" (see Chapter 13 for more coverage of ethos and Aristotle's other artistic proofs). Modern scholars of communication and persuasion speak more about "credibility" as an attitude the audience has toward the speaker, based on both reality and perception, rather than an innate trait of the speaker. Audience members trust the speaker to varying degrees, based on the evidence and knowledge they have about the speaker and how that lines up with certain factors:

- Similarity: does the speaker have experiences, values, and beliefs in common with the audience? Can the audience relate to the speaker because of these commonalities?
- Character: does the speaker, in word and action, in the speech and in everyday life, show honesty and integrity?
- Competence: does the speaker show that he/she has expertise and sound knowledge about the topic, especially through firsthand experience? And does the speaker show competence in his/her ability to communicate that expertise?
- Good will: does the audience perceive the speaker to have ethical intentions toward the audience?

In addition to these key areas will be the audience's perceptions, or even gut feelings, about more intangible characteristics of the speaker, such as appearance, friendliness, sense of humor, likability, appearance, poise, and communication ability. Many of these traits are conveyed through nonverbal aspects, such as facial expression, eye contact, good posture, and appropriate gestures (see Chapter 11 on Delivery).



Understandably, the same speaker will have a different level of credibility with different audiences. For example, in regard to presidential campaigns, it is interesting to listen to how different people respond to and "trust" different candidates. Former President Donald Trump entered the presidential race as a Republican nominee and quickly became a front-runner in many of the early polls and primaries, eventually winning the Electoral College votes, to the surprise of many. Those who voted for him often stated that they value his candor and willingness to say what he thinks because they perceive that as honest and different from other politicians. Others thought he made unwise and thoughtless statements, and they saw that as a lack of competence and demeanor to be the national leader. Donald Trump is the same person, but different audiences respond to his behavior and statements in divergent ways.

The point is that character and competence are both valued by those who like and those who dislike President Trump and contribute to his credibility (or lack of it). However, these groups express their values in different ways. When trying to develop your own credibility as a speaker with an audience, you have to keep in mind all four of the factors listed above. To portray oneself as "similar" to the audience but to do so deceptively will not contribute to credibility in the long run. To only pretend to have good will and want the best for the audience will also have a short-term effect.

Not only does a speaker's level of credibility change or vary from audience to audience, it is also likely to change even during the presentation. These changes in credibility have been labeled as **initial, derived, and terminal credibility**.

Initial credibility is, as you would imagine, the speaker's credibility at the beginning of or even before the speech. There are a number of factors that would contribute to the initial credibility, even such matters as the "recommendation" of the person who introduces the speaker to the audience. Any knowledge the audience has of the speaker prior to the speech adds to the initial credibility. The initial credibility is important, of course, because it will influence the receptivity of the audience or how well they will listen and be open to the speaker's ideas. Initial credibility can be influenced also by the perception that the speaker is not well

dressed, prepared, or confident at the very beginning. Initial credibility is why how you walk to the lectern and give your introduction matter.

Derived credibility is how the audience members judge the speaker's credibility and trustworthiness throughout the process of the speech, which also can range from point to point in the speech. Perhaps you have seen those videos on a news program that show a political speaker on one pane of the video and a graph of the audience's response in real time to the speaker's message, usually noted as "approval rating" as the politician speaks. This could be based on the perception of the speaker's presentation style (delivery), language, specific opinions, open-mindedness, honesty, and other factors. The point of the derived credibility is that credibility is an active concept that is always changing.

Finally, **terminal credibility** is, as you would think, credibility at the end of the speech. The obvious importance of terminal credibility is that it would factor into the audience's final decision about what to do with the information, arguments, or appeals of the speaker – in other words, his or her persuasiveness. It would also determine whether the audience would listen to the speaker again in the future. The terminal credibility can be seen as a result of the initial and derived credibility.

Terminal credibility may end up being lower than the initial credibility, but the goal of any speaker should be to have higher credibility. From an ethics standpoint, of course, credibility should not be enhanced by being untruthful with an audience, by misrepresenting one's viewpoint to please an audience, or by "pandering" to an audience (flattering them). One of the primary attributes of credibility at any stage should be transparency and honesty with the audience.

In conclusion, speaker's credibility does not exist alone. It is supported by a number of factors, including Aristotle's other two traditional forms of persuasion, logos (logic, evidence, good reasoning, lack of fallacious arguments) and pathos (personal and emotional appeals).

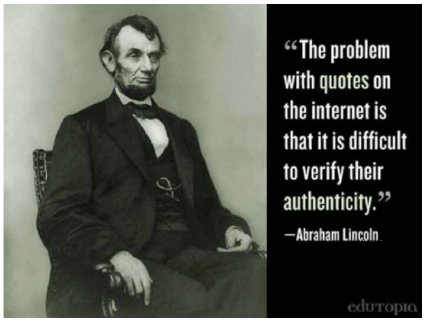
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15.3: Plagiarism

Although there are many ways that you could undermine your ethical stance before an audience, the one that stands out and is committed most commonly in academic contexts is **plagiarism**. A dictionary definition of plagiarism would be "the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person" (Merriam-Webster, 2015). According to the student help website Plagiarism.org, sponsored by WriteCheck, plagiarism is often thought of as "copying another's work or borrowing someone else's original ideas" ("What is Plagiarism?", 2014). However, this source goes on to say that the common definition may mislead some people. Plagiarism also includes:

- Turning in someone else's work as your own;
- Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit;
- Failing to put quotation marks around an exact quotation correctly;
- Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation;
- Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit;
- Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.



Plagiarism exists outside of the classroom and is a temptation in business, creative endeavors, and politics. However, in the classroom, your instructor will probably take the most immediate action if he or she discovers your plagiarism either from personal experience or through using plagiarism detection (or what is also called "originality checking") software. Many learning management systems, perhaps such as the one used at your institution, now have a plagiarism detection program embedded in the function where you submit assignments.

In the business or professional world, plagiarism is never tolerated because using original work without permission (which usually includes paying fees to the author or artist) can end in serious legal action. The Internet has made plagiarism easier and thus increased the student's responsibility to know how to cite and use source material more.

Types of Plagiarism

In our long experience of teaching, we have encountered many instances of students presenting work they claim to be original and their own when it is not. We have also seen that students often do not intend to plagiarize but, due to poor training in high school, still are committing an act that could result in a failing grade or worse. Generally, there are three levels of plagiarism: stealing, sneaking, and borrowing. Sometimes these types of plagiarism are intentional, and sometimes they occur unintentionally (you may not know you are plagiarizing). However, as everyone knows, "Ignorance of the law is not an excuse for breaking it." So let's familiarize you with how plagiarism occurs in order to prevent it from happening.

Stealing

There is a saying in academia: "If you steal from one source, that is plagiarism; if you steal from twelve, that is scholarship." Whoever originated this saying may have intended for it to be humorous, but it is a misrepresentation of both plagiarism and scholarship.

No one wants to be the victim of theft; if it has ever happened to you, you know how awful it feels. When a student takes an essay, research paper, speech, or outline completely from another source, whether it is a classmate who submitted it for another instructor, from some sort of online essay mill, or from elsewhere, this is an act of theft no better or worse than going into a store and shoplifting. The wrongness of the act is compounded by the fact that then the student lies about it being his or her own. If you are

tempted to do this, run the other way. Your instructor will probably have no mercy on you, and probably neither will the student conduct council.



Most colleges and universities have a policy that penalizes or forbids "self-plagiarism." This means that you can't use a paper or outline that you presented in another class a second time. You may think, "How can this be plagiarism or wrong if I wrote both and in my work I cited sources correctly?" The main reason is that by submitting it to your instructor, you are still claiming it is original, first-time work for the assignment in that particular class. Your instructor may not mind if you use some of the same sources from the first time it was submitted, but he or she expects you to follow the instructions for the assignment and prepare an original assignment. In a sense, this situation is also a case of unfairness, since the other students do not have the advantage of having written the paper or outline already.

Sneaking

Some sources refer to this kind of plagiarism as "string of pearls" plagiarism or "incremental plagiarism" (Lucas, 2015). Instead of taking work as a whole from another source, the student will copy two out of every three sentences and mix them up so they don't appear in the same order as in the original work. Perhaps the student will add a fresh introduction, a personal example or two, and an original conclusion. This "sneaky" plagiarism is easy today due to the Internet and the word processing functions of cutting and pasting.

In fact, many students do not see this as the same thing as stealing, because they think "I did some research. I looked some stuff up and added some of my own work." Unfortunately, this approach is only marginally better than stealing and will probably end up in the same penalties as the first type of plagiarism. Why? Because no source has been credited, and the student has "misappropriated" the expression of the ideas as well as the ideas themselves. Interestingly, this type of plagiarism can lead to copyright violation if the work with the plagiarism is published.

Most of the time students do not have to worry about copyright violation when they correctly use and cite material from a source. This is because in academic environments, "fair use" is the rule. In short, you are not making any money from using the copyrighted material, such as from a published book. You are only using it for learning purposes and not to make money, so "quoting" (using verbatim) with proper citation a certain amount of the material is acceptable for a college class.

If, however, you were going to try to publish and sell an article or book and "borrowed" a large section of material without specifically obtaining permission from the original author, you would be guilty of copyright violation and by extension make your organization or company also guilty. When you enter your career field, the "fair use" principle no longer applies and you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holder and pay fees to use all or portions of a work. For more information on this very important and often misunderstood subject, visit the Creative Commons website and the Library of Congress One area in speeches where students are not careful about citing is on their presentational slides. If a graphic or photo is borrowed from a website (that is, you did not take it or design it), there should be a citation in small letters on the slide. The same would be true of borrowed quotations, data, and ideas. Students like to put their works cited or references on the last slide, but this really does not help the audience or get around the possibility of plagiarism.

Borrowing

The third type of plagiarism is "borrowing." In this case, the student is not stealing wholesale. He or she may actually even give credit for the material, either correctly or incorrectly. He might say, "According to the official website of . . ." or "As found in an article in the *Journal of Psychology*, Dr. John Smith wrote . . ." Sounds good, right? Well, yes and no. It depends on whether the student has borrowed in a "sneaky way" (cutting and pasting passages together but this time indicating where the sections came from) or if the student is using the ideas but not the exact wording. In other words, has the student adequately, correctly, and honestly paraphrased or summarized the borrowed material, or just "strung the pearls together" with some "according to's"?

Ethically Crediting Sources

In using source material correctly, a speaker does three things:

1. He or she clearly cites the source of the information. It is here that the oral mode of communication differs from the written mode. In a paper, such as for literature, you would only need to include a parenthetical citation such as (Jones 78) for Modern Language Association (MLA) format, indicating that a writer named Jones contributed this idea on page 78 of a source that the reader can find on the Works Cited Page. In a paper for a class in the social sciences, an American Psychological Association (APA) format citation would be (Jones, 2012) or (Jones, 2012, p. 78). The first would be used if you summarized or paraphrased information from the source, and second (with the page number) is used to indicate the words were quoted exactly from a source. Obviously, in that case, quotation marks are used around the quoted material. In both cases, if the reader wants more information, it can be found on the References Page (APA) or Works Cited Page (MLA).

A speech is quite different. Saying "According to Jones, p. 78," really does very little for the audience. They can't turn to the back of the paper. They don't have a way, other than oral communication, to understand the type of information being cited, how recent it is, the credibility of the author you are citing and why you think he or she is a valid source, or the title of the work. It is necessary in a speech to give more complete information that would help the audience understand its value. The page number, the publishing company, and city it was published in are probably not important, but what is important is whether it is a website, a scholarly article, or a book; whether it was written in 1950 or 2010; and what is the position, background, or credentials of the source.

So, instead of "According to Jones, p. 78," a better approach would be,

"According to Dr. Samuel Jones, Head of Cardiology at Vanderbilt University, in a 2010 article in a prestigious medical journal…"

Or

"In her 2012 book, The Iraq War in Context, historian Mary Smith of the University of Georgia states that…"

Or

"In consulting the website for the American Humane Society, I found these statistics about animal abuse compiled by the Society in 2012…"

This approach shows more clearly that you have done proper research to support your ideas and arguments. It also allows your audience to find the material if they want more information. Notice that in all three examples the citation precedes the fact or information being cited. This order allows the audience to recognize the borrowed material better. The use of a clear citation up-front makes it more noticeable as well as more credible to the audience.

2. The speaker should take special care to use information that is in context and relevant. This step takes more critical thinking skills. For example, it is often easy to misinterpret statistical information (more on that in Chapter 7), or to take a quotation from an expert in one field and apply it to another field. It is also important to label facts as facts and opinions as opinions, especially when dealing with controversial subjects. In addition, be sure you understand the material you are citing before using it. If you are unsure of any words, look their definitions up so you are sure to be using the material as it is intended.

3. The speaker should phrase or summarize the ideas of the source into his or her own words. Paraphrasing, which is putting the words and ideas of others into one's own authentic or personal language, is often misunderstood by students. Your instructor may walk you through an exercise to help your class understand that paraphrasing is not changing 10% of the words in a long quotation (such as two or three out of twenty) but still keeping most of the vocabulary and word order (called syntax) of the source. You should compose the information in your own "voice" or way of expressing yourself.

In fact, you would be better off to think in terms of summarizing your source material rather than paraphrasing. For one thing, you will be less likely to use too much of the original and therefore be skirting the edge of plagiarism. Secondly, you will usually want to put the main arguments of a source in your own words and make it shorter.

Here is an example of an original source and three possible ways to deal with it.

Original information, posted on CNN.com website, October 31, 2015:

"The biggest federal inmate release on record will take place this weekend. About 6,600 inmates will be released, with 16,500 expected to get out the first year. More than 40,000 federal felons could be released early over the next several years, the U.S. Sentencing Commission said. The sentencing commission decided a year ago to lower maximum sentences for

> nonviolent drug offenders and to make the change retro-active, with the inmate releases effective November 1, 2015. Sentences were reduced an average of 18%, the commission said. Early release will be a challenge for the inmates as well as the judicial bureaucracy" (Casarez, 2015).

With that as our original source, which of the following is truly paraphrasing?

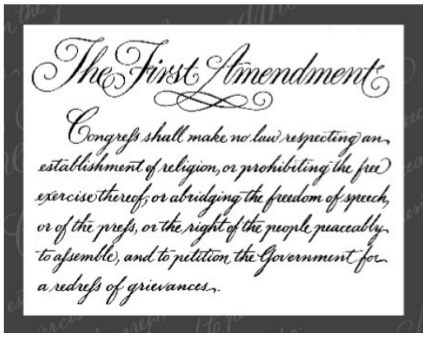
> The CNN News website says the federal government is releasing 40,000 felons from prison in the next few years.
>
> According to a report posted on CNN's website on October 31 of 2015, the federal government's Sentencing Commission is beginning to release prisoners in November based on a decision made in 2014. That decision was to make maximum sentences for nonviolent drug offenders shorter by an average of 18%. Over the next several years over 40,000 federal felons could be let go. However, this policy change to early release will not be easy for the justice system or those released.
>
> The largest release ever of federal inmates will take place in early November. At first 6,600 inmates will be released, and then over 16,000 over the first year. The U.S. Sentencing Commission says it could release over 40,000 federal felons over the upcoming years because the sentencing commission decided a year ago to lessen maximum sentences for nonviolent drug offenders and to make this happen for those already in jail. When the Sentencing Commission says that when it made that decision, the sentences were reduced an average of 18%. Early release will be a challenge for the felons as well as the judicial system. This came from a story on CNN News website in later October 2015.

If you chose the second citation, you would be correct. The first version does not really interpret the original statement correctly, and the third choice imitates the original almost entirely. Choice 2, on the other hand, is in completely different language and identifies the source of the information clearly and at the beginning.

This exercises may raise the question, "Should I always paraphrase or summarize rather than directly quote a source?" There are times when it is appropriate to use a source's exact wording, but quoting a source exactly should be done sparingly—sort of like using hot sauce! You should have a good reason for it, such as that the source is highly respected, has said the idea in a compelling way, or the material is well known and others would recognize it.

Conclusion

As mentioned before, students often have not been trained to use source material correctly and plagiarize unintentionally. But like the old saying goes, "Ignorance of the law is no excuse." You will still be held accountable whether you understand or not, so now, in your early college career, is the time you should learn to cite source material correctly in oral and written communication.



Something to Think About

Why do you think it is so hard for students to learn to cite sources appropriately? This exercise might be helpful for you to develop an understanding of orally citing your sources. Choose one of your sources for an upcoming speech for this exercise. On a sheet of paper, answer these 9 questions.

1. Is this information you found in a unique source, or information that was repeated in all or most of your sources?
2. Who is the original author or "speaker" of this quotation or material?
3. What is the title of source?
4. Is it a primary or secondary source? Is the writer quoting someone else (secondary) or is the author the one who discovered the knowledge/information? If the source is secondary, who is being quoted or cited originally?
5. What do you know about the source of the cite? Is she/he an expert, such as a scientist, doctor, government official, college professor, etc?

6. Where did you find the article? In what journal or magazine, on what website, in what book?
7. If a website, who sponsors the website (what organization, government, company)?
8. When was this information published? What is the date on it?
9. Are you repeating the source's words exactly or just abstracting (summarizing) what was said? Which would be better, in this case?

If you had to pick 5 of the 7 above to put in your speech, which would you use, based on the three criteria of 1. Audience can find it 2. It makes you look more credible, and 3. It is ethical? Put a star by them.

If you had to pick 4 of the 7, which one would you take out from the previous question? (Cross it out)

It is not necessary to say all of this information, but most of it. This is how a speech citation is different from a paper. The audience does not have access to this information unless you say it.

Now, write how you would cite this source in the speech. Stem phrases would be "According to . . ." "In the article. . ." "On a webpage entitled . . ." "On the website for the . . . . organization. . ." "In my interview with Dr. Sam Smith, who is . . . ."

Compare with classmates.

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