Stand up, Speak out

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The Practice and Ethics of Public Speaking

JOSH MILLER; MARNIE LAWLER-MCDONOUGH; MEGAN ORCHOLSKI; KRISTIN WOODWARD; LISA ROTH; AND EMILY MUELLER

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Part III. The Final Steps

EMILY MUELLER; MEGAN ORCHOLSKI; JOSH MILLER; KRISTIN
WOODWARD; MARNIE LAWLER-MCDONOUGH; AND LISA ROTH

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THE BASIS FOR STRONG PUBLIC SPEAKING

In this section you will learn the basics of strong public speaking and become prepared to deliver your first speech.

1. Public Speaking Today

Public speaking is the process of designing and delivering a message to a public audience. Effective public speaking involves understanding your audience and speaking goals, choosing elements for the speech that will engage your audience with your topic, and delivering your message skillfully. Effective public speakers understand that they must plan, organize, and revise their material before speaking. This book will help you understand the basics of effective public speaking and guide you through the process of creating your own presentations. We will begin by discussing how public speaking is relevant to you and can benefit you in your career, education, and personal life. Then, we will introduce some of the basic principles of public speaking.

In a world where television, social media, and the Internet bombard people with messages, one of the first questions you may ask is, "Do people still give speeches?" Well, type the words "public speaking"

into Amazon.com or Barnesandnoble.com, and you will find more than two thousand books with the words "public speaking" in the title. Most of these and other books related to public speaking are not college textbooks. In fact, many books written about public speaking are intended for specific audiences: A *Handbook of Public Speaking for Scientists and Engineers* (by Peter Kenny), *Excuse Me! Let Me Speak!: A Young Person's Guide to Public Speaking* (by Michelle J. Dyett-Welcome), *Professionally Speaking: Public Speaking for Health Professionals* (by Frank De Piano and Arnold Melnick), and *Speaking Effectively: A Guide for Air Force Speakers* (by John A. Kline). Although these different books address specific issues related to nurses, engineers, or air force officers, the content is similar.

If you search for "public speaking" in an online academic database, you'll find numerous articles on public speaking in business magazines (e.g., *BusinessWeek*, *Nonprofit World*) and academic journals (e.g., *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Business Communication*). There is so much information available about public speaking because it continues to be relevant even with the growth of technological means of communication. Author and speaker Scott Berkun writes in his blog, "For all our tech, we're still very fond of the most low tech thing there is: a monologue" (Berkun, 2009). People continue to spend millions of dollars every year to listen to professional speakers. For example, attendees of the 2010 TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference, which invites speakers from around the world to share their ideas in short, eighteen-minute presentations, paid six thousand dollars per person to listen to fifty speeches over a four-day period.

Technology can also help public speakers reach audiences that were not possible to connect with in the past. Millions of people heard about and then watched Randy Pausch's "Last Lecture" online. In this captivating speech, Randy Pausch, a Carnegie Mellon University professor who retired at age forty-six after developing inoperable tumors, delivered his last lecture to the students, faculty,

and staff. Friends turned this inspiring speech into a DVD and a best-selling book that was eventually published in more than thirty-five languages (Carnegie Mellon University, 2011).

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

Why is Public Speaking Important?

In this book, we are beginning with the assumption that public speaking matters. It matters to our world, personal lives, and

professional lives. Public speaking is not merely about conveying information, but it can be a powerful tool for change. In what follows we will introduce some of the basic principles and benefits of public speaking.

Roots of Public Speaking

The ancient Greeks were some of the earliest people to write about public speaking because they viewed speech as critical to a democracy. The Greeks began studying rhetoric in the 5th century BCE when adult male citizens had a duty to participate in government and the courts (Kennedy 1991, p. vii). **Rhetoric** can be defined as the study and practice of communication that can persuade audiences. Some Greek philosophers were deeply skeptical about rhetoric because they recognized its power to be used for both good and evil. However, other scholars, such as Aristotle, insisted that rhetoric is morally neutral. If people are mindful of ethics, rhetoric can be a powerful tool for both social good and individual benefit. The Greeks considered speech to be part of what creates and maintains a public. Public speaking was not an abstract concept. Instead, it was a vital tool for daily life and necessary to sustain a democracy.

The Public

A **public** is a community of people with shared concerns. Sometimes we think about a public in terms of nation or community (people of the United States of America or Milwaukee), but we can also think about publics as being organized around shared interests or

identities (fans of *Dr. Who*, students, or people who support drug legalization). Furthermore, we always belong to multiple publics at the same time. You might have even noticed you belong to more than one of the publics that were mentioned. Through speech, speakers can create, shape, and influence publics. We will return to the concept of a public in the chapter about audience, but it is important to recognize that part of the reason public speaking is valuable is a result of its relationship to a public.

Common Types of Public Speaking

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

Informative Speaking

One of the most common types of public speaking is informative speaking. The primary purpose of informative speeches is to share one's knowledge of a subject with an audience. Reasons for making an informative speech vary widely. For example, you might be asked to instruct a group of coworkers on how to use new computer software or to report to a group of managers how your latest project is coming along. A local community group might wish to hear about your volunteer activities in New Orleans during spring break or learn about the different approaches to reduce homelessness in your community. What all these examples have in common, is the goal of imparting information to an audience.

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

Persuasive Speaking

A second common reason for speaking to an audience is to persuade others. In our everyday lives, we are often called on to convince, motivate, or otherwise persuade others to change their beliefs, take an action, or reconsider a decision. Advocating for music education in your local school district, convincing clients to purchase your company's products, or inspiring high school students to attend college all involve influencing other people through public speaking.

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

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

Ceremonial Speaking

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

Benefits of Public Speaking

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

- influencing the world around you,

- developing leadership skills,
- becoming a thought leader.

Influencing the World around You

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

Developing Leadership Skills

Have you ever thought about climbing the corporate ladder and eventually finding yourself in a management or other leadership position? If so, then public speaking skills are very important. Hackman and Johnson assert that effective public speaking skills are necessary for all leaders (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). If you want people to follow you, you have to clearly and effectively communicate your expectations. According to Bender, "Powerful leadership comes from knowing what matters to you. Powerful presentations come from expressing this effectively. It's important to develop both" (Bender, 1998). One of the most important skills for leaders to develop is their public speaking skills, which is why executives spend millions of dollars every year going to public speaking workshops and hiring public speaking coaches.

Becoming a Thought Leader

Even if you are not in an official leadership position, effective public speaking can help you become a "thought leader." Editor of *Strategy & Business*, Joel Kurtzman, coined this term to call attention to individuals who contribute new ideas to the world of business. Typically, thought leaders engage in a range of behaviors, including

enacting and conducting research on business practices. To achieve thought leader status, individuals must communicate their ideas to others through both writing and public speaking. Lizotte demonstrates how becoming a thought leader can be personally and financially rewarding at the same time: when others look to you as a thought leader, you will be more desired and make more money as a result. Business gurus often refer to "intellectual capital," or the combination of your knowledge and ability to communicate that knowledge to others (Lizotte, 2008). Whether standing before a group of executives discussing the next great trend in business or delivering a webinar (a seminar over the web), thought leaders create the world we live in by using public speaking.

Public Speaking Skills

Oral communication skills were ranked number one by college graduates when asked which skills they found useful in the business world, according to a study by sociologist Andrew Zekeri (Zekeri, 2004). That fact alone makes learning about public speaking worthwhile. However, there are many other benefits of communicating effectively with the hundreds of thousands of college students every year who take public speaking courses. Let's take a look at some of the personal benefits you'll get both from a course in public speaking and from giving public speeches.

In addition to learning the process of creating and delivering an

effective speech, public speaking students leave the class with a number of other benefits as well. Some of these benefits include:

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

Developing Critical Thinking Skills

One of the very first benefits you will gain from your public speaking course is an increased ability to think critically. Problem solving is one of the many critical thinking skills you will engage in during this course. For example, when preparing a persuasive speech, you'll have to think through real problems affecting your campus, community, or the world and provide possible solutions to those problems. You'll also have to consider the positive and negative consequences of your solutions and then communicate your ideas to others. At first, it may seem easy to come up with solutions for a campus problem such as a shortage of parking spaces: just build more spaces. But after thinking and researching further you may find out that building costs, environmental impact from the loss of green space, maintenance needs, or limited locations for additional spaces make this solution impractical. Being able to think through problems and analyze the potential costs and benefits of solutions is an essential part of critical

thinking and of public speaking aimed at persuading others. These skills will help you not only in public speaking contexts but throughout your life as well. As we stated earlier, college graduates in Zekeri's study rated oral communication skills as the most useful for success in the business world. The second most valuable skill they reported was problem-solving. So, your public speaking course is doubly valuable!

Fine-Tuning Verbal and Nonverbal Skills

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

Overcoming Fear of Public Speaking

An additional benefit of taking a public speaking class is that it will help reduce your fear of public speaking. Whether you've spoken in public a lot or are just getting started, most people experience some anxiety when engaging in public speaking. Heidi Rose and Andrew Rancer evaluated students' levels of public speaking anxiety during both the first and last weeks of their public speaking class. They found student's levels of anxiety decreased over the course of the semester (Rose & Rancer, 1993). One explanation is that by taking a course in public speaking, students become better acquainted with the public speaking process, making them more confident and less apprehensive. In addition, you will learn specific strategies for overcoming the challenges of speech anxiety

Public: A community with shared concerns or interests.

Rhetoric: The study and practice of communication that can persuade audiences.

What Is Communication Apprehension?

"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. 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.

One of your most significant 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 worries. 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 doesn'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, people misplace speaking notes, have technical difficulties with a presentation aid, or get distracted by an audience member. Confidently speaking involves knowing how to deal with these and other unexpected events while speaking.

In this chapter, we will help you gain the knowledge to speak 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 providing tactics you can use to deal with a variety of unexpected events you might encounter while speaking.

Definition of Communication Apprehension

According to James McCroskey, **communication apprehension** refers to an individual's "fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 2001). At its heart, communication apprehension is a psychological response to being evaluated. This psychological response 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 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). 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 competent 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.

> **Communication Apprehension** is the fear or anxiety people experience at the thought of communicating with others or in the act of communicating with others.

Physiological Symptoms of Communication Apprehension
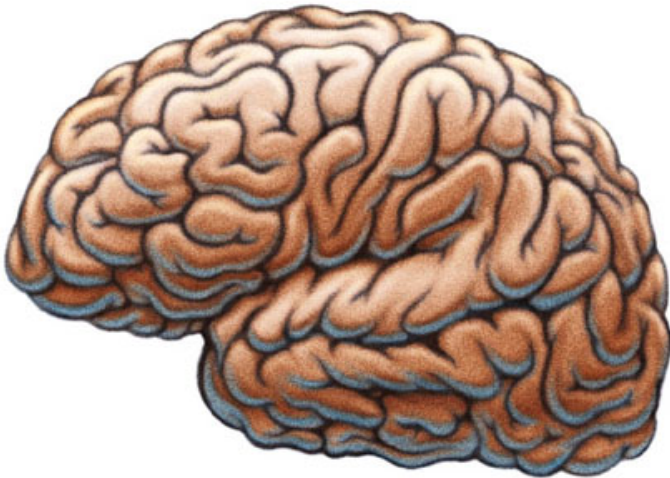
Isaac Mao – [Brain](#) – CC BY 2.0.

There are many 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 nervously pace. Our voices may quiver, and we may have a "dry mouth" sensation that makes it difficult to articulate even simple words. Our breathing may become 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.

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, compelling 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.

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. 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 typical reaction. Good speakers can get nervous just as poor speakers do. Winston Churchill, for example, would get physically ill before significant 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. It is such a widespread problem, Dr. Joyce Brothers contends, "cannot be attributed to deep-seated neuroses" (Brothers, 2008).

2. **Telling a joke or two is always a good way to begin a speech.** Humor is some of the toughest material to effectively deliver 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. As Malcolm Kushner noted, "There are some folks in the audience I wouldn't want to see naked—especially if I'm trying *not* to be frightened" (Kushner, 1999). 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!" This impromptu statement got even more laughter from the audience. A speech does not have to be perfect. You just need 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, 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 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.

All Anxiety Is Not the Same: Sources of Communication Apprehension

We have said that experiencing some form of anxiety is a common 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 believe 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 specific time (Witt, et al., 2006). McCroskey argues there are four types of communication apprehension: anxiety related to traits, 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, Brown, Roberts, Weisel, Sawyer, and Behnke explain, "Trait anxiety measures how people *generally* feel across situations and time periods" (Witt, et al., 2006). 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. This avoidance means their nervousness might be compounded by their 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

MTEA – [Michelle Alexander at Podium](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

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

Formality

Some individuals can be entirely 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

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 more about the instructor.

Novelty

Many 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 ordinarily 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 not have difficulty talking to an audience of your peers

in student government meetings, but an audience composed of students *and* parents on a campus visit might make you nervous. 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 from 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 they are evaluating you. The size of the audience can also play a role. The larger the audience, the more threatening the situation 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.

Reducing Communication Apprehension

Freddie Pena – [Nervous?](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

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 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.

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 during the four stages of delivery in a speech. They compared indicators of physiological stress at different milestones in the process:

- 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) (Witt, et al., 2006).

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 some 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 natural response 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 involves 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 Metcalfe, Beebe, and Beebe call positive self-talk rather than negative self-talk (Metcalfe, 1994; Beebe, 2000). If you find yourself thinking, "I'm going to forget everything when I get to the front of the room," stop and 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 prepare to keep the "unknowns" of the speech event 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 compelling message you can craft for your audience. Since your stage fright is likely to be at its highest at 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. 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.

It may be a good idea to reinforce this organization through visual aids. When it comes to managing anxiety, visual aids have the added benefit of taking attention off the speaker.

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 to adapt your language 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.

An appropriate oral style is more concrete and vivid than written style. Effective speaking relies on verbs rather than nouns, and the language is less complicated. 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 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 because 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 speak, but you may also have the chance to practice using presentation aids. Practicing in the room allows you to potentially avoid distractions and glitches like incompatible computers, blown projector bulbs, or sunlight glaring in your eyes.

Two handy 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 slow. 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 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. 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 genuine possibilities.

Reducing Nervousness during Delivery

Anticipate the Reactions of Your Body

There are steps you can take to counteract the adverse physiological effects of stress on the body. Deep breathing will help to offset 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 podium or gripping it for dear life. If you walk from behind the podium, avoid pacing nervously from side to side. Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the podium 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, 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 by 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 develop a series of one-to-one connections 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 public speaking experience. When he reached the front of the room, he 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 after a long day, a student raised her hand and asked me if I knew that I was wearing two different colored shoes. I looked down and saw that she was right. One of my shoes was black and one was blue. 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 tension 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. You imagine in great detail the goal for which you are striving, like 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 though 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 essential for 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 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 can 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 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).

Coping with the Unexpected

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

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 they 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 essential 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 beneficial 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 necessary to always have a

backup plan, developed in advance, in case of technical difficulties with your presentation materials. As you create 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 verbal 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, to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention.

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. The key is to be 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.

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2. Engaging Your Audience

Josh Miller, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Learning Objectives

- Understand the benefits of establishing a bilateral relationship with your audience.
- Identify the differences between the literal, target, and constructed audiences.
- Explore strategies effectively communicate to different audiences.

On June 13, 2012, the Michigan House of Representatives held a debate over a proposed bill that would limit access to abortion throughout the state. During that debate, Representative Lisa Brown rose to speak against the piece of legislation. She concluded her speech by exclaiming, "I'm flattered that you're all so interested in my vagina but no means no."[i] This statement might be shocking for some of you, and it certainly shocked members of the Michigan House of Representatives. After making this statement, Lisa Brown was notified that her closing remarks had violated the expectations for civility and decorum for debate on the House floor; she would no longer be allowed to speak on the floor of the House of Representatives for the remainder of that congressional session. Regardless of whether or not you agree with Lisa Brown's statement,

you can learn much about the importance of knowing what audience members might expect from speakers and the potential repercussions for speakers who violate those expectations.

People who hear speeches react to them based on their own beliefs and previous experiences. Violations of audience expectations might cause audience members to view the speaker with skepticism or even with open hostility. As a result, learning about your audience and thinking about what they might expect from you is an important element of public speaking. For instance, when you graduate, someone will deliver a commencement speech to your graduating class, and it would likely violate your expectations if that speaker called the graduating class lazy and uneducated. After all, you will put in a lot of effort to reach that day. Anyone who disregarded all of the work you put into reaching your graduation day would likely anger, sadden, or offend you. They would certainly violate the expectations for what you thought you would hear the commencement speaker say. This example highlights that the effectiveness of speakers depends on their understanding of the audience members.

Speeches do not happen in vacuums. Just because you want to say something does not mean that it will be appropriate or effective in a speech. Speakers give speeches to persuade, inform, or entertain others. Those others, the audience, have the power to accept, reject, and respond to your speech in the manner that they deem fit. Moreover, because each time you give a speech your audience will be different, you always need to tailor your speech to each different audience. To craft an effective message, never forget about your audience.

This chapter will equip you with the tools necessary to craft speeches that take the importance of the audience into account. First, this chapter explores necessary ethical considerations and discusses why speakers should work to foster cooperative relationships with their audience members. Then, you will learn about the concept of the target audience and that most speeches

focus on attempting to convince a specific part of the total number of people in the audience. This chapter also discusses ways in which you could analyze your audience to discover information that might help you craft a more effective speech. Finally, you will learn about how your speech can craft a specific role for your audience that might make your audience more likely to accept the main point of your speech.

Ethical Considerations

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When you deliver a speech, your audience members should have the power to decide whether or not they want to believe what you are saying. You can be certain that what you are saying is correct. However, your job as a speaker is to work to convince your audience that you are correct, not trick or force them into doing what you want them to do. In 1972, Wayne Brockriede articulated a theory about what constitutes an ethical argument, and his theory offers us an idea about how we should understand what counts as an ethical relationship between speakers and audience members. Brockriede stated that there are three ways to convince your audience to agree with you. You could force them to agree, you could trick them into agreement, or you could foster a bilateral and cooperative relationship with them in which they choose to agree with you.[i] Those who seek agreement by force might threaten, attack, or demean their audience and those who disagree with them. According

to Brockriede, those who attempt to persuade through the use of force create a **unilateral relationship** with their audience wherein the speaker views themselves as more important and superior than their audience. Speakers who use force are only concerned with getting what they want. Those who use tricks to get their audience to agree with them also seek a unilateral relationship with their audience. These speakers attempt to gain agreement through charm, lying, or deceit. For example, a trickster might take evidence out of context or misuse evidence to make an argument seem stronger than it actually is. Tricksters might use logical fallacies to distract their audience members from the actual substantive issues in a debate.

> A **unilateral relationship** works in one direction. The speaker has power over their audience and does not have a cooperative relationship with the audience.

Both of these ways of attempting to persuade your audience are unethical and often ineffective. They are unethical because they try to limit the audience's ability to make an informed choice. Also, if you earn the reputation of someone who uses tricks or forces others, potential audience members may become skeptical of you and avoid interactions. If you heard about a store that lies to customers about the condition of their products and often yells at or dismisses costumers for asking questions about their products, I imagine that you would not want to shop at that store any time soon. Furthermore, if you enjoyed a presentation given by a speaker but later found out the facts were made up, you probably be more hesitant to accept the claims of that speaker in the future. As an ethical speaker, you should avoid tactics that attempt to trick or force your audience to agree with you.

Ethical speakers seek cooperative and bilateral relationships with their audience—what Brockriede called a loving relationship. People who want **bilateral relationships** with their audience members view themselves as equal to their audience and recognize the audience should have the power to make informed choices. In this form of cooperative relationship, you, as a speaker, concern yourself with what is good for your audience, not merely your own best interests. You do not attempt to force or trick your audience into agreement. Instead, you work to earn agreement from your audience by showing them that you care about what is best for them and let them ultimately make an informed decision. As such, you should view your role as a speaker as one that attempts to create and sustain a cooperative relationship with your audience members.[ii] In these relationships, both parties work to foster trust with each other, and that trust allows both parties to listen to and learn from each other.

A **bilateral relationship** connects the speaker with the audience. The speaker works to enable the audience to make an informed choice about what is best for them.

Those who communicate based on Brockriede's principle of cooperation also understand that they should be willing to change their own minds. Just as you, as the speaker, are attempting to persuade your audience on a particular matter, you should also be willing to change your mind and be persuaded by others.[iii] Only in these moments, when we are willing to change our mind and work to change the minds of others, can genuine personal growth occur. Moreover, fostering a bilateral relationship can lead to a long-term relationship where you might be more likely to alter another person's perceptive on an issue long after the first time you attempted to persuade them of something. When we approach public speaking

through an ethical and cooperative relationship between speakers and audiences, there is a possibility of personal and social growth.

To ensure that you are establishing an ethical relationship with your audience, remember this: Let your research determine your argument. Do not let your argument determine your research. This strategy is a part of being willing to change your mind. If you are certain about something but find study after study shows the opposite is true, do not ignore those studies. Instead, change your mind and modify the argument of your speech. Tell your audience that studies exist that might disagree with what you believe, or explain to your audience why those studies do not necessarily disprove your point of view. Similarly, do not ignore alternative viewpoints. If you are giving a speech on a controversial topic, acknowledge the differences in opinion exist and try to find common ground. If you ignore and dismiss other viewpoints, audience members who hold those points of view might think that you are ignoring them and, in turn, ignore you.

With these ethical considerations in mind, let's turn our attention to how we might define and understand those who comprise your audience.

The Literal and Target Audiences

We might understand your empirical audience (or those who you actually speak to) with two terms: the literal audience and the target audience. The **literal audience** comprises of anyone who hears the speaker's message. If you are speaking to your class, then your literal audience is your classmates and your teacher. If you upload your

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speech to YouTube, then your audience would be anyone who views your upload. For Lisa Brown's speech, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, her literal audience included those who heard her speech on the House floor as well as those who later saw her speech on the news or on YouTube. The literal audience is simply those who hear the speech or message.

> The **literal audience** members are anyone who hears a message.

The target audience is a subsection of your literal audience and constitutes the people for whom you tailored your message. The **target audience** has two additional characteristics. First, members of the target audience are those capable of being impacted or persuaded by the speaker's message. Second, members of the target audience are capable of creating the change that the speaker seeks.

In certain speaking situations, some people may not be open to persuasion on particular issues. Similarly, some people in your audience may be incapable of acting or address a problem you identify. Imagine for a moment that you would like to give a speech that attempts to persuade your class that they should donate blood to the Red Cross. Someone in your class might be so afraid of needles that no matter how compelling your speech is they will never give blood. If this is the case, then that person in your class is not persuadable and would not be a part of your target audience. Additionally, you might have a few classmates who are not allowed to give blood—maybe they recently got a tattoo or have been traveling outside of the United States. Even if you convince these people that they should give blood, they simply cannot. As such, they are not a part of your target audience.

> The **target audience** comprises anyone (1) capable of being persuaded and (2) capable of creating the change the speaker wants.

When you give a speech, you might not be able to persuade everyone to be involved in your solution. People might be unpersuadable or unable to act. When this occurs (and it often does), you want to tailor your message and focus your efforts on convincing those who actually can change their minds and can do the change that you seek: the target audience.

> This definition of the target audience is based on Lloyd

F. Bitzer's definition of the rhetorical audience. For more reading see: Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14.

Audience Analysis

In order to determine who comprises your target audience, you might want to engage in a process called audience analysis. Audience analysis is a process in which you examine who your audience members are and how to best connect your beliefs with them. Based on a definition of rhetoric provided by Donald C. Bryant, we might think of public speaking as the act of "adjusting ideas to people and of people to ideas."[i] The first part of Bryant's definition expresses a need to alter our communication based on the audience; but, at the same time, we cannot forget or lose what we wanted our audience to learn or believe as the result of the speech. We do not want to just tell the audience what they want to hear. We also do not want to just state what we believe without helping our audience understand what we believe and why we believe it. As such, we want to analyze our audience to learn about them and what they believe. Once we conduct such an analysis, we can figure out how we might connect with our audience and adjust our speech accordingly.

It is important to remember that your audience analysis will not give you all the answers that you need to craft your speech. **Audience analysis** provides you with a starting point from which you can infer what appeals that you might want to make in your speech and how to make those appeals. In other words, audience analysis provides

you with specific data about your audience, but it is still up to you to determine what you should do with that data. For example, if through our audience analysis we learn that the majority of our audience members are teachers, we can infer that they likely believe in the value of education and do not need to be persuaded of that value. However, if our audience is comprised of many different occupations that are not associated with teaching or education, we might infer that we want to include a few reasons why those people should value education.

> **Audience analysis** is a way of discovering information about your literal audience so you can make more informed decisions about what to include in your speech.

When conducting your audience analysis, some variables to consider include the size and location of your audience, your audience's demographics, and whether or not your audience is listening to your speech by choice.

Size and Location

The size of your audience and location of your speech are important variables to consider as you prepare your speech. With a larger audience, you need to adjust your volume to ensure that everyone can hear your message. Also, when your audience is larger, it might be more challenging for you to ensure that you are connecting with everyone. For example, eye contact is significantly more difficult in a large lecture room than in a small classroom of 20-25 people. In

this sense, the audience size may not change the appeals that you plan to make, but your delivery (regarding eye contact and distance from your audience) might need to change; knowing to prepare for different physical movement can be a benefit of audience analysis.[ii]

Demographics

Understanding some general characterizes of your literal audience may be helpful in crafting an effective speech. These characteristics are your audience's demographics. Demographic characteristics include race, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual ordination, ability, age, level of education, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, and occupation. Based on demographic information, you might be able to infer similarities between the members of your audience. For example, if you are speaking to your classmates, you can infer that your audience members have the same level of education and might share similar experiences based on being students in school at the same time and place.

Understanding your audience's demographics can help you make generalizations about your audience's beliefs, values, and knowledge. Let us suppose that you are preparing a speech about college affirmative action policies. In the course of your research to prepare your speech, you learn that a 2013 Gallup Poll conducted between June 13 and July 5 found that among white adults 67% want college admissions to be based solely on merit and only 22% of white adults want colleges to consider race. Conversely, the same poll found that 44% of black Americans want college admissions to be based solely on merit and 48% of black Americans want race to factor into admission decisions.[iii] This demographic information may help you make an educated guess about what your classmates think about the issue of affirmative action.

You may, at some point in time, do research on another demographic that might influence an audience's potential receptions of a speech—political party affiliation. A 2015 Gallup Poll found that 35% of Republicans have either a very or mostly favorable view of Planned Parenthood. Conversely, 82% of Democrats reported very or mostly favorable views of the organization. You could also examine differences in support for Planned Parenthood based on sex. The same 2015 report, for example, found that 55% of men hold very or mostly favorable views of Planned Parenthood and 61% of women have the same view.[iv] Polling data can help us make generalizations based on demographic information. Knowing the demographics of your audience would then enable you to research what expectations members of those demographics are likely to hold.

However, only focusing on demographics might lead to problematic stereotyping. A generalization about what people believe may not hold true for the specific people who comprise your audience. As you saw with the Gallup Poll statistics above, even though it is generally true the Democrats are more likely to support Planned Parenthood, 18% of Democrats do not have very or mostly favorable views towards the organization. So, if you discovered that your audience is comprised of 20 Democrats, it is likely that around four of them might not support the organization, statistically speaking. Additionally, demographic information is always partial. A generalization about political party, for example, may not account for a geographic region, age, ethnicity, or educational background. Beginning your speech with the assumption that the whole audience supported Planned Parenthood would be a faulty starting point. So, demographic information might give us a general idea of what we can expect from an audience, but that information cannot give us the whole story of what the audience thinks about themselves or your topic.

Captive versus Voluntary Audiences

One variable that you may encounter when speaking is the variable of whether or not the audience chooses to listen to your speech. A voluntary audience is a group of people who choose to listen to your speech. If you ever give a speech at a wedding, it is likely that the audience wants to be there to celebrate. Likewise, when a politician holds a rally, most of the people who show up want to hear the politician speak. Conversely, a captive audience is a group of people who did not choose to attend the speech. In high school, you might have attended an assembly where you had to listen to someone, maybe the principal, speak about an issue. Despite any potential reluctance, you had to be in the audience. Knowing whether or not an audience is voluntary or captive may factor into how you craft your speech. If someone wants to be there, you may have to make fewer appeals about the importance of your speech (which might help you convince your audience to pay attention to the speech). If someone chooses to see your speech, they are inclined to pay attention. However, if your audience members did not want to attend your speech, you should spend more time in your speech telling your audience why they should pay attention and what they will get out of listening to your speech. In order to engage a captive audience, you may want to include a few more captivating stories or shocking statistics to grab your audience's attention. According to one scholar of communication, David Zarefsky, "when you don't know the status of the audience, it is best to assume that listeners are captive and that you need to motivate them."[v]

Surveying your Audience

To learn more about your literal and target audiences, you may be able to utilize the power of surveys. Businesses often spend considerable time and energy learning about potential consumers. They survey people to find out how many people have heard about their products. They hold focus groups to determine what kinds of products consumers want. Before releasing a commercial, a business might ask a group of people what they think about the message and then alter the message accordingly. Businesses expend this energy and money to know more about their audience and to adopt (and profit from) what their audience wants. A politician might do the same and survey what people believe about a particular issue (immigration, same-sex marriage, or college tuition). Based on the results of these surveys, politicians may decide to focus their speeches and campaigns on the issues that elicited support or excitement from the public. You too could follow the lead of businesses and politicians and survey potential audiences.

Of course, you might not have enough time to survey all the members of your audience before you give a speech. Yet, when you are able to survey your potential audience members, their responses may help you determine which potential audience members might be a part of your target audience. Likewise, surveying may help you determine which appeals you should make in your speech. Following these tips will help you craft a more effective survey:

1. Go beyond demographic questions, and ask questions about your thesis. As the main point of your speech, the thesis is a statement that you want your audience to agree is true after you complete your speech. Because the thesis is the main thrust of your speech, if you have the opportunity to survey an audience, you should make sure you find out what they think about that

thesis. If your thesis is "To persuade my classmates that college student debt should be forgiven," you might want to ask a question about how familiar your audience is with the concept of student debt. You might also want to ask questions to determine whether or not your audience supports that statement; and, perhaps more importantly, you should attempt to determine why they agree or disagree with that thesis statement.

2. Ask questions that help you determine the survey takers level of commitment to their position. For example, instead of asking "college loan rates should be lowered—agree or disagree," ask "college loan rates should be lowered—strongly agree, slightly agree, neutral, slightly disagree, or strongly disagree." Known as Likert-type questions, these types of questions give you more data about the specific feelings of your survey takers.

3. Remember to include all possible answers in the answer choices available to your survey takers (or leave a blank where they can fill in their response). For example, if you wanted to know what people cared most about during an election season and asked "what is the most important thing for you this election season? Foreign Policy or Immigration?" you would have left out a lot of potential topics that people find to be the most important. Someone may think that the economy is the most important issue, for instance. Having too few chooses for your survey takers will skew your data because your survey takers' answers cannot reflect what they actually believe.

4. Ask a variety of questions. In addition to figuring out your audience's level of commitment, you should ask a variety of questions to determine why your audience holds the positions that they do. For example, you could ask a question that has a continuum of answers—strongly agree to strongly disagree. Then, you could ask an open-ended question that asks your survey takers why they strongly agree, slightly agree, remain

neutral, slightly disagree, or strongly disagree. Open-ended questions that allow your audience to write a sentence or two often reveal solid information about your audience's thought process.

5. Do not ask leading questions. For example, a question that asked "how do you feel about the sin of living with someone you are not married to?" implies to survey takers that they should disapprove of unmarried cohabitation. When you ask leading questions, survey takers may feel that they cannot answer the question honestly or may be inclined to respond more negatively (or positively) than they would otherwise. As such, asking leading questions can corrupt your survey results.

6. Avoid vague questions. If survey takers are unsure of what a question is asking of them, then the survey might not accurately reflect the survey takers beliefs on particular questions, making the survey results less usable. Using double negatives can confuse survey takers, so avoid them. An example of a confusing double negative question would be: "Don't you agree that the government should not reduce funding for the military? Yes or no?"

7. Avoid double-barreled questions. Double-barreled questions are questions that ask about multiple different topics but only give the survey taker one way to respond to the question. For instance, a survey that asked "Are you opposed to same-sex marriage and increased immigration? Yes or No?" would be a double-barreled question. The problem with double-barreled questions is that they do not leave room for nuance. What if someone is opposed to same-sex marriage but supports increased immigration? That person may answer the question by marking "no," but the surveyor would not know if the person opposed same-sex marriage, increased immigration, or both. As such, double-barreled questions make it more difficult for surveyors to learn from and use the results of their surveys.

Following these tips will help you craft a useful survey that can enable you to understand your audience better before you speak. However, you are unlikely to be able to poll your audience before every speech you deliver. Understanding the principle of the constructed audience can help you craft a message that can engage your audience even when you have limited information about your audience members.

Your Rhetorically Constructed Audience

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

Your audience members are not static and unchangeable beings. Although knowing the demographics and beliefs of your audience may be helpful, you can also use your speech to offer your audience members a way of viewing themselves. The language you use in your

speech can give your audience an understanding of what role they should play in a given situation.

> The **rhetorically constructed audience** is the roles and identities that the speaker invited the audience to adopt during a speech.

In 1970, Edwin Black, published an influential essay that argued speeches imply their audiences.[1] That is, there are clues in speeches that direct the audience to see themselves in a particular way. If you have listened to a few presidential speeches, you likely have heard someone tell you what role you should adopt. Presidents often start speeches by stating, "my fellow Americans." The act of saying this tells you to view yourself as an American during this speech. In times of crisis, a speaker might tell you to view yourself as someone who is eager to help or as someone who is saddened by a tragedy. President Obama's speech in the aftermath of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School created a role for his audience members—concerned parents of America's children. He stated,

> This job of keeping our children safe, and teaching them well, is something we can only do together, with the help of friends and neighbors, the help of a community, and the help of a nation. And in that way, we come to realize that we bear a responsibility for every child because we're counting on everybody else to help look after ours; that we're all parents; that they're all our children. This is our first task — caring for our children. It's our first job. If we don't get that right, we don't get anything right. That's how, as a society, we will be judged. And by that measure, can we truly say, as a nation,

that we are meeting our obligations? Can we honestly say that we're doing enough to keep our children — all of them — safe from harm?[2]

In this speech, Obama used inclusive language and described the collective "we" as having the duty to act as parents. His statement that "we're all parents" created a role for his audience members to fulfill. In doing so, he positioned his audience as parents who were concerned about the nation's children. Obama's effort to imply his audience members should view themselves as concerned parents helps him alter how his audience might react to his speech. Of course, not everyone will accept the roles in which speakers place their audience members. After all, if you are not a parent, it might be more difficult for you to imagine your role as being of a parent in this speech. Nonetheless, the constructed audience can be powerful in shaping the audience's relationship to a speech.

As you plan your speech, you should think about how you can create a role for your audience to fulfill. Understanding the literal and target audience for your speech can help you determine the possibilities for a constructed audience.[iii] Every individual has the capacity to fulfill a variety of different roles and identities. You, for example, may view yourself as a concerned parent, a sibling, an American, a sushi lover, an avid sports fan, an employee, a boss, a caregiver, a college student, or someone who is concerned about others. Sometimes you occupy these types of roles when you are asked to do so. For instance, whenever my family would have guests over, my mom would make the family clean and say "we want to make sure our guests think we have a clean house." By saying this, my mom created a role for my family. That role involved being concerned about what others thought about the state of our house and valuing cleanliness to ensure our guests thought well of our family. Similarly, as a speaker, you may direct your audience members to how they

should view themselves, and this direction can help you navigate the problem of not knowing precisely who comprises your audience.

Creating a role for your audience to fill allows you to put your audience in a mindset where they might be more likely to accept your argument. In the previously mentioned blood donation speech, stating "as people who are concerned about the health or others, it is our duty to donate blood" might signal to your audience to adopt the role of a concerned citizen—someone who works for the best interests of others. Someone who views their role as being a concerned citizen is more likely to donate blood than someone who thinks their role is to be afraid of medical advances or to be worried about only their own health. The subtle direction to your audience to assume a role or identity can change the way that they understand and interact with your speech.

Identification

One of the ways to help you create a role for your audience and to form a productive relationship with them would be to identify and build upon potential similarities between you and your audience. Both Kenneth Burke and Aristotle believed that being able to show your audience that you are similar to them remained necessary for any speaker to be successful and effective. Kenneth Burke explained, "You persuade [people] only insofar as you can talk [their] language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with [theirs]."[iv] People remain more likely to accept an argument or proposition from someone that they view as similar to themselves. As a speaker, you must find a way to connect with your audience members and, ideally, show yourself as being one of them. One way to do so is by drawing on demographic similarities. For example, sometime in your future, you might have to give a

presentation to your boss and coworkers about the best direction for your company. In this speech, you might be able to connect with your audience by referencing your common occupation or common desire to do what is best for the company. At some point, you may decide to write a letter to your local newspaper about an issue facing your city. In that letter, you would be well served to reference your experience with your local city to show that you share common experiences with your audience. If you are an American giving a speech in front of fellow Americans, you can reference that fact to create identification. Using demographic information to help you create a bond between you and your audience will help you connect with your audience and make them more likely to accept the argument of your speech.

> **Identification** is a speaker's efforts to show an audience the similarities shared between the speaker and the audience.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" highlights a clear attempt to identify with an audience. King wrote this letter in response to a letter written in 1963 by white members of the clergy. In the white clergy members' letter, they critiqued the non-violent civil disobedience promoted by King and also charged King with being an outsider. After all, King was not from Birmingham. As a result, King had to respond to the charge that he was an outsider, and he did so by using his American identity to identify with his audience. In his letter, King wrote the following:

> Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all

indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider.[v]

King responded to the need for his to justify himself as being a member of the community by redefining his relationship with the clergy members, arguing that everyone is connected. Even though others might have called King an "outside agitator," he responded to those charges based on the fact that both King and his accusers lived in the United States and, thus, shared a common value and heritage—being American. Based on the connection that King and his audience were American, King identified with his audience by reminding them of their shared identity. Telling the audience to view their role as someone "who lives inside the United States" encourages them to see their connection with King, unlike if the audience would have seen their role as a resident of Birmingham. Thus, King's letter shows how you can use a shared demographic to foster identification and construct a role for your audience so that your audience may be more likely to agree with the main point of your speech.

One way to think about how you may identify with your audience is to think about **scope**. In the context of public speaking and audience, scope refers to how wide or narrow your point of view is when considering your relationship with another. If you are speaking to your classmates, you can use a narrow scope and frame your relationship with them as being both members of the same class. Your speech could include a moment where you connect with your audience by saying "as members of this class, we know about the importance of higher education." However, that will not be the case in every speech that you give throughout your lifetime. Imagine that someday you decide to give a speech in front of city council about whether or not there should be more funding for road maintenance. In that speech, you obviously could not use the phrase "as members of this class." Instead, you can widen the scope of the relationship

between yourself and your audience to include people who live in your city by saying "as members of this great city, we know the about of people that rely on pot-hole free roads to get to and from their jobs." In other speeches, you might have to go even further to include people who live in the same state. So, in Michigan, you could say to an audience "as Michiganders concerned about the future of our great state, we need to revive the auto industry." You might even widen the scope of your speech to include all people living in the United States ("my fellow Americans") or the world ("As members of the human race" or "as stewards of our magnificent world"). As you can tell from these examples, thinking about widening or narrowing the scope of the relationship that you establish with your audience can enhance the options that you have in your speech. You could select to establish a narrow relationship or a broad relationship. Whichever you choose, remember that forming a relationship with your audience is often necessary to be able to identify with and ultimately persuade those audience members.

> **Scope** refers to how wide or narrow your point of view
> is when considering your relationship with another.

Shared Values

Along with determining what demographic characteristics you might share with your audience, you might also brainstorm what values that you have in common with your audience. A person's values are

judgments about whether or not an object or idea is good or bad. For example, if you believe that love is a good thing, then you uphold love as a positive value. Drawing from shared values might allow you to create a role for your audience that would make them more likely to accept the premise of your speech. For example, if you wanted to give a speech about safety and the risk of sexual assault on college campuses, you could appeal to several different commonly held values. You and your audience might both be concerned with promoting safety on your college campus. As such, you could appeal to your audience by articulating "as college students who want to be more concerned about our studies than our safety" to establish a relationship with your audience that focuses on your shared concern for safety. In addition, you could craft an appeal that focuses on a shared value of freedom of mobility and autonomy. That appeal might sound something like the following: "the chance to be individuals with an enhanced freedom to be who we want to be is central to the college experience. We should all be concerned about issues such as sexual assault on campus that threaten people's ability to express themselves how they want." Both of these appeals work to establish a connection with your audience through references to shared values. In crafting an appeal based off of a shared value, you create that connection with your audience. You also create a role for your audience: to be people who cherish that shared value. Other shared values may include security, honesty, health, the common good, justice, liberty, freedom, compassion, intelligence, hard work, determination, cooperation, peace, or stability. This list is not exhaustive, but the list does show you that there are many ways in which you can craft an appeal based on a shared value.

Robert F. Kennedy's speech after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. provides an excellent example of how speakers can create a constructed audience based on references to a shared value. After King's assassination, there was a significant threat of division and violence in the United States. To respond to the threat of violence,

Kennedy positioned his audience as caring about peace. Before mentioning the news of King's death, Kennedy framed the news that he was about to deliver as being "sad news for all of our fellow citizens and people who love peace all over the world."[vi] Framing the news as being sad for people who loved peace placed the audience in a position wherein their reaction to King's death should be based on their love for peace. In addition, Kennedy included not only black individuals as being individuals who would hurt because of King's death. Instead, "all of our fellow citizens" who love peace and those around the world that love peace would find the news of King's death sad and hurt as well. Using inclusive language, such as "all of our citizens," worked to unite the many different factions that could respond to King's death. All peace loving people would share in reacting to the sad news of King's murder. By forecasting that all people felt grief for King's death, Kennedy implied that the remedy would require all people to connect with each other. Thus, the inevitable emotional reaction to the news of King's death would be framed through the lens of a shared desire for peace. Kennedy's effort to place his audience in that particular position then worked to inoculate this audience against responding violently because the hurt they felt was rooted in their desire for peace. Acting violently or creating further fraction would violate their own desires for peace. Just as Kennedy did in his speech after King's assassination, you too can reference a shared value to imply that your audience should act in a particular way and assume a particular identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, you learned about the importance of keeping your audience in mind as you construct your speech. You learned about what it means to maintain an ethical, bilateral relationship with your

audience where you work to earn the support and trust of your audience. Attempting to force or trick your audience into believing you is both unethical and ineffective. This chapter also surveyed considerations for analyzing your audience. Some factors to consider when you craft your speech include the size and location of your audience, your audience's demographics, and their level of willingness to listen to your speech. In addition, you learned about the constructed audience. Whenever you give a speech, you can create a role for your audience members to fulfill. By doing so, you invite your audience members to see themselves in a particular way that may make them more inclined to follow the recommendations of your speech. Remember that thinking about your audience as you plan your speech, write your speech, and finally deliver your speech is of critical importance.

Notes

[i] Wayne Brockriede, "Arguers as Lovers," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 5 (1972): 1–11.

[ii] William Keith and Christian O. Lundberg, *Public Speaking: Choices and Responsibility* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2004), 39.

[iii] Brockriede, "Arguers as Lovers," 6.

3. Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking

Learning Objectives

- Explain how to use the three levels of the ethics to evaluate the ethical choices of a public speaker or listener.
- Understand how to apply the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication within the context of public speaking.
- Understand how you can apply ethics to your public speaking preparation process.

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

to public speaking. The chapter will conclude with a general discussion of free speech.

The Ethics Pyramid

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

Figure 1: Ethical Pyramid
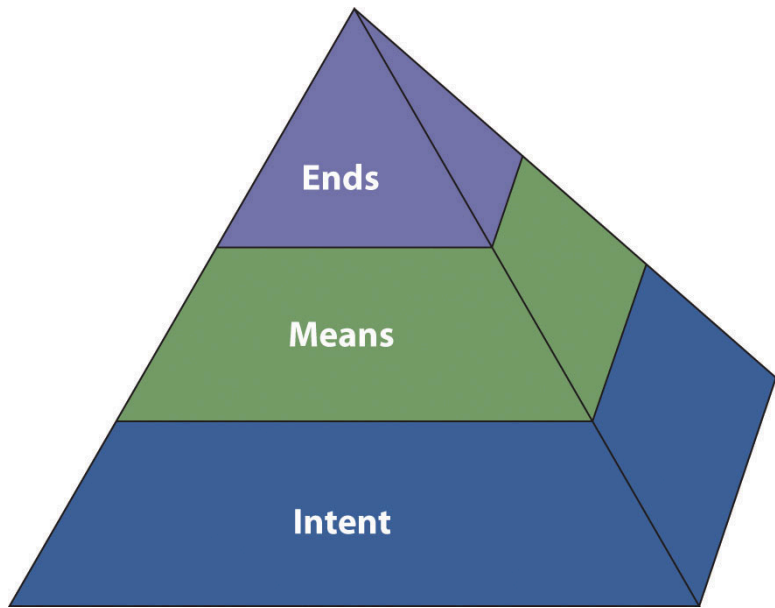
Elspeth Tilley, a public communication ethics expert from Massey University, proposes a structured approach to thinking about ethics (Tilley, 2005). Her ethics pyramid involves three basic concepts: intent, means, and ends. [Figure 1 "Ethical Pyramid"](#) illustrates the Tilley pyramid.

Intent

According to Tilley, the first significant consideration to be aware of

when examining the ethicality of something is the issue of **<u>intent</u>**. To be ethical, a speaker or a listener must begin with ethical intentions. For example, if we agree that honesty is ethical, it follows that ethical speakers will prepare their remarks with the intention of telling the truth to their audiences. Similarly, if we agree that it is ethical to listen with an open mind, it follows that ethical listeners will be intentional about letting a speaker make his or her case before forming judgments.

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

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

> **Intent** is when the speaker plans to make ethical choices.

Means

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

For example, suppose you want your friend Ahmad to spend an hour reviewing a draft of your speech before your speech day. What means might you use to persuade Ahmad to do you this favor? You might explain that you value Ahmad's opinion and will gladly return the favor the next time Ahmad is preparing a speech (good means); or, you might threaten to tell a professor that Ahmad cheated on a test (bad means). While both of these means may lead to the same end—having Ahmad agree to review your speech—one is clearly more ethical than the other.

> The **means** are the tools or behaviors we employ to achieve a desired outcome.

Ends

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

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

if the city lacks these things for the year in question because in that case, balancing the budget would require raising taxes, curtailing essential city services, or both.

When examining ends, we need to think about both the source and the receiver of the message or behavior. Some end results could be good for the source but bad for the receiver, or vice versa. Suppose, for example, that Anita belongs to a club that is raffling off a course of dancing lessons. Anita sells Ben a ten-dollar raffle ticket. However, Ben later thinks it over and realizes that he has no desire to take dancing lessons and that if he should win the raffle, he will never take the lessons. Anita's club has gained ten dollars—a good end—but Ben has lost ten dollars—a bad end. Again, the ethical standards you and your audience expect will help in deciding whether a particular combination of speaker and audience ends is ethical.

> The **ends** are the outcomes you desire to achieve.

Thinking through the Pyramid

Ultimately, understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid: intent, means, and ends. When thinking

about the ethics of a given behavior, Tilley recommends asking yourself three basic questions:

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

You do not need to ask yourself these three questions before enacting every behavior as you go through a day. However, they do provide a useful framework for thinking through a behavior when you are not sure whether a given action, or statement, may be unethical. Ultimately, understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid: intent, means, and ends.

Ethics in Public Speaking

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

Communication Code of Ethics

In 1999, the National Communication Association, NCA, officially adopted the Credo for Ethical Communication. The organization updated the credo in 2017. Ultimately, the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication is a set of beliefs communication scholars have about the ethics of human communication.

National Communication Association Credo for Ethical Communication

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across

contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication:

- We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.
- We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of individuals, families, communities, and society.
- We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.

-     We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
-     We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
-     We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

Source: http://www.natcom.org/ Default.aspx?id=134&terms=Credo

Applying the NCA Credo to Public Speaking

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

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

Carmella Fernando – [Promise?](#) – CC BY 2.0.

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

   It is also important to be honest about where all your information

comes from in a speech. As speakers, examine your information sources and determine whether they are biased or have hidden agendas. For example, you are not likely to get accurate information about nonwhite individuals from a neo-Nazi website. While you may not have firsthand knowledge of all of your sources, you should attempt to find objective sources that do not have an overt or covert agenda. Sources with agendas skew the argument you are making.

The second part of information honesty is to disclose where we obtain the information in our speeches thoroughly. As ethical speakers, it is vital to always cite your sources of information within the body of a speech. Whether you conducted an interview or read a newspaper article, you must tell your listeners the source of your information. We mentioned earlier in this chapter that using someone else's words or ideas without giving credit is called **plagiarism**. The word "plagiarism" stems from the Latin word *plagiaries*, or kidnapper. The American Psychological Association states in its publication manual that ethical speakers do not claim "words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due" (American Psychological Association, 2001).

> **Plagiarism** is using someone else's words or ideas
> without giving them credit.

In the previous sentence, we placed quotation marks around the phrase that came from the American Psychological Association and not from us. When speaking informally, people sometimes use "air quotes" to signal direct quotations, but this is not a recommended technique in public speaking. Instead, speakers need to verbally tell an audience when they are using someone else's information. The consequences for failing to cite sources during public speeches can

be substantial. When former Vice President Joseph Biden was running for president of the United States in 1988, reporters found that he had plagiarized portions of his stump speech from British politician Neil Kinnock. Biden was forced to drop out of the race as a result. More recently, the student newspaper at Malone University in Ohio alleged that the university president, Gary W. Streit, had plagiarized material in a public speech. Streit retired abruptly as a result.

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

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

The second plagiarism trap public speakers fall into is paraphrasing what someone else said or wrote without giving credit to the speaker or author. For example, you may have read a book and learned that there are three types of schoolyard bullying. In the middle of your speech, you talk about those three types of schoolyard bullying. If you do not tell your audience where you found that information, you are plagiarizing. Typically, the only information you do not need to

cite is information that is general knowledge. General knowledge is information that is publicly available and widely known by a large segment of society. For example, you would not need to provide a citation within a speech for the name of Delaware's capitol. Although many people do not know the capitol of Delaware without looking it up, this information is publicly available and easily accessible, so assigning credit to one specific source is not useful or necessary.

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

> The main character on the hit Fox television show *House*, Dr. Gregory House, has one basic mantra, "It's a basic truth of the human condition that everybody lies. The only variable is about what" (Shore & Barclay, 2005). This notion that "everybody lies" is so persistent in the series that t-shirts have been printed with the slogan. Surprisingly, research has shown that most people do lie during interpersonal interactions to some degree. In a study conducted by Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead (1975), the researchers had 130 participants record their own conversations with others. After recording these conversations, the participants then examined the truthfulness of the statements within the interactions. Only 38.5% of the statements made during these interactions were labeled as "completely honest."

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

Instead, these authors cited information found in two other locations. This type of citation is appropriate.

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

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

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

We Endorse Freedom of Expression, Diversity of

Perspective, and Tolerance of Dissent to Achieve the Informed and Responsible Decision Making Fundamental to a Civil Society

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

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

their voting decisions on incomplete and, not infrequently, inaccurate information.

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

Ultimately, honoring free speech and seeking out a variety of perspectives is very important for all listeners. We will discuss this idea further in the chapter on listening.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Promote Communication

Climates of Caring and Mutual Understanding That Respect the Unique Needs and Characteristics of Individual Communicators

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

Second, it is important for a speaker to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding. To do this, you should first learn as much as possible about your audience, a process called audience analysis. We will discuss this topic in more detail in the audience analysis chapter.

To create a climate of caring and mutual respect, speakers need to be open with our audiences so that our intentions and perceptions are clear. Nothing alienates an audience faster than a speaker with a hidden agenda unrelated to the stated purpose of the speech. One of our coauthors once listened to a speaker give a two-hour talk, allegedly about workplace wellness, which turned out to be an infomercial for the speaker's weight-loss program. In this case, the

speaker had a hidden (or not-so-hidden) agenda, which made the audience feel disrespected.

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

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

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

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

At the same time, it is important for listeners to pay attention to expressions of intolerance or hatred. Extremist speakers sometimes attempt to disguise their true agendas by avoiding bigoted "buzzwords" and using mild-sounding terms instead. For example, a speaker advocating the overthrow of a government might use the term "regime change" instead of "revolution"; similarly, proponents of genocide in various parts of the world have used the term "ethnic

cleansing" instead of "extermination." By listening critically to the gist of a speaker's message as well as the specific language he or she uses, we can see how that speaker views the world.

> **Distortion** occurs when someone purposefully twists information and uses it in a manner that is not in the spirit of the original information.

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

We believe that finding and bringing to light situations of inequality and injustice within our society is vital. Public speaking has been used throughout history to point out inequality, bias, and injustice. From Sojourner Truth describing the evils of slavery to Army Lt. Dan Choi's speeches arguing that the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy," speeches have long been used to point out injustice. Many social

justice movements have started because young public speakers have decided to stand up for what they believe is fair and just.

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

This ethical principle involves balancing personal disclosure with discretion. It is perfectly normal for speakers to want to share their personal opinions and feelings about a topic. If you choose to represent your thoughts and feelings in your speech, it is necessary to highlight the information is from your own perspective. Your listeners have a right to know the difference between facts and personal opinions.

Similarly, we must respect others' privacy and confidentiality when speaking. If you obtain the information from a printed or publicly distributed material, it's entirely appropriate to use that information

without getting permission, as long as you cite it. However, when you have a great anecdote one of your friends told you in confidence or access to information that is not available to the general public, it is best to seek permission before using the information in a speech.

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

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

The last statement of NCA's ethical credo may be the most important one. We live in a society where a speaker's message can be heard around the world in a matter of minutes, thanks to our global

communication networks. Extreme remarks made by politicians, media commentators, and celebrities, as well as ordinary people, can unexpectedly "go viral" with regrettable consequences. It is not unusual to see situations where a speaker talks hatefully about a specific group, but when one of the speaker's listeners violently attacks a member of the group, the speaker insists that they had no way of knowing that this could have happened. Washing one's hands of responsibility is unacceptable: all speakers should accept responsibility for the short and long-term consequences of their speeches. Although it is certainly not always the speaker's fault if someone commits an act of violence, the speaker should take responsibility for their role in the situation. This process involves being genuinely reflective and willing to examine how one's speech could have tragic consequences.

Furthermore, attempting to persuade a group of people to take any action means you should make sure that you understand the consequences of that action. Whether you are convincing people to vote for a political candidate or just encouraging them to lose weight, you should consider the potential short and long-term consequences of that decision. While our predictions of short and long-term consequences may not always be right, we have an ethical duty to at least think through the possible effects of our speeches and the actions we encourage.

Practicing Ethical Public Speaking

In this section, we've introduced you to the basics of thinking through the ethics of public speaking. Knowing about ethics is essential, but even more important to being an ethical public speaker is putting that knowledge into practice. We should begin by thinking through possible ethical pitfalls prior to standing up and speaking out. <u>Table 1 "Public Speaking Ethics Checklist"</u> is a checklist based on our discussion in this chapter to help you think through some of these issues.

Table 1 Public Speaking Ethics Checklist

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

Scoring: For ethical purposes, all your answers should have been "false."

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4. Topic, Purpose, and Thesis

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.

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 and thesis of your speech.

General Purpose

What do you think of when you hear the word "purpose"? Technically speaking, a purpose is why something exists, how we use an object, or why we make something. For the purposes of public speaking, all three can be applied. For example, when we talk about a speech's purpose, we can question why a specific speech was given, how we are supposed to use the information within a speech, and 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.

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 of 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 for three general purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain.

> A **general purpose** refers to the broad goal of creating and delivering a speech.

To Inform

The first general purpose that some people have for giving speeches is to inform. Simply put, **informative speaking** 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. a speech on a new technology or a speech

on an issue of community concern) or to perform a new task or improve their skills (e.g. a speech on how to swing a golf club or a speech on 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, they are no longer informing but instead persuading.

Informative speaking is about helping audience members acquire information that they do not already possess.

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 instead 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. 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 responsibility drives them to share their knowledge (internal motivational factors). Others are compelled to share knowledge because of the desire for recognition or the possibility of job enhancement (external motivational factors). Knowledge sharing is an integral part of every society, so learning how to deliver informative speeches is a valuable skill.

> **Knowledge sharing** is the process of delivering information, skills, or expertise in some form to people who could benefit from it.

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 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 particular 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. In **persuasive speaking**, 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 is 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 speaking fall into two main categories, which we will call "pure persuasion" and "manipulative persuasion." **<u>Pure persuasion</u>** 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 genuinely believe that oral hygiene is essential 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).

<u>Manipulative persuasion</u> 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 of attempting to persuade the audience. Ultimately, this form of persuasion is perceived as profoundly 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 illness, 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 critical 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 they will derive personal benefits from their adopting a specific behavior or point of view? Unless your speech assignment calls explicitly 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.

Persuasive speaking attempts to get listeners to embrace a point of view or to adopt a behavior that they would not have done otherwise.

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.

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Persuasion: Behavior versus

Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

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 their behavior, or observable actions on the part of listeners. 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 relatively ambiguous and tend to be very lofty ideas. Ultimately, what we value in life 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. Personal 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 alter 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.

Attitude is defined as an individual's general predisposition toward something as being good or bad, right or wrong, negative or positive.

Value refers to an individual's perception of the usefulness, importance, or worth of something.

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 are beliefs that people have not actively engaged in; they are judgments based on related subjects, which people make when they encounter a proposition.

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 Bio-diesel 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 http://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** focuses 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 speaking** 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, an **inspirational speech**, is one where the speaker's primary goal is to inspire her or his audience. Inspirational speeches are based on emotions 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).

> **Entertainment speaking** is a speech for audience enjoyment.
>
> **After-dinner speaking** 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.
>
> A **ceremonial speech** is a type of entertaining speech where the specific context of the speech is the driving force of the speech.
>
> An **inspirational speech** is one where the speaker's primary goal is to inspire her or his audience.

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 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!

Selecting a Topic

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

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 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.

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 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, or 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, they 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 they 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 of 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, determining 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. The best way to prevent yourself from picking a topic that is inappropriate for a specific audience is to know your audience, which is why we recommend conducting an audience analysis.

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 on 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, Urartu, 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 down 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?

Specific Purposes

Andrew Sutherland – Roma Street Steps – CC BY-SA 2.0.

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. The specific purpose answers the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* questions for your speech.
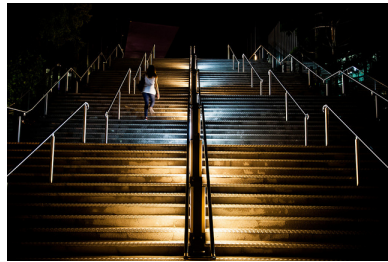
Getting Specific

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 write 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 (telling people why they need to adopt a specific hygiene practice), or to entertain (explaining 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 at 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 delivered. 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 pay attention 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 and 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 with 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 "My Specific Purpose Is..." provides several more examples of good specific purpose statements.

Table 6 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."
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 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 Speech 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. Speeches early in the term have shorter time limits, and speeches later in the term have longer time limits. 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.

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.

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.

Crafting and Understanding Thesis Statements for Speeches

You might be familiar with a thesis statement in writing an essay. Thesis statements are similar in speeches, but slightly different because they are only heard and not read. To help us understand thesis statements, we will first explore their basic functions and then discuss how to write a thesis statement.

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Basic Functions of a Thesis Statement

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

Express Your Specific Purpose

To orient your audience, you need to be as clear as possible about your meaning. A strong thesis will prepare your 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 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 you have no clear position on your topic because you 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. Therefore, the specific topic of the speech is still not clear to the audience. The strong statement not only specifies plagiarism but also states your specific concern (loss of creative learning interaction).

Provide a Way to Organize Your Main Points

A thesis statement should appear, almost verbatim, toward the end of the introduction to a speech. 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 your thesis statement is sufficiently clear and decisive, you will know where you stand on your topic and where you intend to go with your speech. Having a clear thesis statement

is especially important if you know a great deal about your topic or you have strong feelings about it. If this is the case for you, you need to know exactly what you are planning on talking about in order to fit within specified time limitations. Knowing where you are and where you are going is the entire point in establishing a thesis statement; it makes your speech much easier to prepare and to present.

Let's say you have a reasonably strong thesis statement, and that you've already brainstormed a list of information that you know about the topic. Chances are your list is too long and has no focus. Using your thesis statement, you 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 you keep useful information and weed out less helpful information.

Make Your Research More Effective

If you begin your research with only a general topic in mind, you run the risk of spending hours reading mountains of excellent literature about your topic. However, mountains of research does not always make coherent speeches.

You may have little or no idea of how to tie your research together, or even whether you should tie it together. If, on the other hand, you conduct your research with a clear thesis statement in mind, you will be better able to zero in only on material that directly relates to your 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, you 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 your thesis statement will help you narrow the scope of information you 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 you want your 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. Your definitions of words like "generation," "quick driving decisions," and "cloverleaf systems" could jolt your audience out of assumptions they have taken for granted as truth.

Second, the framing of the thesis provides you 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 your own thesis statement, can lead to a robust and memorable speech.

Enhance Your Delivery

When your thesis is not clear to you, your listeners will be even more clueless than you are. However, if you have a good clear thesis statement, your speech becomes clear to your listeners. When you stand in front of your audience presenting your introduction, you can vocally emphasize the essence of your speech, expressed as your 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 Your Topic

The first step in writing a good thesis statement is finding your topic. Once you have a general topic, you are ready to go to the second step of creating a thesis statement.

Narrow Your 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 you are speaking. You can run out of time if your topic is too broad. To decide if your topic is narrow enough for a specific time frame, ask yourself three questions:

First, is your thesis statement narrow or is it a broad overgeneralization of a topic? Overgeneralization occurs when we classify everyone in a specific group as having a specific characteristic. For example, a speaker's thesis statement that "the elderly are bad drivers" is an overgeneralization of all elderly drivers. Make sure that your thesis statement is nuanced enough to accurately represent what you can support in your speech.

The second question to ask yourself when narrowing a topic is whether your speech's topic is one clear topic or multiple topics. A strong thesis statement consists of only a single topic. The following is an example of a thesis statement that contains too many topics: "Medical marijuana and prostitution should be legalized in the United States." Not only are both broad, but you also have two completely unrelated topics thrown into a single thesis statement. Instead of a thesis statement that has multiple topics, limit yourself to only one topic. Here's an example of a thesis statement examining only one

topic: "Today we're going to examine the legalization and regulation of prostitution in the state of Nevada." In this case, we're focusing our topic on how one state has handled the legalization and regulation of prostitution.

The last question a speaker should ask when making sure a topic is sufficiently narrow is whether the topic has direction. If your basic topic is too broad, you will never have a solid thesis statement or a coherent speech. For example, if you start off with the topic "Barack Obama is a role model for everyone," what do you mean by this statement? Do you think President Obama is a role model because of his dedication to civic service? Do you think he's a role model because he's a good basketball player? Do you think he's a good role model because he's an excellent public speaker? When your topic is too broad, almost anything can become part of the topic. This broadness ultimately leads to a lack of direction and coherence within the speech itself. To make a cleaner topic, a speaker needs to narrow their topic to one specific area. For example, you may want to examine why President Obama is a good speaker.

Put Your Topic into a Sentence

Once you've narrowed your topic to something that is reasonably manageable given the constraints placed on your speech, you can then formalize that topic as a complete sentence. For example, you could turn the topic of President Obama's public speaking skills into the following sentence: "Because of his unique sense of lyricism and his well-developed presentational skills, President Barack Obama is a modern symbol of the power of public speaking." Once you have a clear topic sentence, you can start tweaking the thesis statement to help set up the purpose of your speech. *Your thesis statement should be a clear, declarative statement that sets up your speech.*

Use the Thesis Checklist

Once you have written the first draft of your thesis statement, you're probably going to end up revising your thesis statement a number of times before delivering your actual speech. A thesis statement is something that is constantly tweaked until the speech is given. As your speech develops, often your 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 you think you finally have a thesis statement that is good to go for your speech, take a second and make sure it adheres to the criteria shown below.

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?
7. Does your thesis statement introduce a clear argument?
8. Does your thesis statement clearly indicate what your audience should know, do, think, or feel?

Scoring: For a strong thesis statement, all your answers should have been "yes."

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 fascinating 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. Informative Speaking

Derek Zon – [Speech](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

An informative speech conveys knowledge, a task that you've engaged in throughout your life. When you give driving directions, you convey knowledge. When you caution someone about crossing the street at a certain intersection, you are describing a dangerous situation. When you steer someone away from using the carpool lane, you are explaining why a carpool lane would be used.

When your professors greet you on the first day of a new academic term, they typically hand out a course syllabus, which informs you

about the objectives and expectations of the course. Much of the information comes to have a more significant meaning as you encounter your coursework. Why doesn't the professor explain those meanings on the first day? He or she probably does, but in all likelihood, the explanation won't make sense at the time because you don't yet have the supporting knowledge to put it in context.

However, it is still important that the orientation information is offered. It is likely to answer some specific questions, such as the following: Am I prepared to take this course? Is a textbook required? Will the course involve a great deal of writing? Does the professor have office hours? The answers to these questions should be of central importance to all the students. These orientations are informative because they give important information relevant to the course.

An informative speech does not attempt to convince the audience that one thing is better than another. It does not advocate a course of action. Let's say, for instance, that you have carefully followed the news about BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Let's further say that you felt outraged by the sequence of events that led to the spill and, even more so, by its consequences. Consider carefully whether this is a good topic for your informative speech. If your speech describes the process of offshore oil exploration, it will be informative. However, if it expresses your views on what petroleum corporations *should* do to safeguard their personnel and the environment, save that topic for a persuasive speech.

Being honest about your private agenda in choosing a topic is important. It is not always easy to discern a clear line between informative and persuasive speech. Good information has a strong tendency to be persuasive, and persuasion relies on good information. Thus informative and persuasive speaking do overlap. It remains up to you to examine your real motives in choosing your topic. As we have said in various ways, ethical speaking means respecting the intelligence of your audience. If you try to circumvent

the purpose of the informative speech to plant a persuasive seed, your listeners will notice. Such strategies often come across as dishonest.

Informative Speaking Goals
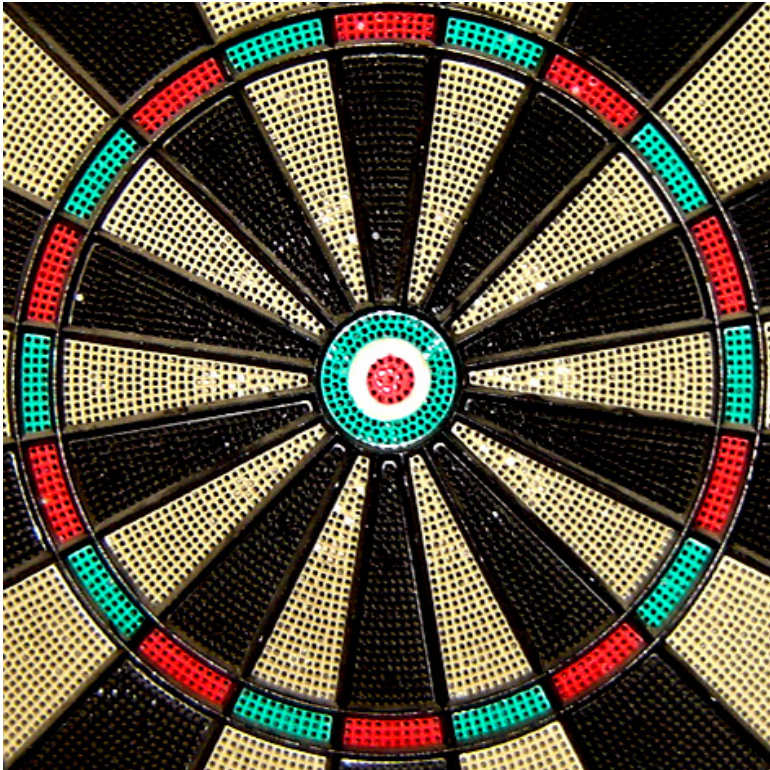
Cesar bojorquez – target – CC BY 2.0.

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 the 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 provide 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. 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.

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 evident 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. Keeping your speech interesting for your audience 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 certain canine parasites also pose risks to humans—this connection might 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 an opinion.

This avoidance doesn't mean you may not speak about controversial topics. If you choose to speak on a controversial topic, you must deliver a fair statement of each side of the issue in the 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 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. However, they 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.

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 to 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 helpful 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 are curious about and what they know.

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, the 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 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" (Lucas, 2004). Define terms to help listeners understand them the way you intend. 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 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 sufficiently 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 complicated 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 on 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 ill-advised 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.

Link Current Knowledge to

New Knowledge

Certain sets of knowledge are familiar 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, 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. Because most students in the classroom know this information, it 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 at 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, found an interesting way to narrow that topic, developed presentation aids, and worked 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 and easy for most college students to 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 you can do this by describing the advice that was given to President Roosevelt by his top advisers, or 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 a 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 imperative 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 strategy will make the topic more real to them, since it may have happened to them on a number of occasions. 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 exciting. 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 that, 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. 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 is unethical.

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 that when you are developing your speech, focus on areas where your audience may experience

confusion. Use the likely sources of confusion as a guide for developing the content of your speech. Rowan 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 (Rowan, 1995). 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, or clear, 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 providing 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 the 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 confusion 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 show 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 of 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.

References

Lucas, Stephen E. (2004). *The art of public speaking*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Rowan, K. E. (1995). A new pedagogy for explanatory public speaking: Why arrangement should not substitute for invention. *Communication Education*, 44, 236–249.

6. Researching Your Speech

Kristin Woodward, University of
Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Learning Objectives

- Select information sources that present multiple perspectives on your research topic.
- Perform keyword searches appropriate to your topic.
- Students are able to assign proper attribution and citations using APA Citation Style.

The following learning resources and exercises will guide you through a research process and help you to explore a variety of information sources. This research process can be used to identify information sources for a variety of speech types. For best results, use your current speech assignment as the topic for each of the recommended learning exercises. Your instructor may assign a specific forum in which to share your work from each activity (in-class activities and discussions, D2L discussion posts, or D2L Dropbox reflections.) All of the resources you see in this chapter can be found on the UWM Libraries guide to research for Communication 103 (http://guides.library.uwm.edu/comm103).

How to Search

When you are researching your speech topic, you should start by planning your search strategy to allow you to define the scope of your search. In other words, defining the scope of your search will help you to determine which aspects of a topic you will research. The first step is to break a larger topic down into smaller manageable "chunks," or topics. Once you know what the "chunks" of the speech are, you will need to identify the concepts that should be included in your search.

Exercise 1

LEARNING ACTIVITY: Watch the Communication 103 Search Strategies video series (all three) for Exercise 1: [Mindmapping to Plan Your Research](), [Brainstorming Keywords](), and [Initial Search](). Then, make a list of everything you already know about this topic. List one thing about this topic you are unsure of and one aspect that interests you.
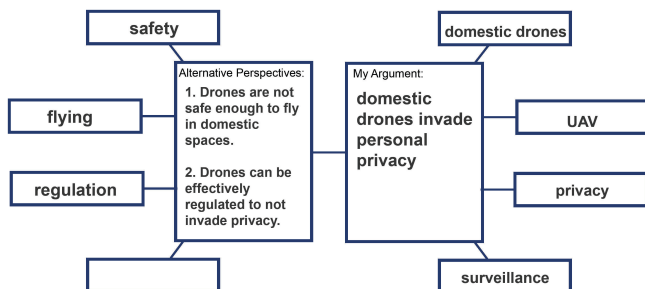
Concept Map

LEARNING ACTIVITY: You will want to organize your search using a mind map. A mind map is a type of graphic organizer that will allow you to visualize the elements of your topic. Use the Mind Map to help you structure your online search. Download a blank mind map and develop a graphic organizer for your own speech topic. Work with a partner to discuss the concepts you have identified and ask for feedback and suggestions to help you explore the topic.

Getting Background Information

Another strategy for organizing your search for information is to consult sources of background information that will help you

establish facts, theories, vocabulary and other elements of your topic. CQ Researcher provides authoritative in-depth, unbiased reports of health, social trends, criminal justice, international affairs, education, the environment, technology, and the economy.

Exercise 2

CQ RESEARCHER
CQPRESS *In-depth reports on today's issues*

HOME   BROWSE TOPICS ⌄   BROWSE REPORTS ⌄   USING CQR ⌄   LIBRARIAN ACCOUNT   ABOUT ⌄

▸ **FULL REPORT**
▸ Introduction
▸ Overview
▸ Background
▸ Current Situation
▸ Outlook
▸ Pro/Con
▸ Chronology
▸ Short Features
▸ Maps/Graphs
▸ Bibliography
▸ The Next Step
▸ Contacts
▸ Footnotes

Opioid Crisis

Can recent reforms curb the epidemic?

By Peter Katel

⬇ View PDF   "" Cite Now!

Introduction

Overdoses of **opioid** drugs, including powerful prescription painkillers and heroin, have killed almost 250,000 Americans since 2000, leading many experts to compare the **crisis** to the HIV and AIDS epidemics. **Opioid** addiction, once largely an urban minority affliction, has spread to every corner of the United States, hitting young adults and white people especially hard. One study has found that more adults use prescription painkillers than cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and cigars combined. As **opioid** abuse grows, propelled in part by a flood of cheap heroin from Mexico, alarmed authorities are trying to figure out how to fight back. In July, President Obama signed a bill encouraging the expansion of treatment programs and the development of alternatives to **opioid** painkillers. But many experts are divided over how best to help **opioid** addicts. Some advocate providing them with limited doses to control their addiction, while others say that such an approach would make the **crisis** worse.

Learning Activity

Search [CQ Researcher](#) for some of the concepts in your research topic. For example, *medical marijuana, opioid*

addiction, *refugee crisis*, *online privacy*, or *domestic drones*. Find a report that addresses your topic. Write a brief summary of the issues discussed in this report.

Learning Activity

Select a report in [CQ Researcher](#) that discusses your topic or issues related to your topic. Choose a source from the report's Bibliography section. Find this source by following the links provided in the bibliography or use [Search@UW](#) to find the source at UWM. Write a brief reflection on this new source. What new perspective is presented in the source you selected from the bibliography? How might this source help you present this topic or issue to your audience?

Finding Neutral Sources

Now that you have organized your search and reviewed some background information in CQ Researcher, you will want to think about additional information sources that will help you develop your speech topic. Whether your goal is to educate your audience, support an argument, persuade or propose a solution to a problem, you will want to identify sources that lend credibility to your presentation. You will also want to make sure that you research the whole topic, not just one part or one perspective.

Exercise 3
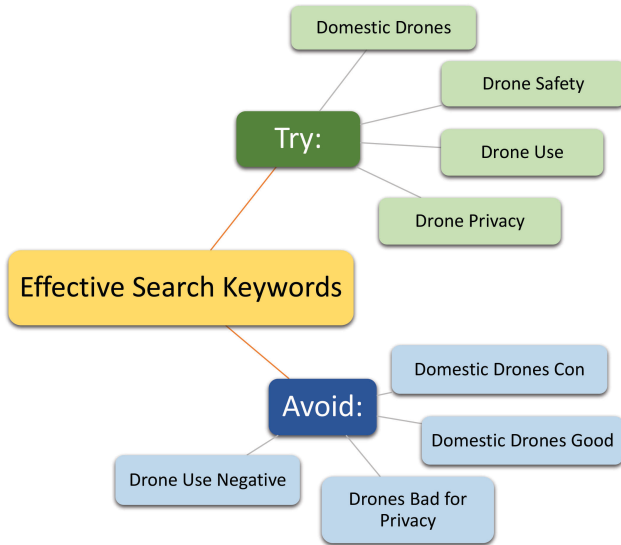
Effective Search Keywords by Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System CC BY 4.0

Learning Activity

When you develop your search strategy think about what you want to know about the topic. If you are educating your audience about opioid addiction, will you address the costs of opioid addiction to the community? Your search terms might be the *opioid addiction* and

public cost. Jot down the aspects of your topic you would like to address for your audience. Create two to three sets of search terms to express these specific aspects of your search.

Learning Activity

View the [Neutral Sources](#) video. Reflecting on the strategies described in the video for selecting a source that discusses multiple aspects of a topic, then use [Search@UW](#) to search for your speech topic. Identify a source that will help you persuade or inform, and also includes a robust discussion of your topic. Write a brief summary of the way you will use this source.

Verbal Citations

Citing sources in your speeches and your speech outline is necessary to avoid plagiarism and build your credibility. Citation in speeches is a little different than citing sources in a written paper. In a written paper, your in-text citations, or citations within the body of your paper, follow a specific format, like APA or MLA. However, in your speeches, while your bibliographies will follow a format, like APA, your verbal citations will be in verbal citation format.

Verbal citations are oral statements that give the audience information about the source you used for a specific piece of information in your speech. Based off of the name, you can deduce that the citation is spoken out loud, verbally, to build your credibility and inform your audience about where you received the information.

Additionally, if there is a source in your bibliography, you should verbally attribute the source in the speech. And vice versa, if you verbally cite a source in your speech, you should include the source in your bibliography.

At this point, you are probably wondering, what should be included in my verbal citations, and how exactly do I verbally cite my sources. First, in each of your verbal citations, you should include: the author's name, the source (journal, book, website, newspaper, etc.), the date of publication, and the credentials of the author or the source. In some instances, you may not be able to find all of this information for your source. These instances are one of the reasons you should always be working ahead in your speech. If you can't find all of the information, you should consult a librarian or ask your instructor to help you.

Second, let's look at an example of citing your source verbally. Let's say you are writing a speech informing your audience about the community concern of the large amount of runaway and homeless youth in Milwaukee. You find an organization that supports homeless youth ages 11 to 17 in Milwaukee called Pathfinders. There is a great quotation on their website from their Vice President of Housing that you think would support your speech. However, if you just talk about Pathfinders, your audience may be confused about why this is a credible organization. Therefore, you would verbally cite your source as,

Katie Hall, Pathfinder's Vice President of Housing, an organization that provides housing resources to over 220 Milwaukee youth annually, posted on their website on January 4, 2018 that "paid and volunteer staff who provide 24-hour services every day of the year."

The citation tells you the author (Katie Hall), the source (the Pathfinder website), the date (January 4, 2018), the credentials of the author (Pathfinder's Vice President of Housing), and the credentials of the organization (an organization that provides housing resources to over 220 Milwaukee youth annually).

An example of another source for the same speech would be a

citation from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Citing this source you could say:

According to an article by reporter John Schmid in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Milwaukee's local paper, on March 23, 2017, explained that Milwaukee is in a public health and economic crisis.

This citation tells you the author (John Schmid), the source (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel), the date (March 23, 2017), the author's credibility (reporter), and the source's credibility (Milwaukee's local paper).

These citations may seem long and perhaps hard to say. However, as a speaker, you should consider your audience's perspective. If you give them all of this information, they will view you and your source as credible to provide information. To help yourself out when delivering your speech, you may want to write out your sources word-for-word, and practice saying them, so that your delivery seems more natural.

A **verbal citation** is an oral statement that gives the audience information about the source you are using for a specific piece of information in your speech.

Creating a Bibliography

Citations give credit to those whose ideas have contributed to your research and give your readers enough information to locate the sources you used. There are many ways to format citations. The style

you choose depends on your field and the requirements set by your professor or publisher. In these examples, we will use APA Style. The template shows the elements of the citation required for proper APA style, the order in which each element appears in the citation, and the punctuation you will use to define each element. The examples show how typical books and article would be cited following this pattern.

Exercise 4

A citation or reference is the information given in a bibliography or a database about a particular title, which often includes:

- article title or chapter title
- periodical title or book title
- author(s) or editor(s)
- place of publication
- date of publication
- publisher name

- volume/issue (articles) or edition (books)
- page range
- medium of publication
- electronic access (URL or DOI)
- date accessed

Learning Activity

Select a book or an article from your database searches. Looking carefully at the citation as it is listed in the database, list all the parts of the citation. For additional support identifying the parts of a citation from a journal article, database record, and other sources, see Finding Key Citation Information.

Template

Book

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year of Publication). *Title of book: Capital for subtitle.* (Edition ed.). Place of Publication: Publisher Name.

Chapter in an edited book

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year of Publication). Title of chapter. In A. A. Editor(Ed.). *Title of book.* (Page Range). Place of Publication: Publisher Name.

Examples

One author

Shields, C. J. (2006). *Mockingbird: A portrait of Harper Lee.* New York, NY: Henry Holt.

Multiple authors

Anson, C. M., Schwegler, R. A., & Muth, M. F. (2000). The Longman writer's companion. (4th ed) New York: Longman.

Chapter in an edited book

Smith, P. M. (2006). The diverse librarian. In E. Connor (Ed.). *An introduction to reference services in academic libraries.* (pp. 137-140). Binghampton, NY: Haworth Press.

Template of APA Style Citation for Books

Template

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year of Publication). Title of article: Capital after colon. *Title of Journal*, *Volume(Issue)*, Page Range. URL or DOI

Examples

Print Article

Ellery, K. (2008). Undergraduate plagiarism: A pedagogical perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *33*(5), 507-516.

Online Article

Herbst-Damm, K. L., & Kulik, J. A. (2005). Volunteer support, marital status, and the survival times of terminally ill patients. *Health Psychology*, *24*, 225-229. doi: 10.1037/0278-6133.24.225

APA Style Citations for Articles

Learning Activity

After identifying the elements of the citation for at least three of your sources, use the Template for Books or the Template for Articles to write an APA style citation. Check your list of elements to ensure you were able to place each element in the citation correctly. Share your formatted citations with a partner in class or via the discussion board. Ask for feedback on the formatting. Additional examples of APA Style Citations can be found using the APA Publication Manual available from the UWM Libraries or online guides like the OWL at Purdue.

7. Building and Organizing Your Speech

Siddie Nam – [Thinking](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

In a series of ground-breaking studies conducted during the 1950s and 1960s, researchers started investigating how a speech's organization was related to audience perceptions of those

speeches. The first study, conducted by Raymond Smith in 1951, randomly organized the parts of a speech to see how audiences would react. Not surprisingly, when speeches were randomly organized, the audience perceived the speech more negatively than when audiences were presented with a speech with a clear, intentional organization. Smith also found that audiences who listened to unorganized speeches were less interested in those speeches than audiences who listened to organized speeches (Smith, 1951). Thompson furthered this investigation and found that it was harder for audiences to recall information after an unorganized speech. Basically, people remember information from speeches that are clearly organized, and they forget information from speeches that are poorly organized (Thompson, 1960). A third study by Baker found that when audiences were presented with a disorganized speaker, they were less likely to be persuaded, and saw the disorganized speaker as lacking credibility (Baker, 1965).

These three critical studies make the importance of organization very clear. When speakers are organized they are perceived as credible. When speakers are not organized, their audiences view the speeches negatively, are less likely to be persuaded, and don't remember specific information from the speeches after the fact.

We start this chapter by discussing these studies because we want you to understand the importance of speech organization to real audiences. This chapter will help you learn organization so that your speech with have its intended effect. In this chapter, we are going to discuss the basics of organizing the body of your speech.

Determining Your Main Ideas

While speeches take many different forms, they are often discussed as having an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction

establishes the topic and wets your audience's appetite, and the conclusion wraps everything up at the end of your speech. The real "meat" of your speech happens in the body. In this section, we're going to discuss how to think strategically about structuring the body of your speech.

We like the word strategic because it refers to determining what is essential to the overall plan or purpose of your speech. Too often, new speakers throw information together and stand up and start speaking. When that happens, audience members are left confused, and the reason for the speech may get lost. To avoid being seen as disorganized, we want you to start thinking critically about the organization of your speech. In this section, we will discuss how to take your speech from a specific purpose to creating the main points of your speech.

What Is Your Specific Purpose?

Before we discuss how to determine the main points of your speech, we want to revisit your speech's specific purpose, which we discussed in detail in Chapter 4 "Topic, Purpose, and Thesis". Recall that a speech can have one of three general purposes: to inform, to persuade, or to entertain. The general purpose refers to the broad goal for creating and delivering the speech. The specific purpose, on the other hand, starts with one of those broad goals (inform,

persuade, or entertain) and then further informs the listener about the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* of the speech.

The specific purpose is stated as a sentence incorporating the general purpose, the specific audience for the speech, and a prepositional phrase that summarizes the topic. Suppose you are going to give a speech about using open-source software. Here are three examples (each with a different general purpose and a different audience):

General Purpose	To inform
Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts.
General Purpose	To persuade
Specific Purpose	To persuade a group of college students to make the switch from Microsoft Office to the open-source office suite OpenOffice.
General Purpose	To entertain
Specific Purpose	To entertain members of a business organization with a mock eulogy of for-pay software giants as a result of the proliferation of open-source alternatives.

In each of these three examples, you'll notice that the general topic is the same, open-source software, but the specific purpose is different because the speech has a different general purpose and a different audience. Before you can think strategically about organizing the body of your speech, you need to know what your specific purpose is. If you have not yet written a specific purpose for your current speech, please go ahead and write one now.

From Specific Purpose to Main Points

Once you've written down your specific purpose, you can start thinking about the best way to turn that specific purpose into a series of main points. **Main points** are the key ideas you present to enable your speech to accomplish its specific purpose. In this section, we're going to discuss how to determine your main points and how to organize those main points into a coherent, strategic speech.

> **Main Points** are the key ideas you present to enable your speech to accomplish its specific purpose.

How Many Main Points Do I Need?

While there is no magic number for how many main points a speech

should have, speech experts generally agree that the fewer the number of main points the better. First and foremost, experts on the subject of memory have consistently shown that people don't tend to remember very much after they listen to a message or leave a conversation (Bostrom & Waldhart, 1988). While many different factors can affect a listener's ability to retain information after a speech, how the speech is organized is an important part of that process (Dunham, 1964; Smith, 1951; Thompson, 1960). For the speeches you will be delivering in a typical public speaking class, you will usually have just two or three main points. If your speech is less than three minutes long, then two main points will probably work best. If your speech is between three and ten minutes in length, then it makes more sense to use three main points.

You may be wondering why we are recommending only two or three main points. The reason comes straight out of the research on listening. According to LeFrancois, people are more likely to remember information that is meaningful, useful, and of interest to them; different or unique; organized; visual; and simple (LeFrancois, 1999). Two or three main points are much easier for listeners to remember than ten or even five. In addition, if you have two or three main points, you'll be able to develop each one with examples, statistics, or other forms of support. Including support for each point will make your speech more interesting and more memorable for your audience.

Narrowing Down Your Main

Points

When you write your specific purpose and review the research you have done on your topic, you will probably find yourself thinking of quite a few points that you'd like to make in your speech. Whether that's the case or not, we recommend taking a few minutes to brainstorm and develop a list of points. In brainstorming, your goal is simply to think of as many different points as you can, not to judge how valuable or vital they are. What information does your audience need to know to understand your topic? What information does your speech need to convey to accomplish its specific purpose? Consider the following example:

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts.
Brainstorming List of Points	Define open-source software.
	Define educational software.
	List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.
	Explain the advantages of using open-source software.
	Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software.
	Review the history of open-source software.
	Describe the value of open-source software.
	Describe some educational open-source software packages.
	Review the software needs of my specific audience.
	Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.

Now that you have brainstormed and developed a list of possible

points, how do you go about narrowing them down to just two or three main ones? Remember, your main points are the key ideas that help build your speech. When you look over the preceding list, you can then start to see that many of the points are related to one another. Your goal in narrowing down your main points is to identify which individual, potentially minor points can be combined to make main points. This process is called **chunking** because it involves taking smaller chunks of information and putting them together with like chunks to create more fully developed chunks of information. Before reading our chunking of the preceding list, see if you can determine three large chunks out of the list (note that not all chunks are equal).

Chunking involves taking smaller chunks of information and putting them together with like chunks to create more fully developed chunks of information.

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts.
	School districts use software in their operations.
Main Point 1	Define educational software.
	List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.
	What is open-source software?
	Define open-source software.
	Review the history of open-source software.
Main Point 2	Explain the advantages of using open-source software.
	Describe the value of open-source software.
	Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software.
	Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.
	Name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider.
Main Point 3	Review the software needs of my specific audience.
	Describe some educational open-source software packages.

You may notice that in the preceding list, the number of subpoints under each of the three main points is a little disjointed or the topics don't go together clearly. That's all right. Remember that these are just general ideas at this point. It's also important to remember that there is often more than one way to organize a speech. Some of these points could be left out and others developed more fully, depending on the purpose and audience. We'll develop the preceding main points more fully in a moment.

Helpful Hints for Preparing Your Main Points

Now that we've discussed how to take a specific purpose and turn it into a series of main points, here are some helpful hints for creating your main points.

Uniting Your Main Points

Once you've generated a possible list of main points, you want to ask yourself this question: "When you look at your main points, do they fit together?" For example, if you look at the three preceding main points (school districts use software in their operations; what is open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider), ask yourself, "Do these main points help my audience understand my specific purpose?"

Suppose you added a fourth main point about open-source software for musicians—would this fourth main point go with the other three? Probably not. While you may have a strong passion for open-source music software, that main point is extraneous

information for the speech you are giving. It does not help accomplish your specific purpose, so you'd need to toss it out.

Keeping Your Main Points Separate

The next question to ask yourself about your main points is whether they overlap too much. While some overlap may happen naturally because of the singular nature of a specific topic, the information covered within each main point should be clearly distinct from the other main points. Imagine you're giving a speech with the specific purpose "to inform my audience about the health reasons for eating apples and oranges." You could then have three main points: that eating fruits is healthy, that eating apples is healthy, and that eating oranges is healthy. While the two points related to apples and oranges are clearly distinct, both of those main points would probably overlap too much with the first point "that eating fruits is healthy," so you would probably decide to eliminate the first point and focus on the second and third. On the other hand, you could keep the first point and then develop two new points giving additional support to why people should eat fruit.

Balancing Main Points

One of the biggest mistakes some speakers make is to spend most of their time talking about one of their main points, completely neglecting their other main points. To avoid this mistake, organize your speech to spend roughly the same amount of time on each main point. If you find that one of your main points is simply too large, you may need to divide that main point into two main points and consolidate your other main points into a single main point.

Let's see if our preceding example is balanced (school districts use software in their operations; what is open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider). What do you think? The answer depends on how much time a speaker will have to talk about each of these main points. If you have an hour to speak, then you may find that these three main points are balanced. However, you may also find them wildly unbalanced if you only have five minutes to speak because five minutes is not enough time to even explain what open-source software is. If that's the case, then you probably need to rethink your specific purpose to ensure that you can cover the material in the allotted time.

Creating Parallel Structure for

Main Points

Another major question to ask yourself about your main points is whether or not they have a parallel structure. By **<u>parallel structure</u>**, we mean that you should structure your main points so that they all sound similar. When all your main points sound similar, it's easier for your audiences to remember your main points and retain them for later. Let's look at our sample (school districts use software in their operations; what is open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider). Notice that the first and third main points are statements, but the second one is a question. We have an example here of main points that are not parallel in structure. You could fix this in one of two ways. You could make them all questions: what are some common school district software programs; what is open-source software; and what are some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider. Or you could turn them all into statements: school districts use software in their operations; define and describe open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider. Either of these changes will make the grammatical structure of the main points parallel.

> **Parallel structure** means structuring your main points so that they all sound similar.

Maintaining Logical Flow of Main Points

The last question you want to ask yourself about your main points is whether the main points make sense in the order you've placed them. The next section goes into more detail of common organizational patterns for speeches, but for now, we want you to think logically about the flow of your main points. When you look at your main points, can you see them as progressive, or does it make sense to talk about one first, another one second, and the final one last? If you look at your order, and it doesn't make sense to you, you probably need to think about the flow of your main points. Often, this process is an art and not a science. But let's look at a couple of examples.

School Dress Codes Example

Main Point 1	History of school dress codes.
Main Point 2	Problems with school dress codes.
Main Point 3	Eliminating school dress codes.

Rider Law Legislation

Main Point 1	Why should states have rider laws?
Main Point 2	What are the effects of a lack of rider laws?
Main Point 3	What is rider law legislation?

When you look at these two examples, what are your immediate impressions of the two examples? In the first example, does it make sense to talk about history, and then the problems, and finally how to eliminate school dress codes? Would it make sense to put history as your last main point? Probably not. In this case, the main points are

in a logical sequential order. What about the second example? Does it make sense to talk about your solution, then your problem, and then define the solution? Not really! What order do you think these main points should be placed in for a logical flow? Maybe you should explain the problem (lack of rider laws), then define your solution (what is rider law legislation), and then argue for your solution (why states should have rider laws). Notice that in this example you don't even need to know what "rider laws" are to see that the flow didn't make sense.

Using Common Organizing Patterns

Organization makes you flow

Twentyfour Students – [Organization makes you flow](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Previously in this chapter, we discussed how to make your main points flow logically. This section is going to provide you with organization patterns to help you 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 your original specific purpose. Let's look at an example:

Specific Purpose	To persuade a group of high school juniors to apply to attend Generic University.
	I. Life in the dorms.
Main Points	II. Life in the classroom.
	III. Life on campus.

In this case, we have a speaker trying to persuade a group of high school juniors to apply to attend Generic University. To persuade 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 college students about the uses and misuses of Internet dating.
	I. Define and describe Internet dating.
Main Points	II. Explain some strategies to enhance your Internet dating experience.
	III. List some warning signs to look for in potential online dates.

In this speech, the speaker is talking about how to find others online and date them. Specifically, the speaker starts by explaining what Internet dating is; then the speaker talks about how to make Internet dating better for her or his audience members; and finally, the speaker ends by discussing some negative aspects of Internet dating. Again, notice that the information is chunked into three categories or topics and that the second and third could be reversed and still provide a logical structure for your speech.

Comparison/Contrast

Another method for organizing your main points is the **comparison/contrast speech pattern**. While this pattern lends itself easily to two main points, you 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.

If you were using the comparison/contrast pattern for persuasive purposes, in the preceding examples, you'd want to make sure that when you show how Drug X and Drug Y differ, you clearly state why Drug X is the better choice for physicians to adopt. In essence, you'd want to make sure that when you compare the two drugs, you show that Drug X has all the benefits of Drug Y, but when you contrast the two drugs, you show how Drug X is superior to Drug Y in some way.

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 primary reason to choose this format is to show that the main points have specific locations. We'll look at two

examples here, one involving physical geography and one involving a different spatial order.

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.

Now let's look at a spatial speech unrelated to geography.

Specific Purpose	To explain to a group of college biology students how the urinary system works.
Main Points	I. Locate and describe the kidneys and ureters.
	II. Locate and describe the bladder.
	III. Locate and describe the sphincter and urethra.

In this example, we still have three spatial areas. If you look at a model of the urinary system, the first step is the kidney, which then takes waste through the ureters to the bladder, which then relies on the sphincter muscle to excrete waste through the urethra. All we've done in this example is create a spatial speech order for discussing how waste is removed from the human body through the urinary system. It is spatial because the organization pattern is determined by the physical location of each body part in relation to the others discussed.

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 you could also use reverse chronological order and start with Churchill's writings after World War II, progressing backward to his earliest writings.

Cause/Effect

The **causal speech pattern** is used to explain cause-and-effect relationships. When you use a causal speech pattern, your speech will have two basic main points: cause and effect. In the first main point, typically you will talk about the causes of a phenomenon, and in the second main point, you will then show how the causes lead to either a specific effect or a small set of effects. Let's look at an example.

Specific Purpose	To inform my audience about the problems associated with drinking among members of Native American tribal groups
Main Points	I. Explain the history and prevalence of drinking alcohol among Native Americans.
	II. Explain the effects that abuse of alcohol has on Native Americans and how this differs from the experience of other populations.

In this case, the first main point is about the history and prevalence of drinking alcohol among Native Americans (the cause). The second point then examines the effects of Native American alcohol consumption and how it differs from other population groups.

However, a causal organizational pattern can also begin with an effect and then explore one or more causes. 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 your 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, you describe a problem, identify what you 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.
	I. Demonstrate that vandalism and violence among youth is having a negative effect on our community.
Main Points	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 demonstrated 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.

Speech Pattern Overview

The **categorical/topical speech pattern** creates categories (or chunks) of information that go together to help support your original specific purpose.

The **comparison/contrastspeech pattern** uses main points to compare an contrast two similar objects, topics, or ideas.

The **spatial speech pattern** organizes information according to how things fit together in physical space.

The **chronological speech pattern** places the main idea in the time order in which items appear—whether backward or forward.

The **causal speech pattern** is used to explain cause-and-effect relationships. When you use a causal speech pattern, your speech will have two basic main points: cause and effect.

The**problem-cause-solution speech pattern** describes

a problem, identifies what is causing the problem, and then recommends a solution to correct the problem.

Selecting an Organizational Pattern

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

You will want to be aware that it is also possible to combine two or more organizational patterns to meet the goals of a specific speech. For example, you might wish to discuss a problem and then compare/contrast several different possible solutions for the audience. Such a speech would thus be combining elements of the comparison/contrast and problem-cause-solution patterns. When considering which organizational pattern to use, you need to keep in

mind your specific purpose as well as your audience and the actual speech material itself to decide which pattern you think will work best.

Keeping Your Speech Moving

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Have you ever been listening to a speech or a lecture and found yourself thinking, "I am so lost!" or "Where the heck is this speaker going?" Chances are one of the reasons you weren't sure what the speaker was talking about was that the speaker didn't effectively keep the speech moving. When we are reading and encounter something we don't understand, we can reread the paragraph and try to make sense of what we're trying to read. Unfortunately, we are not that lucky when it comes to listening to a speaker. We cannot pick up our universal remote and rewind the person. For this reason, speakers

need to think about how they keep a speech moving so that audience members are easily able to keep up with the speech. In this section, we're going to look at four specific techniques speakers can use that make following a speech much easier for an audience: transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

Transitions between Main Points

A **transition** is a phrase or sentence that indicates that a speaker is moving from one main point to another main point in a speech. Basically, a transition is a sentence where the speaker summarizes what was said in one point and previews what is going to be discussed in the next point. Let's look at some examples:

- Now that we've seen the problems caused by lack of adolescent curfew laws, let's examine how curfew laws could benefit our community.
- Thus far we've examined the history and prevalence of alcohol abuse among Native Americans, but it is the impact that this abuse has on the health of Native Americans that is of the greatest concern.
- Now that we've thoroughly examined how these two medications are similar to one another, we can consider the many clear differences between the two medications.

- Although he was one of the most prolific writers in Great Britain prior to World War II, Winston Churchill continued to publish during the war years as well.

You'll notice that in each of these transition examples, the beginning phrase of the sentence indicates the conclusion of a period of time (now that, thus far) or main point. Table 2: Transition Words contains a variety of transition words that will be useful when keeping your speech moving.

Table 2: Transition Words

Addition	also, again, as well as, besides, coupled with, following this, further, furthermore, in addition, in the same way, additionally, likewise, moreover, similarly
Consequence	accordingly, as a result, consequently, for this reason, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, so then, subsequently, therefore, thus, thereupon, wherefore
Generalizing	as a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, generally speaking, ordinarily, usually
Exemplifying	chiefly, especially, for instance, in particular, markedly, namely, particularly, including, specifically, such as
Illustration	for example, for instance, for one thing, as an illustration, illustrated with, as an example, in this case
Emphasis	above all, chiefly, with attention to, especially, particularly, singularly
Similarity	comparatively, coupled with, correspondingly, identically, likewise, similar, moreover, together with
Exception	aside from, barring, besides, except, excepting, excluding, exclusive of, other than, outside of, save
Restatement	in essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say, in short, in brief, to put it differently
Contrast and Comparison	contrast, by the same token, conversely, instead, likewise, on one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, nevertheless, rather, similarly, yet, but, however, still, nevertheless, in contrast
Sequence	at first, first of all, to begin with, in the first place, at the same time, for now, for the time being, the next step, in time, in turn, later on, meanwhile, next, then, soon, the meantime, later, while, earlier, simultaneously, afterward, in conclusion, with this in mind
Common Sequence Patterns	first, second, third...
	generally, furthermore, finally
	in the first place, also, lastly
	in the first place, pursuing this further, finally
	to be sure, additionally, lastly
	in the first place, just in the same way, finally
	basically, similarly, as well

Summarizing	after all, all in all, all things considered, briefly, by and large, in any case, in any event, in brief, in conclusion, on the whole, in short, in summary, in the final analysis, in the long run, on balance, to sum up, to summarize, finally
Diversion	by the way, incidentally
Direction	here, there, over there, beyond, nearly, opposite, under, above, to the left, to the right, in the distance
Location	above, behind, by, near, throughout, across, below, down, off, to the right, against, beneath, in back of, onto, under, along, beside, in front of, on top of, among, between, inside, outside, around, beyond, into, over

Beyond transitions, there are several other techniques that you can use to clarify your speech organization for your audience. The next sections address several of these techniques, including internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

Internal Previews

An **internal preview** is a phrase or sentence that gives an audience an idea of what is to come within a section of a speech. An internal preview works similarly to the preview that a speaker gives at the end of a speech introduction, quickly outlining what he or she is going to talk about (i.e. the speech's three main body points). In an internal preview, the speaker highlights what he or she is going to discuss within a specific main point during a speech.

Ausubel was the first person to examine the effect that internal previews had on retention of oral information (Ausubel, 1968). When a

speaker clearly informs an audience what they are going to be talking about in a clear and organized manner, the audience listens for those main points, which leads to higher retention of the speaker's message. Let's look at a sample internal preview:

> To help us further understand why recycling is important, we will first explain the positive benefits of recycling and then explore how recycling can help our community.

When an audience hears that you will be exploring two different ideas within this main point, they are ready to listen for those main points as you talk about them. In essence, you're helping your audience keep up with your speech.

Rather than being given alone, internal previews often come after a speaker has transitioned to that main topic area. Using the previous internal preview, let's see it along with the transition to that main point.

> Now that we've explored the effect that a lack of consistent recycling has on our community, let's explore the importance of recycling for our community (transition). To help us further understand why recycling is important, we will first explain the positive benefits of recycling and then explore how recycling can help our community (internal preview).

While internal previews are definitely helpful, you do not need to include one for every main point of your speech. In fact, we recommend that you use internal previews sparingly to highlight only the main points containing relatively complex information.

Internal Summaries

Whereas an internal preview helps an audience know what you are going to talk about within a main point at the beginning, an **internal summary** is delivered to remind an audience of what they just heard within the speech. In general, internal summaries are best used when the information within a specific main point of a speech was complicated. To write your own internal summaries, look at the summarizing transition words in [Table 2: Transition Words](#) Let's look at an example.

> To sum up, school bullying is a definite problem. Bullying in schools has been shown to be detrimental to the victim's grades, the victim's scores on standardized tests, and the victim's future educational outlook.

In this example, the speaker was probably talking about the impact that bullying has on an individual victim educationally. Of course, an internal summary can also be a great way to lead into a transition to the next point of a speech.

> In this section, we have explored how bullying in schools has been shown to be detrimental to the victim's grades, the victim's scores on standardized tests, and the victim's future educational outlook (internal summary). Therefore, schools need to implement campus-wide, comprehensive anti-bullying programs (transition).

While not sounding like the more traditional transition, this internal summary helps readers summarize the content of that main point. The sentence that follows than leads to the next major part of the

speech, which is going to discuss the importance of anti-bullying programs.

Signposts

Have you ever been on a road trip and watched the green rectangular mile signs pass you by? Fifty miles to go. Twenty-five miles to go. One mile to go. Signposts within a speech function the same way. A **signpost** is a guide a speaker gives their audience to help the audience keep up with the content of a speech. If you look at Table 2: Transition Words and look at the "common sequence patterns," you'll see a series of possible signpost options. In essence, we use these short phrases at the beginning of a piece of information to help our audience members keep up with what we're discussing. For example, if you were giving a speech whose main point was about the three functions of credibility, you could use internal signposts like this:

- The first function of credibility is competence.
- The second function of credibility is trustworthiness.
- The final function of credibility is caring/goodwill.

Signposts are meant to help your audience keep up with your speech, so the more simplistic your signposts are, the easier it is for your audience to follow.

In addition to helping audience members keep up with a speech, signposts can also be used to highlight specific information the

speaker thinks is important. Where the other signposts were designed to show the way (like highway markers), signposts that call attention to specific pieces of information are more like billboards. Words and phrases that are useful for highlighting information can be found in Table 2: Transition Words under the category "emphasis." All these words are designed to help you call attention to what you are saying so that the audience will also recognize the importance of the information.

A **transition** is a phrase or sentence that indicates that a speaker is moving from one main point to another main point in a speech.

An **internal preview** is a phrase or sentence that gives an audience an idea of what is to come within a section of a speech.

An **internal summary** is delivered to remind an audience of what they just heard within the speech.

A **signpost** is a guide a speaker gives their audience to help the audience keep up with the content of a speech.

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8. Effective Introductions and Powerful Conclusions

Introductions and conclusions can be challenging. One of the most common complaints novice public speakers have is that they simply don't know how to start or end a speech. It may feel natural to start crafting a speech at the beginning, but it can be difficult to craft an introduction for something

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which doesn't yet exist. Many times, creative and effective ideas for how to begin a speech will come to speakers as they go through the process of researching and organizing ideas. Similarly, a conclusion

needs to be well considered and leave audience members with a sense of satisfaction.

In this chapter, we will explore why introductions and conclusions are important, and we will identify various ways speakers can create impactful beginnings and endings. There is not a "right" way to start or end a speech, but we can provide some helpful guidelines that will make your introductions and conclusions much easier for you as a speaker and more effective for your audience.

The Importance of an Introduction
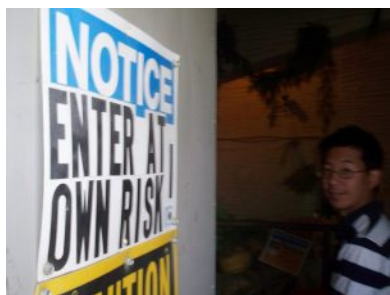
Brian Indrelunas – enter at your own risk – CC BY-NC 2.0.

The introduction of a speech is incredibly important because it needs to establish the topic and purpose, set up the reason your audience should listen to you and set a precedent for the rest of the speech. Imagine the first day of a semester long class. You will have a different perception of the course if the teacher is excited, creative and clear about what is to come then if the teacher recites to you what the class is about and is confused or disorganized about the rest of the semester. The same thing goes for a speech. The introduction is an important opportunity for the speaker to gain the interest and trust of the audience.

Overall, an effective introduction serves five functions. Let's examine each of these.

Gain Audience Attention and Interest

The first major purpose of an introduction is to gain your audience's attention and get them interested in what you have to say. While your audience may know you, this is your speeches' first impression! One common incorrect assumption beginning speakers make that people will naturally listen because the speaker is speaking. While many audiences may be polite and not talk while you're speaking, actually getting them to listen and care about what you are saying is a completely different challenge. Think to a time when you've tuned out a speaker because you were not interested in what they had to say or how they were saying it. However, I'm sure you can also think of a time someone engaged you in a topic you wouldn't have thought was interesting, but because of how they presented it or their energy about the subject, you were fascinated. As the speaker, you have the ability to engage the audience right away.

State the Purpose of Your Speech

The second major function of an introduction is to reveal the purpose of your speech to your audience. Have you ever sat through a speech wondering what the basic point was? Have you ever come away after a speech and had no idea what the speaker was talking about? An introduction is critical for explaining the topic to the audience and justifying why they should care about it. The speaker needs to have an in-depth understanding of the specific focus of their topic and the goals they have for their speech. 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." The specific purpose is the one idea you want your audience to remember when you are finished with

your speech. Your specific purpose is the rudder that guides your research, organization, and development of main points. The more clearly focused your purpose is, the easier it will be both for you to develop your speech and your audience to understand your core point. To make sure you are developing a specific purpose, you should be able to complete the sentence: "I want my audience to understand…" Notice that your specific speech purpose is phrased in terms of expected audience responses, not in terms of your own perspective.

Establish 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 idea of **credibility** relates directly to audience perception. You may be the most competent, caring, and trustworthy speaker in the world on a given topic, but if your audience does not perceive you as credible, then your expertise and passion will not matter to them. As public speakers, we need to communicate to our audiences why we are credible speakers on a given topic. James C. McCroskey and Jason J. Teven have conducted extensive research on credibility and have determined that an individual's credibility is composed of three factors: competence, trustworthiness, and caring/goodwill (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Competence is the degree to which a speaker is perceived to be knowledgeable or expert in a given subject by an audience member.

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 the audience does not perceive a speaker as trustworthy, the

information coming out of the speaker's mouth is automatically perceived as deceitful.

Finally, **caring/goodwill** is the last 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 indicated by Wrench, McCroskey, and Richmond, "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" (Wrench, McCroskey & Richmond, 2008). As a speaker, then, you need to establish that your information is being presented because you care about your 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 understanding 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.

> **Credibility** relates directly to audience perception. You may be the most competent, caring, and trustworthy speaker in the world on a given topic, but if your audience does not perceive you as credible, then your expertise and passion will not matter to them.
>
> **Trustworthiness** is the degree to which an audience member perceives a speaker as honest.
>
> **Caring/goodwill** is the degree to which an audience member perceives a speaker as caring about the audience member.

Provide 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 your audience is to provide them with reasons why they should listen to your 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'll spend a lot more time talking about how you can establish a good relationship with your audience. This relationship starts the moment you step to the front of the room to start speaking.

Instead of assuming the audience will make their own connections to your material, you should explicitly state how your information might be useful to your audience. Tell them directly how they might use your information themselves. It is not enough for you alone to be interested in your topic. You need to build a bridge to the audience by explicitly connecting your topic to their possible needs.

Preview Main Ideas

The last major function of an introduction is to preview the main ideas that your speech will discuss. A preview establishes the direction your speech will take. We sometimes call this process signposting because you're establishing signs for audience members to look for while you're 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 points will be, which demonstrates to the audience that the speaker is organized.

A study by Baker found that individuals who were unorganized

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

Putting Together a Strong Introduction

Now that we have an understanding of the functions of an introduction, let's explore the details of putting one together. As with all aspects of a speech, these may change based on your audience, circumstance, and topic. But this will give you a basic understanding of the important parts of an intro,

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what they do, and how they work together.

Attention Getting Device

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. Topic and purpose of the speech

2. Appropriateness or relevance to the audience
3. Topic
4. Occasion

First, when selecting an attention-getting device is considering your speech topic and purpose. Ideally, your attention-getting device should have a relevant connection to your speech. Imagine if a speaker pulled condoms out of his pocket, yelled "Free sex!" and threw the condoms at the audience. This act might gain everyone's attention, but would probably not be a great way to begin a speech about the economy. Thinking about your topic because the interest you want to create needs to be specific to your subject. More specifically, you want to consider the basic purpose of your speech. When selecting an attention getter, you want to make sure that you select one that corresponds with your basic purpose. If your goal is to entertain an audience, 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 your audience's attention. Remember, one of the goals of an introduction is to prepare your audience for your speech. If your attention-getter differs drastically in tone from the rest of your speech the disjointedness may cause your audience to become confused or tune you out completely.

Possible Attention Getters

These will help you start brainstorming ideas for how to begin your speech. While not a complete list, these

are some of the most common forms of attention-getters:

- Quotation
- Reference to Current Events
- Historical Reference
- Story
- Startling Fact
- Question
- Rhetorical Question
- Humor
- Hypothetical Situation
- Demonstration
- Personal Reference
- Reference to Audience
- Reference to Occasion

Second, when selecting an attention-getting device, you want to make sure you are being appropriate and relevant to your specific audience. Different audiences will have different backgrounds and knowledge, so you should keep your audience in mind when determining how to get their attention. For example, if you're giving a speech on family units to a group of individuals over the age of sixty-five, starting your 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.

Finally, the last consideration involves the speech occasion. Different occasions will necessitate different **tones** or particular styles or manners of speaking. For example, giving a eulogy at a funeral will have a very different feel than a business presentation.

This understanding doesn't mean certain situations are always the same, but rather taking into account the details of your circumstances will help you craft an effective beginning to your speech. When selecting an attention-getter, you want to make sure that the attention-getter sets the tone for the speech and situation.

> **Tones** are particular styles or manners of speaking determined by the speech's occasion.

Link to Topic

The link to the topic occurs when a speaker demonstrates how an attention-getting device relates to the topic of a speech. This presentation of the relationship works to transition your audience from the attention getter to the larger issue you are discussing. Often the attention-getter and the link to the topic are very clear. But other times, there may need to be a more obvious connection between how you began your attention-getting device and the specific subject you are discussing. You may have an amazing attention-getter, but if you can't connect it to the main topic and purpose of your speech, it will not be as effective.

Significance

Once you have linked an attention-getter to the topic of your speech,

you need to explain to your audience why your topic is important and why they should care about what you have to say. Sometimes you can include the significance of your topic in the same sentence as your link to the topic, but other times you may need to spell out in one or two sentences why your specific topic is important to this audience.

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. You may even want to write a version of your thesis statement before you even begin conducting research for your speech in order to guide you. While you may end up rewriting your thesis statement later, having a clear idea of your purpose, intent, or main idea before you start searching for research will help you focus on the most appropriate material.

Preview of Speech

The final part of an introduction contains a preview of the major points to be covered by your speech. I'm sure 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 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.

Putting it all together

The importance of introductions often leads speakers to work on them first, attending to every detail. While it is good to have some ideas and notes about the intro, specifically the thesis statement, it is often best to wait until the majority of the speech is crafted before really digging into the crafting of the introduction. This timeline may not seem intuitive, but remember, the intro is meant to introduce your speech and set up what is to come. It is difficult to introduce something that you haven't made yet. This is why working on your main points first can help lead to an even stronger introduction.

Why Conclusions Matter

Willi Heidelbach – [Puzzle2](#) – CC BY 2.0.
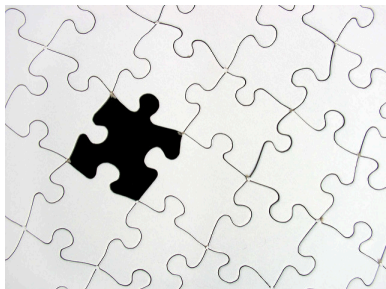
As public speaking professors and authors, we have seen many students give otherwise good speeches that seem to fall apart at the end. We've seen students end their three main points by saying things such as "OK, I'm done"; "Thank God that's over!"; or "Thanks. Now what? Do I just sit down?" It's understandable to feel relief at the end of a speech, but remember that as a speaker, your conclusion is the last chance you have to drive home your 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, remind yourself to keep your energy up as you approach the end of your speech, and plan ahead so that your conclusion 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, you need to keep in mind the importance of developing a speech with an effective introduction and an effective body. If you have these elements, you will have the foundation you need to be able 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 helps your listeners remember your speech.

Signals the End

The first thing a good conclusion can do is to signal the end of a speech. You may be thinking that showing an audience that you're about to stop speaking is a "no brainer," but many speakers don't prepare their audience for the end. 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 the next section, 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 Your Speech

The second reason for a good conclusion stems out of some research reported by the German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus back in 1885 in his book *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology* (Ebbinghaus, 1885). 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 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 created an experiment that rearranged the ordering of a speech to determine the recall of information (Ehrensberger, 1945). 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.

Steps of a Conclusion

In the previous sections, we discussed the importance a conclusion has on a speech. In this section, we're going to examine the three steps to building an effective conclusion.

Restatement of the Thesis

Restating a thesis statement is the first step to a powerful conclusion. As we explained earlier, 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 your thesis statement was, "I will analyze Barack Obama's use of lyricism in his July 2008 speech, 'A World That Stands as One.'" You could restate the thesis in this fashion at the conclusion of your 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 your conclusion reminds the audience of the main purpose or goal of your 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 your 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 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:

> 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.

> 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 initially set forth. Both variations are equally effective reviews of the main points, but you 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. You are always encouraged to choose the wording that you think will be most effective for your audience.

Concluding Device

The final part of a powerful conclusion is the concluding device. A **concluding device** is a final thought you want your audience members to have when you stop speaking. It also provides a definitive sense of closure to your 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 observed that speakers tend to use one of ten concluding devices when ending a speech (Miller, 1946). The rest of this section is going to examine these ten concluding devices and one additional device that we have added.

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 activity that requires a special effort. In a speech on the necessity of fundraising, a speaker could conclude by challenging the audience to raise 10 percent more than their original projections. In a speech on eating more vegetables, you could challenge your 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.

Conclude with a Quotation

A second way you can conclude a speech is by reciting a quotation relevant to the speech topic. When using a quotation, you need to think about whether your 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 you are delivering an informative speech about dissident writers in the former Soviet Union. You could end by citing this quotation from Alexander Solzhenitsyn: "A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason,

no regime has ever loved great writers" (Solzhenitsyn, 1964). Notice that this quotation underscores the idea of writers as dissidents, but it doesn't ask listeners to put forth the effort to engage in any specific thought process or behavior. If, on the other hand, you were delivering a persuasive speech urging your audience to participate in a very risky political demonstration, you might use this quotation from Martin Luther King Jr.: "If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live" (King, 1963). 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, they are 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 your 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 your audience imagine the future you believe can occur. If you are giving a speech on the development of video games for learning, you 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 their 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, an **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 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 connect with someone emotionally. 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 about 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. **<u>Advice</u>** is 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 for your opinion. Your advice should matter to your audience. If, for example, you are an expert in nuclear physics, you might conclude a speech on energy by giving advice about the benefits of nuclear energy.

Conclude by Proposing a Solution

Another way a speaker can conclude a speech powerfully is to offer a solution to the problem discussed within a speech. For example, perhaps a speaker has been discussing the problems associated with the disappearance of art education in the United States. The speaker could then propose a solution for creating more community-based art experiences for school children as a way to fill this gap. Although this can be a compelling conclusion, a speaker must ask themselves

whether the solution should be discussed in more depth as a stand-alone main point within the body of the speech so that audience concerns about the proposed solution may be addressed.

Conclude with a Question

Another way you can end a speech is to ask a rhetorical question that forces the audience to ponder an idea. Maybe you are giving a speech on the importance of the environment, so you 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 you aren't 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.

Conclude with a Reference to

Audience

The last concluding device discussed by Miller (1946) was a reference to one's audience. This concluding device is when a speaker attempts to answer the audience question, "What's in it for me?" The goal of this concluding device is to spell out the direct benefits a behavior or thought change has for audience members. For example, a speaker talking about stress reduction techniques could conclude by listing all the physical health benefits stress reduction offers (e.g. improved reflexes, improved immune system, improved hearing, reduction in blood pressure). In this case, the speaker is spelling out why audience members should care. They're telling the audience what's in it for them!

Connect to your Introduction

Finally, one tactic a speaker often uses is to link the introduction of the speech to the conclusion. For example, if you began your speech with a quotation, your conclusion may refer back to that person's words in respect to what your audience has learned throughout your speech. While not always necessary, linking back to your introduction can provide a feeling of coming full circle for your audience. The repetitive nature can also help aid in remembering your speech and topic. However, you don't want to just repeat. Instead, you want to utilize similar aspects of your attention getter to illustrate growth or movement from the beginning of your speech to the end.

A **concluding device** is a final thought you want your audience members to have when you stop speaking.

A **challenge** is a call to engage in some activity that requires special effort.

An **appeal for action** occurs when a speaker asks their audience to engage in a specific behavior or change in thinking.

An **immediate call to action** asks people to engage in behavior right now.

Inspire means to affect or connect with someone emotionally.

Advice is a speaker's opinion about what should or should not be done.

Informative versus Persuasive Conclusions

As you read through the ten possible ways to conclude a speech, hopefully, you noticed that some of the methods are more appropriate for persuasive speeches and others are more appropriate for informative speeches. To help you choose appropriate conclusions for informative, persuasive, or entertaining speeches, we've created a table to help you quickly identify suitable concluding devices.

Your Speech Purpose and Concluding Devices

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

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TAKING YOUR SPEECH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

In this section you will learn how to refine the content of your speech, with a specific emphasis on persuasion.

9. Persuasive Speaking

Adapted from:

Tucker, Barbara and Barton, Kristin, "Exploring Public Speaking" (2016). Communication Open Textbooks. Book 1. http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/communication-textbooks/1

Speaker's Corner – The north-east corner of Hyde Park is the haunt of many orators who speak on any subject under the sun. This Southern US gentleman was speaking on the Bible. – CC BY 2.0.

Every day we are bombarded with persuasive messages. Some messages are mediated and designed to get us to purchase specific products or vote for a particular candidate, while others might come from our loved ones and are designed to get us to help around the house or join the family for game night. Whatever the message being sent, we are constantly being persuaded and persuading others. In this chapter, we are going to focus on persuasive speaking. We will

first talk about persuasion as a general concept. We will then examine four different types of persuasive speeches, and finally, we'll look at three organizational patterns that are useful for persuasive speeches.

Why Persuasion?

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We defined **persuasion** earlier in this text as an attempt to get a person to behave in a manner, or embrace a point of view related to values, attitudes, and beliefs, that he or she would not have done otherwise. Perloff (2003) defines **persuasion** as:

> A symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding

an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice. (p. 8)

First, notice that persuasion is symbolic, that is, uses language or other symbols (even graphics can be symbols), rather than force or other means. Second, notice that it is an attempt, not always entirely successful. Third, there is an "atmosphere of free choice," in that the persons being persuaded can choose not to believe or act. And fourth, notice that the persuader is "trying to convince others to change."

Some of this may sound like splitting hairs, but these are four important points. The fact that audience members have a free choice means that they are active participants in their own persuasion. They can choose whether the speaker is successful. For our purposes in this class, it calls on the student speaker to be ethical and truthful. Sometimes students will say, "It is just a class assignment, I can lie in this speech," but that is not a fair way to treat your classmates.

Perloff's definition distinguishes between "attitude" and "behavior," meaning that an audience may be persuaded to think, to feel, or to act. Finally, persuasion is a process. Successful persuasion actually takes a while. One speech can be effective, but usually, other messages influence the listener in the long run.

Two Definitions of 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 he or she would not have done otherwise.

Perloff's definition of persuasion is, **persuasion** is

> a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice.

Change Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

The first type of persuasive public speaking involves a change in someone's attitudes, values, and beliefs. An **attitude** is defined as an individual's general predisposition toward something as being good or bad, right or wrong, or negative or positive. Maybe you believe that local curfew laws for people under twenty-one are a bad idea, so you want to persuade others to adopt a negative attitude toward such laws.

You can also attempt to persuade an individual to change her or his value of something. A **value** refers to an individual's perception of the usefulness, importance, or worth of something. We can value a college education or technology or freedom. Values, as a general concept, are fairly ambiguous and tend to be very lofty ideas. Ultimately, what we value in life motivates us to engage in a range

of behaviors. For example, if you value technology, you are more likely to seek out new technology or software on your own. On the contrary, if you do not value technology, you are less likely to seek out new technology or software unless someone, or some circumstance, requires you to.

Lastly, you can attempt to get 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 or 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, and 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 never have 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).

When it comes to persuading people to alter core and dispositional beliefs, persuading audiences to change core beliefs is more difficult than persuading audiences to alter 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.

An **attitude** is defined as an individual's general predisposition toward something as being good or bad, right or wrong, or negative or positive.

A **value** refers to an individual's perception of the usefulness, importance, or worth of something.

Beliefs are propositions or positions that an individual holds as true or false without positive knowledge or proof.

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 or belief in extraterrestrial life forms).

Dispositional beliefs are beliefs that people have not actively engaged in but rather judgments that they make, based on their knowledge of related subjects, and when they encounter a proposition.

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 enumerate three reasons why people should study persuasion (Frymier & Nadler, 2007). 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 pick apart the messages being sent to you and see why some of them are good and others are 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. We'll be able to understand why some public speakers can get an audience eating out of their hands, while others flop.

Furthermore, 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.

Why is Persuasion Hard?

Persuasion is hard mainly because we have a bias against change. As much as we hear statements like "The only constant is change" or "Variety is the spice of life," the evidence from research and from our personal experience shows that, in reality, we do not like change. Recent research, in risk aversion, points to how we are more concerned about keeping from losing something than with gaining something. Change is often seen as a loss of something rather than a gain of something else. Change is a step into the unknown, a gamble (Vedantam & Greene, 2013).

In the 1960s, psychiatrists, Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, wanted to investigate the effect of stress on life and health. As explained on the Mindtools website:

> They surveyed more than 5,000 medical patients and asked them to say whether they had experienced any of a series of 43 life events in the previous two years. Each event, called a Life Change Unit (LCU), had a different "weight" for stress.

> The more events the patient added up, the higher the score. The higher the score and the larger the weight of each event, the more likely the patient was to become ill. (The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, 2015)

You can find the Holmes-Rahe stress scale on many websites. What you will see is that the stressful events almost all have to do with a change in some life situations. These changes can include the death of a close family member (which might rate 100 LCUs), loss of a job, even some good changes like the Christmas holidays (12 LCUs). Change is stressful. We do not embrace things that bring us stress.

Additionally, psychologists have pointed to how we go out of our way to protect our beliefs, attitudes, and values. First, we selectively expose ourselves to messages that we already agree with, rather than those that confront or challenge us. This selective exposure is often seen in choices of mass media that individuals listen to and read, whether TV, radio, or Internet sites. Not only do we selectively expose ourselves to information, we selectively attend to, perceive, and recall information that supports our existing viewpoints.

This principle led Leon Festinger (1957) to form the theory of cognitive dissonance, which states, among other ideas, that when we are confronted with conflicting information or viewpoints, we reach a state of dissonance, which can be very uncomfortable, and we will do things to get rid of the dissonance and maintain "consonance." The easiest way to do so is to not expose oneself to conflicting messages in the first place.

Additionally, as mentioned before, during a persuasive speech the audience members are holding a mental dialogue with the speaker or at least the speaker's content. They are putting up rebuttals or counter-arguments. These have been called reservations (as in the audience member would like to believe the speaker but has reservations about doing so). They could also be called the "yeah-buts" because the audience members are saying in their minds, "Yeah,

I see what you are arguing, but—". These reservations can be very strong, since, the bias is to be loss averse and *not* to change our actions or beliefs.

In a sense, the reasons *not* to change can be stronger than even very logical reasons *to* change. For example, you probably know a friend who will not wear a seatbelt in a car. You can say to your friend, "Don't you know that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2009) says, and I quote, '1,652 lives could be saved, and 22,372 serious injuries avoided each year on America's roadways if seat belt use rates rose to 90 percent in every state'?" What will your friend probably say, even though you have cited a credible source?

They will probably come up with some reason for not wearing it. Their response could even be something as dramatic as "I knew a guy who had a cousin who was in an accident and the cop said he died because he was wearing his seatbelt." You may have had this conversation or one like it. Their argument may be less dramatic, such as "I don't like how it feels" or "I don't like the government telling me what to do in my car." For your friend, the argument for wearing a seat belt was not as strong as the argument against it, at least at this moment. If they are open-minded and can listen to evidence, they might experience cognitive dissonance and then be persuaded.

Solutions to the Difficulty of Persuasion

With these reasons for the resistance audience members would have to persuasion, what is a speaker to do? Here are some strategies.

Since change is resisted, we do not make many large or major changes in our lives. We do, however, make smaller, concrete, step-by-step or incremental changes in our lives every day. Having reasonable persuasive goals is the first way to meet resistance. Even

moving someone a little bit is progress. Over time, these small shifts will eventually result in a significant amount of persuasion.

Secondly, a speaker must "deal with the reservations." First, the speaker must acknowledge they exist. The acknowledgment shows audience awareness, and then the speaker must attempt to rebut or refute them. In reality, since persuasion involves a mental dialogue, your audience is more than likely thinking of counter-arguments in their minds. Therefore, including a refutation section in your speech, after your presentation of arguments in favor of your proposition, is a required and important strategy.

There are some techniques for rebuttal or refutation that work better than others. You would not want to say, "One argument against my proposition is…, and that is wrong" or "If you are one of the people who believe this about my proposition, you are wrong." On the other hand, you could say that the reservations are "misconceptions," "myths," or "mistaken ideas" that are commonly held about the proposition. Generally, strong persuasive speeches offer the audience what are called **two-tailed arguments.** Two-tailed arguments bring up a valid issue against your argument which you, as the speaker, must then refute. After acknowledging them and seeking to refute or rebut the reservations, you must also provide evidence for your refutation.

> **Two-tailed arguments** bring up a valid issue against your argument which you, as the speaker, must then refute.

Ultimately, this will show your audience that you are aware of both sides of the issue you are presenting. Your knowledge makes you a

more credible speaker. However, you cannot just say something like this:

> "One common misconception about wearing seatbelts is that if the car goes off a bridge and is sinking in water, you would not be able to release the belt and get out. First, that rarely happens. Second, if it did, getting the seat belt unbuckled would be the least of your worries. You would have to know how to get out of the car, not just the seat belt. Third, the seat belt would have protected you from any head injuries in such a crash, therefore keeping you conscious and able to help anyone else in the car."

This refutation is a good start, but there are some assertions in here that would need support from a reliable source. For example, the argument that the "submerging in water" scenario is rare. If it has happened to someone you know, you probably would not think it is rare.

The third strategy is to keep in mind that because you are asking the audience to change something, they must view the benefits of the change as worth the stress of the change. If you conduct a good audience analysis, you know they are asking, "What's in it for me?" What benefit or advantage or improvement would happen for the audience members? It could be the benefit of being logical, having consonance rather than dissonance, being consistent with the evidence and authorities on a subject, or there might be some benefit from changing behavior.

If the audience is being persuaded to sign an organ donor card, which is an altruistic action that cannot benefit them in any way because they will be dead, what would be the benefit? Knowing others would have better lives, feeling a sense of contribution to the good of humanity, and helping medical science might be examples. The point is that a speaker should be able to engage the audience at the level of needs, wants, and values as well as logic and evidence.

How to Persuade
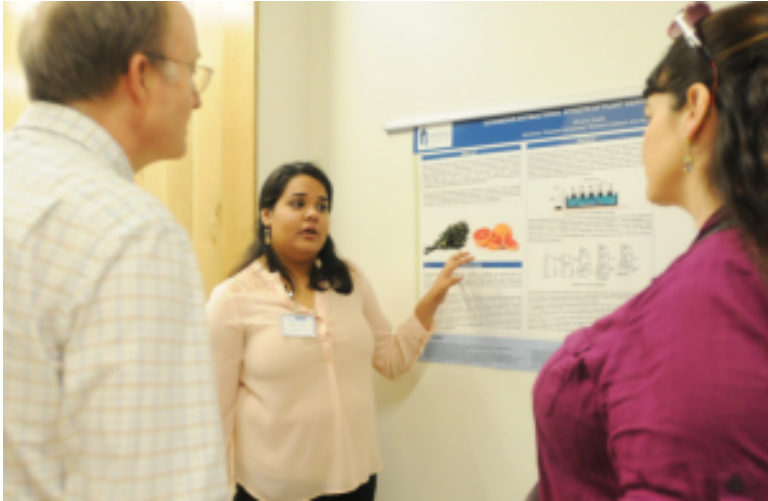
In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle took upon the study of the public speaking practices of the ruling class in Athenian society. For two years he observed the rhetoric of the men who spoke in the assembly and the courts. In the end, he wrote *Rhetoric* to explain his theories about what he saw. Among his many conclusions, which have formed the basis of communication study for centuries, was the classification of persuasive appeals into ethos, logos, and pathos. Over the years, Aristotle's original understanding and definition of these terms have been refined as more psychological research has been done.

Ethos

Ethos has come to mean the influence of speaker credentials and character in a speech. Ethos is one of the more studied aspects of public speaking. During the speech, a speaker should seek to utilize their existing credibility (based on the favorable things an audience already knows or believes about the speaker, such as education, expertise, background, and good character), and to improve or enhance their credibility (through citing reliable, authoritative sources, strong arguments, showing awareness of the audience, and effective delivery).

The word "ethos" looks very much like the word "ethics," and there are many close parallels to the trust an audience has in a speaker and his or her honesty and ethical stance. In terms of ethics, your speech will be truthful. Another matter to consider is your own personal involvement in the topic. Ideally, you have chosen the topic because it means a great deal to you personally.

For example, perhaps your speech is designed to motivate audience members to take action against bullying in schools, and it is important to you because you work with the Boys and Girls Club organization and have seen how anti-bullying programs can have positive results. Sharing your own involvement and commitment is key to the credibility and emotional appeal (ethos and pathos) of the speech, added to the logos (evidence showing the success of the programs and the damage caused by bullying that goes unchecked). However, it would be wrong to manufacture stories of personal involvement that are untrue, even if the proposition is a socially valuable one.

Logos

Aristotle's original meaning for **logos** had philosophical meanings tied to the Greek worldview that the universe is a place ruled by logic and reason. Logos in a speech is related to standard forms of arguments that the audience would find acceptable. Today we think of logos as both the logical and organized arguments and the credible evidence used to support the arguments in a speech.

Pathos

In words like "empathy," "sympathy," and "compassion," we see the root word behind pathos. **Pathos**, to Aristotle, was using the emotions such as anger, joy, hate, desire for community, and love to persuade the audience of the rightness of a proposition. One example of emotional appeals is using strong visual aids and engaging stories to get the attention of the audience. Someone asking you to donate money to help homeless pets may not have a strong effect, but seeing the ASPCA's commercials that feature emaciated and mistreated animals is probably much more likely to persuade you to donate (add the music for full emotional effect).

Emotions are also engaged by showing the audience that the proposition relates to their needs. However, we recognize that emotions are complex and that they can be used to create a smokescreen to logic. Emotional appeals that use inflammatory language, like name-calling, are often unethical or at least counterproductive. Some emotions are more appropriate for persuasive speeches than others. Anger and guilt, for example, do have effectiveness, but they can backfire. Positive emotions such as pride, sympathy, and contentment are usually more productive.

One negative emotion that is useful and that can be used ethically is fear. When you think about it, we do a number of things in life to avoid negative consequences. Avoiding negative consequences often means making decisions out of fear. Why don't we drive 100 miles an hour on the interstate? Fear of getting a ticket, fear of paying more for insurance, fear of a crash, fear of hurting ourselves or others. Fear is not always applicable to a specific topic, but research shows that mild fear appeals, under certain circumstances, are very useful. When using fear appeals, the speaker must:

- Prove the fear appeal is valid.
- Prove the fear applies to the audience.
- Prove that the solution can work.
- Prove the solution is available to the audience.

Without these "proofs," the audience may dismiss the fear appeal as not being real or not applying to them (O'Keefe, 2002).

Ethos is the influence of speaker credentials and character in a speech.

Logos is both the logical and organized arguments and the credible evidence used to support the arguments in a speech.

Pathos is using the emotions such as anger, joy, hate, desire for community, and love to persuade the audience of the rightness of a proposition.

For example, a student gave a speech in one of our classes about flossing teeth. He used dramatic and disturbing photos of dental and

gum problems, and he also proved that the dramatic photos of gum disease really did come from lack of flossing. The solution to avoid the gum disease was readily available, and the student proved through his evidence that the solution of flossing regularly did work to avoid the disease. Fear appeals can be overdone, but mild ones supported by evidence are useful.

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10. Developing Strong Arguments

Josh Miller, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Learning Objectives

- Understand the principles of argumentation.
- Identify the parts of an argument.
- Understand the different types of arguments, and how to make an effective argument.
- Explain the techniques for creating and the benefits of having counter arguments.

When you think of the word argument, you might also think of intense shouting matches where one person attempts to yell louder than the other person. You might imagine someone's feelings getting hurt or relationships falling apart. Or, perhaps a scene emerges in your mind where one friend decides to stop speaking with another friend after an altercation. You might even think of physical violence. In general, people tend to have a negative impression about arguing, thinking that arguments are destructive and harmful. We want to avoid arguments. This chapter, however, takes a different approach to argument. As you will learn in this chapter, effective public speeches

develop around arguments, and arguments do not need to be considered harmful things to be avoided. Instead, someone engaged in an argument gives logical reasons to other people—reasons that might enable those people to change their own minds about a particular topic or issue.

This chapter will first equip you with some basic principles for understanding the importance of arguments in public speaking. Based on those principles, you will learn why speeches must have arguments and how to determine the success of an argument. Then, you will learn about the basic structure of an argument, so you have the tools to develop compelling arguments. The chapter will also discuss several types of arguments that you can make, and it will warn you several types of argumentative strategies that you will want to avoid. You will also learn about the significance of knowing what other people might think about your topic and why it is important to address other people's potential concerns with your topic in your speech itself.

Principles of Argumentation

Before we examine the structure of an argument, it might be helpful to first cover some essential principles of argumentation. These principles help us to be better equipped to answer the following questions: why do we argue? What is argumentation and what is an argument? How do I know that I have made a successful argument? There are four principles in total: (1) argumentation solves problems, (2) argumentation involves uncertainty, (3) arguments are a process and a product, and (4) success is determined by the audience.

Principle #1: Argumentation as Solutions to Problems

Why do we make arguments and why do we engage in argumentation? At the most basic level, we engage in arguments to solve problems. In your local community, you might believe that the roads are littered with too many potholes, so you decide to convince your neighbors and your local city council to raise taxes to fix all of those potholes. To convince your neighbors and city council members to make the change, you need to engage in argumentation. In other words, you need to give your audience, members of your local city council and neighbors, good reasons as to why they should make a change and taxes should be increased. What distinguishes argumentation from other ways to solve problems is that arguers will use evidence and logical reasoning to convince others that there is a problem and that they know the best way to fix the problem.[i] In public speaking, argumentation is not a zero-sum game where there is a clear winner and loser because the goal of argumentation is connection and problem-solving. In short, arguments are used to inspire action and solutions to fix problems.

Principle #2: Argumentation involves Uncertainty

Arguments are necessary when there is uncertainty about what people can do or should do at some point in the future. Arguments work to reduce that uncertainty. When we face a problem in our daily lives, in our communities, or as a nation, we have many different options about what we can do. Some might not even recognize or believe that a problem is occurring and thus believe that we do not need to do anything. Some people might believe that one possible

solution is better than the other solutions, and some might disagree with that assessment. Moreover, we generally need to decide how to respond to the problem with limited information, and we can never be certain what the proper course of action entails. If the solution were obvious, we would not need to make arguments to convince others of the best course of action. When we face problems, we can try to agree on the best course of action by giving each other reasons why we should prefer one action over another. Because of the uncertainty inherent in argumentation, arguments require people to take "inferential leaps" or leaps of faith. People make these leaps of faith because they believe that a strong rationale exists for believing in one point of view over another.[ii]

Principle #3: Arguments as Products/Process

We can understand arguments as being both a product and a process. To view an argument as a product is to understand that an argument is something that is made and has a structure. As a public speaker, you will make an argument to convince someone to agree with your point of view. You will give evidence and use that evidence to make an argument about why your point of view is correct. However, arguments are something that you will also have with other people. Arguments do not occur in a vacuum. So, to view argument as a process means to understand that arguments happen in interactions with others. Through that process, you might tell your audience why you believe your evidence justifies a particular position over another, but your audience members might also tell you why they think their point of view is superior to others. Throughout that interaction and exchange of ideas and evidence, hopefully, you and your fellow arguers will arrive and agree upon the best course of action.

In order for the process of argumentation to work, both you and

your audience members have to be open to persuasion. This openness is known as the **principle of reciprocity**. True argumentation can only occur if both you and your audience are open to being persuaded and willing to admit that you may be wrong.[iii] You and your audience members have to be willing to examine the evidence and be willing to compromise. That is, engagement with others is necessary for productive argumentation.[iv] Otherwise, even though you might be exchanging points of view and evidence supporting those points of view, both you and your audience members will not be able to arrive at a collective course of action that will solve the problems you face. In short, arguments are things that we make (produce), but arguments are also things that we do with others (process).

> The **principle of reciprocity** is when both you and your audience members are open to persuasion.

Principle #4: Success is Determine by Your Audience

Being correct is not the same thing as having a strong or successful argument. Success is based on earning agreement of your audience. When we argue, it is because we want others to share our point of view and act with us to solve a problem. Ultimately, it is up to our audience to decide if they want to agree with our point of view and act collectively with us. So, even if we are confident that we are correct in what we believe, we cannot consider our arguments

to be successful until we convince others to agree with our point of view. The process of earning agreement from your audience can be long and difficult. However, merely repeating what you believe to be correct will not foster a successful argument. It is not until you realize that your audience determines whether or not your argument is correct that you can begin to work to earn that agreement. As such, creating a successful argument often takes time, effort, research, and a willingness to engage with ideas and beliefs with which you disagree.

Now that we have covered some of the basic principles of argumentation, let us examine the parts of an argument. Knowing the parts of every argument will help you recognize whether or not you are crafting an effective argument for your speech.

The Parts of an Argument

A well-structured argument contains at least three parts: the claim, the data, and the reasoning. The **claim** is the initial statement with which you would like your audience to agree. The **data** is the supporting material and evidence that you present to your audience that you believe shows that your claim is accurate. The **reasoning** is the logical connection between your data and claim. In other words, the reasoning shows your audience why your data supports your claim.[i] For example, if you are attempting to convince your friend to go eat lunch with you at a local burger place, you might say "we should go to that burger place for lunch today." You want your friend to agree with that statement, and it is thus your claim. Your friend might ask "why?" And, you might respond by stating "it has the best fries." This statement is your data because it is the supporting material that you provided to your friend to prove that your claim ("we should go to the burger place") is correct. Your reasoning is the

logical connection between your claim and the data. In this case, your reasoning might be that "restaurants that have the best fries are the best places to eat." This statement connects your data (that the burger place has the best fries) to your claim (that you should eat at the burger place). Thus, your complete argument: "Places that have the best fries are the best places to eat lunch. So, we should eat at the burger place, because they have the best fries." This statement includes your claim, data, and reasoning.
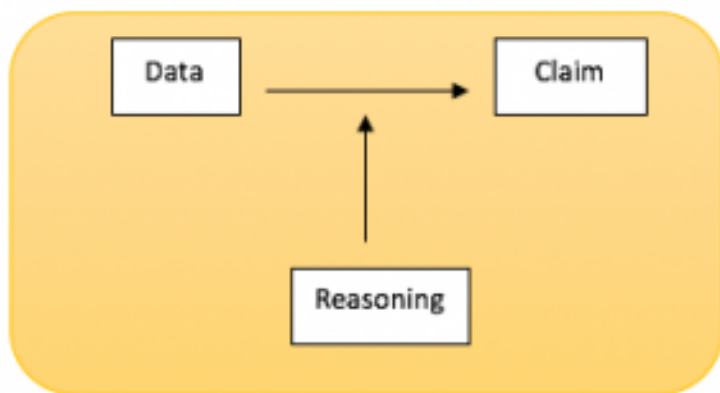
In everyday conversation, speakers do not always explicitly state the reasoning of the argument. When you talk to your friends about where to eat lunch, you might only say "we should eat at the burger place, because they have great fries." If you ever said this statement, you would have only explicitly stated the claim and data. The reasoning is implied, and you would have assumed that your friends would understand the logical connection between having good fries and going to a place to eat. Based on this example, we might infer that not everyone will explicitly state their reasoning. However, for your argument to be effective, your audience needs to understand and agree with the logical connection between your claim and data.

As such, if you do not state the reasoning explicitly, you must be confident that the logical connection is obvious enough that your audience will understand what it is. To be on the safe side, you should be as explicit as possible about how your data supports your claim in your speech, especially if your argument is complex or new to your audience. Remember that without a clear connection between your data and claim your argument will fall flat.

The **claim** is the intial statement with which you would like your audience to agree.

The **data** is the supporting material and evidence that you present to your audience that you believe shows that your claim is accurate.

The **reasoning** is the logical connection between your data and claim.

The basic structure of an argument includes a claim, data, and reasoning. To know how to develop as many diverse arguments as possible, it is helpful to know about the many different ways the reasoning process works in an argument. Let's examine the different types of argument.

Try It: "Because" Test

Strong data is critical to developing strong arguments. To

ensure that you include evidence in every argument, use the "because" test. The word because usually signals that a clause in your sentence will contain data supporting the other clause in the sentence. As such, one way to identify your claim and data is to add the word "because." Examine the topic sentence of each paragraph (or main point) of your speech. If those sentences do not contain the word "because," try to rewrite them to include the word "because." If you cannot, then it is likely that your sentence needs data to support your claim and be a complete argument. Think of the burger place example once again. In this hypothetical, if your sentence was only "we should go to the burger place," you will notice that you cannot rewrite this sentence to include the word "because." As such, this sentence is only the claim. However, if your statement was "The burger place has great fries. We should go to it." You can rewrite that statement as "we should go to the burger place because it has great fries." This statement includes both the claim ("we should go to the burger place") and data ("it has great fries"); the "because" in the sentence signals a connection between the claim and data.

Types of Arguments

Understanding different reasoning patterns can help you construct better arguments. We will examine six ways you might reason as you develop and articulate an argument: (1) arguments by induction, (2)

arguments from deduction, (3) arguments of cause, (4) arguments by analogy, (5) arguments by sign, and (6) arguments from authority.

Arguments from Induction

When **arguing by induction**, speakers take specific instances of an occurrence and generalize to a general principle based on their observation of those specific instances.[i] This process of going from specific instances and information to generalizing is also called developing an argument from example. During election seasons, pollsters use reasoning by example to make arguments about which candidate the general population prefers or wants to vote for at a given time. Pollsters ask a sample number of people to determine what they are thinking about the election. Based on the results from that sample, pollsters generalize and draw conclusions about what the general population thinks about the election and the candidates.

When developing an argument from example, your data is a specific instance of a larger phenomenon. You might use your personal experience to make your generalization. For example, if you are giving a speech about the need for public libraries, you can use your personal experience of using the public library to use the internet, check out a book, or have a quiet place to work. Based on your personal experience (your data) of needing to use the library, you generalize (your reasoning) to make the argument that libraries are an essential facet of your community (your claim). Other types of data that might be relevant to an argument from example include testimonies of other and statistics. For instance, if you want to argue that the economy of your state is doing poorly, you might find statistics that three of the largest cities in the state have growing unemployment and have a shrinking economy. Based on those three statistics (your data), you generalize (your reasoning) to conclude

that the economy in the entire state is likely weaker than it should be (your claim).

If you decide to use inductive reasoning in your speech, you should ask yourself the following questions: (1) Do I have enough examples to support the generalization? (2) Will my audience members find my examples typical and representative?[ii] Your argument from example may not be persuasive without enough examples to support your conclusion. For instance, if you are giving a speech about funding for libraries and you tell your audience that you use the libraries, your audience will not accept your generalization that the library is important because many people use it. Instead, you could provide your audience with a statistic stating the total number of people that use the libraries to generalize that many people use them. Arguments from example also fail when the examples are outliers or isolated instances. You may not like chocolate cake, but that does not mean that we can then conclude that most people dislike chocolate cake.

Arguments from Deduction

Whereas reasoning by example involves moving from specific instances to a general principle, when using **deductive reasoning**, speakers take a general principle and apply that principle to a specific case. For example, if you have evidence proving that in general students who attend a preschool do better in their K-12 education than students who do not, you might make an argument that your child should attend preschool so they can do better in their K-12 education. In this example, your claim would be that "my child should attend preschool." Your data is the study you found saying, attending preschool correlates with more success in K-12 education. The reasoning that connects the data and claim is the belief that what is

generally true for other children will be true for your child. When you make an argument that starts with a general principle and then apply that principle to a specific example, you are reasoning by deduction.

Data that supports an argument from deduction can include both facts and values derived from expert testimony, statistics, and revered documents. For example, when Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, he cited two revered documents: the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. On that hot summer's day in 1963, King exclaimed:

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."[iii]

The argument that King develops in this passage is one based on deduction. King starts with the data that the Declaration of Independence proclaims that all people are created equal. King then applies the general value principle established by the Declaration of Independence to the issue of racial segregation. When he does that, he can conclude that all races should be treated equally under the law and granted the guarantee of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Because the Declaration of Independence generally concludes that all people are created equal (data), King argues that in the specific instance (reasoning) of racial segregation that the law should treat all races equally (claim).

When developing an argument from deduction, you need to be confident that the general principle on which you base your argument is accurate and that your audience will believe that it is

accurate. If you do not believe that your audience will agree with the general principle, then you would want to include additional evidence justifying that the general principle is accurate before you apply that general principle to a specific situation.

Arguments of Cause

Arguments based on **causal reasoning** attempt to establish a cause and effect relationship between two items. So, based on an assumption about a relationship between the two items, your argument predicts that something will occur based on the data that you have. That is, you believe that one of the items influences the other items in some way. For instance, if a friend noticed you studying three hours a day for a whole week, that friend might make the following prediction: "you are going to do well on your exam because you have been putting in so many hours of studying." In this example, your friend's claim is that you will do well on the exam. The data is your friend's observation of all of the studying that you have been doing. The reasoning in this argument is that a cause and effect relationship exists between studying and doing well on an exam. When speakers and audiences believe that one thing causes the other thing, they assume that the observation of one of the things allows us to predict that the other thing will occur.

Another example of reasoning by cause would be the argument that "you should stop smoking, so you do not develop lung disease." In this argument, the claim would be "you should stop smoking." The speaker making this argument would be using causal reasoning because the argument assumes that a causal relationship between smoking and lung disease exists. The argument assumes that smoking does cause lung disease. To strengthen arguments by cause, you should clearly articulate evidence that supports the cause and effect relationship

between the two items. In the instance of the smoking example, citing evidence that establishes the connection between smoking and lung cancer would make the causal argument stronger. Moreover, strong arguments by cause usually include an explanation about how one item influences the other item. For instance, in the example about smoking, saying that smoking damages lung cells which increases the likelihood of lung disease explains to the audience how smoking and lung disease are connected.

Causal arguments fail when they are based on correlation rather than causation. Correlation means that two things tend to happen at the same time—they have a connection. However, in a correlation one thing does not cause the other thing. For example, we may notice that college debt is increasing in the United States, and we may also notice that over the same period of time smoking has been decreasing in the United States. However, we cannot conclude that if more people smoked cigarettes, college debt would decrease. When two things happen at the same time, it does not prove that one causes the other.

Arguments by Analogy

Arguments by analogy assume that if two items are alike in some respects, then they will be alike in other respects. As such, reasoning by analogy connects evidence to the claim by comparing to items.[iv] Take the following argument for example: "Sweden's health care system dramatically reduced health care costs in five years. Thus, the United States should follow Sweden's lead and adopt a similar healthcare system." In this example, the claim is that the United States should adopt a health care system that is similar to Sweden's. The data is a report that Sweden's health care costs were reduced in five years. The reasoning connects the claim and data together. In

this case, the reasoning is that because the United States and Sweden are comparable countries, what worked in Sweden should work in the United States. This type of reasoning relies on the belief that the two items (in this example, Sweden and the United States) are actually comparable in ways that are relevant to the argument. If members of the audience think that one cannot make a comparison between the two countries, then the reasoning process (and the argument) fails.

Remember that when you reason by analogy, the two objects that you are comparing need to be similar and your audience needs to understand their similarities. The similarities also need to be relevant to your argument. If the two objects that you are comparing seem dissimilar, then it will be more difficult for you to convince your audience to take the "leap of faith" and accept your claim.

Arguments by Sign

When a speaker makes an argument that uses **reasoning by sign**, the speaker assumes that the observation of one item shows that another item is occurring. Reasoning by sign then allows us to infer the presence of something, even if that thing cannot be physically observed. One of the most common arguments based on sign is the following: "I see smoke. There must be a fire." Even though the speaker does not see fire, the speaker reasons that the presence of smoke must mean that there is a fire. If we were to break that argument into its parts, we would say the claim is that there is fire. The data is the physical observation of smoke. The reasoning process would be that "smoke is a sign of fire."

Reasoning by sign is distinct from reasoning by cause because reasoning by sign does not attempt to show a causal relationship between the two things. That is, when you are reasoning by sign, you are not saying that "smoke causes fire" but that "from our observation

of smoke, we can assume the presence of fire." If we were to use reasoning by cause, we might state that: "because fire causes smoke, if I start a fire, there will also be smoke." In the example of reasoning by cause, we infer something *will* happen based on the occurrence of something else. In the example of reasoning by sign, we infer something *is happening* based on our observation of something else.

When reasoning by sign, you want to be careful to take into account alternative explanations of what might be happening. For example, if you walk outside in the morning and see a large puddle of water, you might assume that it recently rained. This assumption would be reasoning by sign because you assume that your observation of the puddle enables you to infer that rain occurred. However, other explanations might exist for why there is a large pool of water. For example, a fire hydrant might be broke nearby that is gushing water everywhere, or someone might have left on their garden hose. So, when you reason by sign, you need to take other possibilities into account and determine if your explanation is the best possible explanation for what occurred.[v]

Arguments from Authority

An **argument from authority** uses the expertise of someone as data to justify a claim as correct. This type of argument is one of the reasons it is important to cite qualified sources in your speech. The expertise of your sources justifies the arguments that you are making. Take the following argument: "Climate change is a real phenomenon because a vast majority of scientists indicate that it is real. In fact, in a peer-reviewed study, Doctor John Cook and his research team compiled scientific studies about climate change and found over 90% of scientists agree that the phenomenon is real."[vi] In this argument, the claim is that climate change is real. The data is a study conducted

by experts in the field stating that scientific consensus exists around the issue of climate change. The reasoning that connects the claim with the data is that what experts in their field indicate as true is likely to be true. When you reason by authority, you can either quote the authority figure or summarize the authority figure's arguments. Regardless, you must also tell your audience who the authority figure is and why they are qualified to speak about the topic of your speech.

When developing an argument from authority, remember the following: first, you need to make sure that the person you are citing is an expert in the topic of your speech. Someone might have a doctorate in literature, but that does not mean that their testimony on a scientific process is authoritative. Conversely, someone who has a doctorate in chemistry might not have the most authoritative voice when it comes to a speech involving books that have historically been banned from public schools. Second, the strongest arguments from authority generally do not rely on only one person's authority. Instead, they rely on the testimony of multiple sources all of which are qualified to speak on the matter of your speech. For example, if you want to make a claim about the effect of increased carbon dioxide emission on plant life, a stronger argument would cite multiple independent qualified sources rather than just one source. Lastly, always remember to cite your sources out loud in your speech. Because your argument relies on the credibility of the people you are citing, you need to make sure you tell your audience your sources' qualifications.

Arguments and Multiple Types of Reasoning

Not every member of your audience will be persuaded by the same argument. Some people connect better with a clear example. Some people are more trusting of authority figures than others. Because

of this, you will want to include several types of arguments in your speech. For example, if you wanted to convince your neighbors to increase taxes to reduce potholes, you might want to both include personal testimonies of people who say that they damaged their cars (reasoning by example) and evidence from car mechanics that detail how potholes can damage cars (reasoning by authority). When you include a few types of reasoning in your speech, the chance that at least one of your arguments will convince your audience of your thesis will increase. To strengthen your argument, you might use multiple pieces of evidence and reason in different ways to justify the same claim.

Additionally, you might cite evidence to support the reasoning process of an argument in your speech. Recall the example above about convincing someone to quit smoking. If you said, "you should quit smoking because you do not want to get cancer," you would be reasoning by cause. Your claim is the person should quit smoking. The data is that it is bad to get cancer. The argument assumes a causal relationship between smoking and cancer. Thus, the argument reasons by cause. Now, imagine that you made the following argument: "you should quit smoking because you do not want to get cancer. According to a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), smoking leads to lung cancer."[vii] In this statement, you have provided evidence supporting the reasoning of your argument. Think of the second sentence "according to a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), smoking leads to lung cancer" as a new argument. In this argument, the claim is that smoking leads to lung cancer which is the reasoning from the first sentence of the argument. The data for the second sentence is the CDC's report. The reasoning that connects the claim and data is reasoning by authority because the argument assumes that what experts state as true is likely to be true. So, when you are constructing your arguments for your speech, if you ever think that the reasoning of your argument is unclear or might not convince others, you should find additional evidence to support the logical connection between your claim and data.

Inductive reasoning is when a speaker takes specific instances of occurrence and generalizes to a general principle based on their observation of those specific instances.

Deductive reasoning is when speakers take a general principle and apply that principle to a specific case.

Arguments based on **causal reasoning** attempt to establish a cause and effect relationship between two items.

Arguments by analogy assume that if two items are alike in some respects, then they will be alike in other respects.

When **reasoning by sign**, the speaker assumes that the observation of one item shows that another item is occurring.

An argument that **reasons from authority** uses the expertise of someone as data to justify a claim as correct.

Counter Arguments

Effective speakers recognize that their audience members' points of view often differ from their own. As a speaker, you will, of course, attempt to prove that your point of view is the one that your audience should adopt. However, because audience members have their own points of view and beliefs about many issues, it is vital for you to brainstorm what those other beliefs and views about your topic might be and how you might address those beliefs in your speech. It might be easy to ignore divergent points of view, but doing so does a disservice to both your speech and your audience. As a speaker, you

need to take other points of view into account as you develop your speech.

To ensure that you are considering other points of view, your speech should address potential counter arguments. **Counter arguments** are positions with which your audience might hold that contradict or oppose your arguments.[i] For example, if you were to give a speech in which you argue that taxes should be increased to maintain public libraries in your hometown, someone else might think "why would we do that? No one uses libraries anymore." The belief that no one uses libraries anymore may challenge the main argument of your speech. Thus, it is a counter-argument to your speech.

It is important for you to remember that at least one counter argument will exist whenever you give a speech. If there are no counter arguments and everyone in the audience already agrees with your thesis, you would have no reason to deliver the speech. The best speakers, knowing there are likely to be counter arguments present whenever they speak, anticipate and respond to potential beliefs or positions that run contrary to their thesis. For instance, if you were delivering the speech mentioned above about increasing funding for libraries, you would want to tailor your speech to highlight why people might use libraries and provide data to support your claim. You might find reports that show people use libraries for internet access if they do not have internet at home, or you might also find newspaper articles that discuss summer reading program that libraries hold for children. You can then incorporate those pieces of evidence into your speech to address the counter-argument that people do not use libraries anymore. For instance, you might say something like this: "Some of you might think that not enough people use our public libraries to justify the increased expenditures, but a recent Pew Research Institute poll found that people still frequently use public libraries to check out books, take classes about how to use new technology, and use the internet to find jobs."[ii] If you had

delivered this statement, you would have referenced an opposing viewpoint ("not enough people use our public libraries to justify increased expenditures"), showing your audience that you are aware of potential positions that contradict your own. You also would have responded to the opposing position with evidence that shows your audience members why they do not need to be concerned about lack of library use.

You can also address counter arguments is by establishing a value hierarchy. A **value hierarchy** prioritizes certain values and beliefs over others while still affirming all of those values and beliefs. For example, imagine that you are involved in a debate with another person about whether or not the United States should adopt a counter-terrorism measure and increase surveillance on its citizens. One side might argue, "No, we should not increase surveillance because that undermines our freedom and right to privacy." The other side might argue, "Yes, we should increase surveillance because that will make us safer from terror attacks." Both sides have constructed their argument based on the need for preserving a particular value. One side wants to preserve freedom, and the other side wants to preserve safety. Both positions can establish a value hierarchy to respond to the other side's argument. For example, the person who opposes the counter-terrorism measure might say, "Although our safety is important, we must remember that we are fighting to protect the principles and rights on which our country was founded, including the right to privacy. Give me liberty or give me death." In this statement, the speaker values the opposing side's safety concerns but also indicates that the right to privacy is more important than safety. So, although the speaker agrees that safety is important, the speaker concludes that the counter-terror measure should not be adopted based on another more important value. Yet, the speaker who supports the counter-terror measure might also attempt to establish a value hierarchy. That speaker might say, "You are correct that privacy is important. However, to truly enjoy the

benefits of living in a free society, we must all feel that we are safe. Without a feeling of security, we will never benefit from the freedoms we have." This speaker establishes a value hierarchy by suggesting the safety is necessary for freedom, which takes counter-argument of needing to preserve freedom into account and addresses it. Therefore, when you are constructing your speech, one way you can address counter-arguments is by considering related values and developing a value hierarchy.

In general, acknowledging counter arguments and responding to them makes you appear more credible to your audience members than if you simply ignored counter-argument. The first reason that this is the case is that addressing counter arguments makes you appear more knowledgeable about the topic and less biased. Explaining potential reasons that someone might disagree with your speech shows your audience that you did your research and tried to understand all sides of the issue as you developed your speech. Your knowledge enhances your credibility on a particular topic. Then, when you address the various sides of the issue, you show your audience that you took the time to consider other viewpoints and why your position is still the correct one. What this does is show your audience that you care about finding the correct solution to a problem, making you seem more trustworthy.

The second reason that you should address counter arguments is that audience members who agree with the counter argument will view you with skepticism if you fail to address their concerns. For example, if you attempt to get a vegetarian or someone who wants to eat healthy to join you for lunch at your local burger place, they are unlikely to be convinced by your argument that the burger place has really juicy burgers. The vegetarian would probably think "but I don't eat meat. What is in it for me?" And, the person trying to eat healthily might think, "but don't those have a thousand calories?" Neither one of these people would be convinced by your argument because you have not addressed the counter-arguments. Just stating

the burger place has great burgers may make these members of your audience feel that you did not care about their beliefs and values or, in another sense, whether or not you actually convinced them to go to the burger place. Without taking into account your audience's beliefs, it can be difficult for you to establish a connection with your audience. Remember, a connection is necessary for you to persuade your audience to accept your point of view.

> **Counter arguments** are positions with which your audience might hold that contradict or oppose your arguments.
>
> A **value hierarchy** holds certain values and beliefs over others while still affirming all of those values and beliefs.

Logical Fallacies: Weaknesses in Reasoning

Many potential pitfalls exist when you are creating arguments. These pitfalls, known as logical fallacies, are weaknesses in reasoning. As you read earlier in the chapter, every argument contains a claim, data, and reasoning that logically connects your data to your claim. In other words, when you craft an argument, a clear reason as to why your data supports and justifies your claim must exist. Without that clear connection, your argument will not make sense. Saying, for example, it will rain today because my finger itches does not make sense because there is not a clear connection between an itchy finger and rain. **Logical fallacies** are arguments in which there is not

a clear connection between the claim and evidence, or there appears to be a connection between the two, but that connection is flawed. In other words, logical fallacies are weakness or flaws in the logic and reasoning of particular arguments.

Logical fallacies are fairly common. They can occur in political speeches, in arguments with friends and parents, commercials, and advertisements. An important part of being a critical listener is being able to notice the weaknesses in arguments. And, an important part of being an effective speaker is being able to avoid logical fallacies and develop the strongest arguments possible. As such, learning to identify logical fallacies will enhance your critical listening skills as well as your ability to be an effective speaker.

The Strawperson Fallacy

The **strawperson** fallacy exaggerates or misrepresents someone else's argument to make that argument easier to refute. Recall the example from earlier in the chapter about giving a speech where you argued that taxes should be increased in order to pay for fixing potholes. Now, imagine that someone said, "all tax and spend liberals want is to take all your money and increase the size of government." This statement is an example of the strawperson fallacy because your argument is not that the government should take all of the local townsfolk's money. This person is exaggerating your argument to make it sound ridiculous and weaker than it is. The strawperson fallacy is a dishonest argumentative strategy because it fails to tell the audience the actual argument that needs to be refuted. It might be easier to "beat" a position if you misrepresent it, but doing so is unethical. Audience members who are familiar with the actual argument that you are refuting will know that you are exaggerating the argument and will view you with skepticism.

False Cause

The **false cause** fallacy assumes that if an actual or perceived relationship exists between two things, then one must be the cause of the other. That is, this fallacy assumes that correlation is causation. Thus, the false cause fallacy is committed when an argument is based on the mistaken belief that a causal relationship exists between two variables when no support for that relationship exists. When the false cause fallacy occurs in a speech, it is likely that causal relationship between the two variables has not been established or cannot be established. A Buzzfeed article posted in 2013 by Ky Harlin exhibits several interesting correlations and why you should not assume that one variable causes another based on a simple correlation. For example, Harlin's article shows that there is a correlation between the amount of ice cream sold in a month and the number of murders that occur in a month. An argument using a false cause fallacy may claim that buying ice cream causes murder. Another example in Harlin's article is a correlation exists between M. Night Shyamalan's movie score on Rotten Tomatoes and total newspaper ad sales.[i] Assuming that people failing to buy newspaper ads makes M. Night Shyamalan worse at making movies would be a false cause fallacy. For each of these examples, other explanations likely exist for changes to each variable. In the case of ice cream and murder, perhaps the reason that both ice cream buying and murder increases in the summer is due to the weather or another variable entirely.

Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc

Meaning "after this, therefore because of this," **post hoc ergo propter hoc** is a subset of the false cause fallacy. This fallacy assumes that if Event A happened before Event B, then Event A was the cause

of Event B. If you ever hear people make the argument that their itchy fingers mean it is about to rain, they are likely committing this fallacy. Imagine that your finger started itching and then ten minutes later it started to rain. If you conclude that your itchy finger made it rain, then you would be assuming that an event happened first and thus caused the second event to occur. Logically, there is not a connection between the two events unless you are able to prove that connection to your audience. In other words, pointing out that two things happened in chronological order is not proof that one is connected to the other. Your audience will likely see the two things as independent of each other unless you can provide an explanation of why they are connected.

Red Herring

The **red herring** fallacy occurs when someone introduces irrelevant information or topics into a discussion in order to distract from the topic or debate at hand. This action is an attempt to "win" a debate by starting a discussion of another topic or by distracting those you are engaged with in an argument. For example, if you were at a local city council meeting where the topic of discussion was the road quality and potholes, someone giving a speech about the prevalence of local corruption in politics would probably distract people's attention from the question about how to best fix the roads in the city. Red Herring is a fallacy because changing the discussion to another topic does not prove that you are correct about the previous topic. Asking yourself "does the claim that I am making clearly connect to the issue I am discussing?" will help you avoid making the red herring fallacy.[ii]

Ad Hominem

Meaning "to the person," this logical fallacy is when someone attacks their opponent and does not respond to the opponent's argument. **Ad hominem** is an attack on a person's character, personality, or traits. For example, if you are trying to convince someone that college campuses should be tuition-free and that person responds by saying "you are stupid and have bad breath," then that person has committed the *ad hominem* fallacy. This fallacy is a poor argumentative strategy because it distances the arguer from the audience. People generally avoid interacting with and listening to people who call them names or attack their character. Moreover, proving that someone else has bad character traits does not demonstrate to your audience that you are correct about a particular issue. So, instead of attempting to demean other points of view, use your speech to establish why you are correct about the topic to which you are speaking.

Either-Or Fallacy

Also called the forced dilemma fallacy, the **either-or fallacy** happens when someone presents two competing possibilities as the only two possibilities in a given situation. This presentation is a fallacy because it is likely that more than two possibilities exist. An example of this fallacy would be if a speaker argued for funding a new college by saying "either we fund this new college or it will close and our kids will never be able to attend college." In that statement, the speaker only articulates two possibilities for what can happen. However, as you can probably tell, there are many other options for what could occur. Those kids could go to a different college, or funding for the new college could come from somewhere else. Using the either-or fallacy is a flawed argumentative strategy because members of your

audience will recognize that other options exist. When members of your audience think of other options, you will lose credibility as a speaker because your audience will be able to tell that you did not take all other opinions and options about the issue into consideration as you developed your speech. Many issues are complex. Do not attempt to make them appear overly simplistic. Doing so does a disservice to yourself as a speaker and to your audience members.

Hasty Generalization

The **hasty generalization** fallacy is when a speaker reasons using examples but then jumps to a general conclusion without a sufficient number of examples. That is, the speaker uses examples to establish a general claim but uses too few examples to support that generalization. Moreover, the speaker might use examples that do not relate to the general claim that the speaker is attempting to make. Often stereotypes can arise because people reason using the hasty generalization fallacy. For instance, if someone made the argument that "one time I met a man wearing a red hat and he was really rude, therefore all men who wear red hats are rude," that person would be using a hasty generalization to stereotype people with red hats. The hasty generalization is a weak argument strategy because members of an audience can often think of counter-examples that disprove the general claim. When making arguments based on examples, make sure that you have enough examples to demonstrate that your generalization is accurate.

Bandwagon

The **bandwagon** fallacy occurs when someone assumes that something is true just because many people believe it to be true. Thus, appealing to the popularity of an idea as its primary support is the bandwagon fallacy. For example, if you wanted to convince your audience to avoid skydiving and argued that everyone knows that skydiving causes death, you have substituted actual evidence for the assertion that everyone knows you are correct. Just because people believe something is true does not mean that it is the case. Remember that a lot of people used to believe that the earth is flat and that leeches effectively cured diseases. Do not rely on the popularity of an idea to demonstrate that the idea is correct.

> **Logical fallacies** arguments in which there is not a clear connection between the claim and evidence, or there appears to be a connection between the two, but that connection is flawed.
>
> The **strawperson** fallacy exaggerates or misrepresents someone else's argument to make that argument easier to refute.
>
> The **false cause** fallacy assumes that if an actual or perceived relationship exists between two things, then one must be the cause of the other.
>
> **Post hoc ergo propter hoc**, meaning "after this, therefore because of this," is a subset of the false cause fallacy. This fallacy assumes that if Event A happened before Event B, then Event A was the cause of Event B.

The **red herring** fallacy occurs when someone introduces irrelevant information or topics into a discussion in order to distract from the topic or debate at hand.

Ad hominem is an attack on a person's character, personality, or traits.

The **either-or** fallacy, or forced dilemma fallacy, happens when someone presents two competing possibilities as the only two possibilities in a given situation.

The **hasty generalization** fallacy is when a speaker reasons using examples but then jumps to a general conclusion without a sufficient number of examples.

The **bandwagon** fallacy occurs when someone assumes that something is true just because many people believe it to be true.

Conclusion

In this chapter, you learned several principles of argumentation. As you now know, arguments are about trying to solve collective problems. When we need to argue, it is because there is something needs to be changed or improved. We argue to convince people that there is a problem and that we can solve it. This mindset creates

conditions where people might actually work to change and fix an issue. Moreover, arguments occur when there is uncertainty about what should happen in the future. We argue in an attempt to create more certainty by highlighting which options for the future are the best options. Finally, you learned that the success of an argument is based on whether or not it earns agreement from the audience.

This chapter also detailed the parts of the argument. Arguments contain these three parts: (1) the claim, (2) the data, and (3) the reasoning. The reasoning is the logical connection that shows why a particular piece of data supports the claim that a speaker is attempting to make. In addition, this chapter described six types of arguments that you might make in a speech: (1) arguments from examples, (2) arguments from deduction, (3) arguments of cause, (4) arguments by analogy, (5) arguments by sign, and (6) arguments from authority. It remains important to remember that your speech should develop several types of arguments in support of your thesis because certain types of arguments might be more persuasive than others. This chapter also defined and illustrated several types of weaknesses in arguments. These logical fallacies should be avoided when you develop a speech.

Whenever you need to develop an argument, other people might have different points of view on the issue. Rather than ignoring other people's points of view, engage them and explain to your audience why they should prefer your point of view. Also, be willing to change your mind. Argumentation is not about who can yell the loudest. Instead, it is about giving your audience good reasons to believe in your point of view and engage ideas with which you may disagree. You cannot force someone to change their mind, but you can give good reasons as to why they should change their mind. That is the purpose of argumentation.

11. The Importance of Language and Style

Believe Creative – [Abraham Lincoln – head & shoulders portrait](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Ask any professional speaker or speechwriter, and they will tell you that language matters. In fact, some of the most important and memorable lines in American history came from speeches given by American presidents:
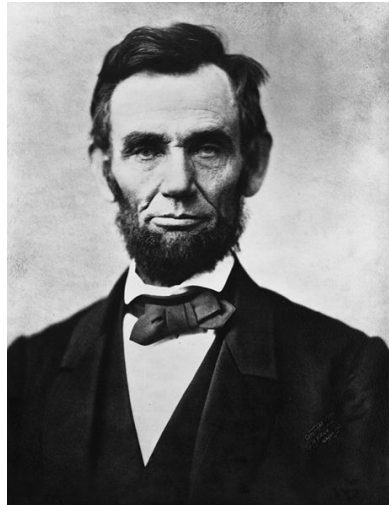
It is true that you may fool all the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all the time; but you can't fool all of the people all the time (McClure, 1904).
   Abraham Lincoln

Speak softly and carry a big stick (Roosevelt, 1901).
   Theodore Roosevelt

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself (Roosevelt, 1933).
   Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country (Kennedy, 1961).
   John F. Kennedy

We lose ourselves when we compromise the very ideals that we fight to defend. And we honor those ideals by upholding them not when it's easy, but when it is hard (Obama, 2009).
   Barack Obama

You don't have to be a president or a famous speaker to use language effectively. So in this chapter, we're going to explore the importance of language. First, we will discuss the difference between oral and written language, then we will talk about some basic guidelines for using language, and lastly, we'll look at six key elements of language.

Oral versus Written Language

When we use the word "language," we are referring to the words you choose to use in your speech. Therefore, by definition, our focus is on spoken language. Spoken language has always existed prior to written language. Wrench, McCroskey, and Richmond suggested that if you think about the human history of language as a twelve-inch ruler, written language or recorded language has only existed for the "last quarter of an inch" (Wrench, et al., 2008). Furthermore, of the more than six thousand languages that are spoken around the world today, only a few of them use a written alphabet (Lewis, 2009). To help us understand the importance of language, we will first look at the basic functions of language and then delve into the differences between oral and written language.

Basic Functions of Language

Language is any formal system of gestures, signs, sounds, and

symbols used or conceived as a means of communicating thought. As mentioned above, there are over six thousand language schemes currently in use around the world. The language spoken by the greatest number of people on the planet is Mandarin; other widely spoken languages are English, Spanish, and Arabic (Lewis, 2009). Language is ultimately important because it is the primary means through which humans can communicate and interact with one another. Some linguists go so far as to suggest that the acquisition of language skills is the primary advancement that enabled our prehistoric ancestors to flourish and succeed over other hominid species (Mayell, 2003).

Language is any formal system of gestures, signs, sounds, and symbols used or conceived as a means of communicating thought.

In today's world, effective use of language helps us in our interpersonal relationships at home and work. Using language effectively also will improve your ability to be an effective public speaker. Because language is an important aspect of public speaking that many students don't spend enough time developing, we encourage you to take advantage of this chapter.

One of the first components necessary for understanding language is to understand how we assign meaning to words. Words consist of sounds (oral) and shapes (written) that have agreed-upon meanings based on concepts, ideas, and memories. When we write the word "blue," we may be referring to a portion of the visual spectrum dominated by energy with a wavelength of roughly 440–490 nanometers. You could also say that the color in question is an equal mixture of both red and green light. While both of these are

technically correct ways to interpret the word "blue," we're pretty sure that neither of these definitions is how you thought about the word. When hearing the word "blue," you may have thought of your favorite color, the color of the sky on a spring day, or the color of an ugly car you saw in the parking lot. When people think about language, there are two different types of meanings that people must be aware of: denotative and connotative.

Denotative Meaning

Denotative meaning is the specific meaning associated with a word. We sometimes refer to denotative meanings as dictionary definitions. The definitions provided above for the word "blue" are examples of definitions that might be found in a dictionary. The first dictionary was written by Robert Cawdry in 1604 and was called *Table Alphabeticall.* This dictionary of the English language consisted of three thousand commonly spoken English words. Today, the *Oxford English Dictionary* contains more than 200,000 words (Oxford University Press, 2011).

Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning is the idea suggested by or associated with a word. In addition to the examples above, the word "blue" can evoke many other ideas:

- State of depression (feeling blue)
- An indication of winning (a blue ribbon)
- Side during the Civil War (blues vs. grays)
- Sudden event (out of the blue)

We also associate the color blue with the sky and the ocean. Maybe your school's colors or those of your archrival include blue. There are also various forms of blue: aquamarine, baby blue, navy blue, royal blue, and so on.

Some miscommunication can occur over denotative meanings of words. For example, one of the authors of this book recently received a flyer for a tennis center open house. The expressed goal was to introduce children to the game of tennis. At the bottom of the flyer, people were encouraged to bring their own racquets if they had them but that "a limited number of racquets will be available." It turned out that the denotative meaning of the final phrase was interpreted in multiple ways: some parents attending the event perceived it to mean that loaner racquets would be available for use during the open house event, but the people running the open house intended it to say that parents could purchase racquets onsite. The confusion over denotative meaning probably hurt the tennis center, as some parents left the event feeling they had been misled by the flyer.

Although denotatively based misunderstanding such as this one does happen, the majority of communication problems involving language occur because of differing connotative meanings. You may

be trying to persuade your audience to support public funding for a new professional football stadium in your city, but if mentioning the team's or owner's name creates negative connotations in the minds of audience members, you will not be very persuasive. The potential for misunderstanding based on connotative meaning is an additional reason why audience analysis is critically important. By conducting an effective audience analysis, you can know in advance how your audience might respond to the connotations of the words and ideas you present.

Connotative meanings can not only differ between individuals interacting at the same time but can also differ greatly across time periods and cultures. Ultimately, speakers should attempt to have a working knowledge of how their audiences could potentially interpret words and ideas to minimize the chance of miscommunication.

Denotative meaning is the specific meaning associated with a word. We sometimes refer to denotative meanings as dictionary definitions.

Connotative meaning is the idea suggested by or associated with a word.

Twelve Ways Oral and

Written Language Differ

A second important aspect to understand about language is that oral language (used in public speaking) and written language (used for texts) does not function in the same way. Try a brief experiment. Take a textbook, maybe even this one, and read it out loud. When the text is read aloud, does it sound conversational? Probably not. Public speaking, on the other hand, should sound like a conversation. McCroskey, Wrench, and Richmond highlighted the following twelve differences that exist between oral and written language:

1. Oral language has a smaller variety of words.
2. Oral language has words with fewer syllables.
3. Oral language has shorter sentences.
4. Oral language has more self-reference words (I, *me*, *mine*).
5. Oral language has fewer quantifying terms or precise numerical words.
6. Oral language has more pseudoquantifying terms (*many*, *few*, *some*).
7. Oral language has more extreme and superlative words (*none*, *all*, *every*, *always*, *never*).
8. Oral language has more qualifying statements (clauses beginning with *unless* and *except*).
9. Oral language has more repetition of words and syllables.
10. Oral language uses more contractions.
11. Oral language has more interjections ("Wow!," "Really?," "No!," "You're kidding!").
12. Oral language has more colloquial and nonstandard words (McCroskey, et al., 2003).

These differences exist primarily because people listen to and read

information differently. First, when you read information, if you don't grasp content the first time, you have the ability to reread a section. When we are listening to information, we do not have the ability to "rewind" life and relisten to the information. Second, when you read information, if you do not understand a concept, you can look up the concept in a dictionary or online and gain the knowledge. However, oral communication should be simple enough to be easily understood at the moment by a specific audience, without additional study or information.

Using Language Effectively

When considering how to use language effectively in your speech, consider the degree to which the language is appropriate, vivid, inclusive, and familiar. The next sections define each of these aspects of language and discuss why each is important in public speaking.

Use Appropriate Language

As with anything in life, there are positive and negative ways of using language. One of the first concepts a speaker needs to think about when looking at language use is appropriateness. By **appropriate**, we mean whether the language is suitable or fitting for ourselves, as the speaker, our audience, the speaking context, and the speech itself.

Appropriate for the Speaker

One of the first questions to ask yourself is whether the language

you plan on using in a speech fits with your speaking pattern. Not all language choices are appropriate for all speakers. The language you select should be suitable for you, not someone else. If you're a first-year college student, there's no need to force yourself to sound like an astrophysicist even if you are giving a speech on new planets. One of the biggest mistakes novice speakers make is thinking that they have to use million-dollar words because it makes them sound smarter. Actually, million-dollar words don't tend to function well in oral communication, so using them will probably make you uncomfortable as a speaker. Also, it may be difficult for you or the audience to understand the nuances of meaning when you use such words, so using them can increase the risk of denotative or connotative misunderstandings.

Appropriate for the Audience

The second aspect of appropriateness asks whether the language you are choosing is appropriate for your specific audience. Let's say that you're an engineering student. If you're giving a presentation in an engineering class, you can use language that other engineering students will know. On the other hand, if you use that engineering vocabulary in a public speaking class, many audience members will not understand you. As another example, if you are speaking about the Great Depression to an audience of young adults, you can't assume they will know the meaning of terms like "New Deal" and "WPA," which would be familiar to an audience of senior citizens. In

other chapters of this book, we have explained the importance of audience analysis; once again, audience analysis is a key factor in choosing the language to use in a speech.

Appropriate for the Context

The next question about appropriateness is whether the language you will use is suitable or fitting for the context itself. The language you may employ if you're addressing a student assembly in a high school auditorium will differ from the language you would use at a business meeting in a hotel ballroom. If you're giving a speech at an outdoor rally, you cannot use the same language you would use in a classroom. Recall that the speaking context includes the occasion, the time of day, the mood of the audience, and other factors in addition to the physical location. Take the entire speaking context into consideration when you make the language choices for your speech.

Appropriate for the Topic

The fourth and final question about the appropriateness of language involves whether the language is appropriate for your specific topic. If you are speaking about the early years of The Walt Disney Company, would you want to refer to Walt Disney as a "thaumaturgic" individual (i.e., one who works wonders or miracles)? While the word "thaumaturgic" may be accurate, is it the most appropriate for the topic at hand? As another example, if your speech topic is the dual residence model of string theory, it makes sense to expect that you will use more sophisticated language than if your topic was a basic introduction to the physics.

> **Appropriate language** is when the language is suitable or fitting for ourselves, as the speaker, our audience, the speaking context, and the speech itself.

Use Vivid Language

After appropriateness, the second main guideline for using language is to use vivid language. **Vivid language** helps your listeners create strong, distinct, clear, and memorable mental images. Good vivid language usage helps an audience member truly understand and imagine what a speaker is saying. Two common ways to make your speaking more vivid are through the use of imagery and rhythm.

> **Vivid language** helps your listeners create strong, distinct, clear, and memorable mental images.

Imagery

Imagery is the use of language to represent objects, actions, or ideas. The goal of imagery is to help an audience member create a mental picture of what a speaker is saying. A speaker who uses imagery successfully will tap into one or more of the audience's five basic

senses (hearing, taste, touch, smell, and sight). Two common tools of imagery are concreteness and metaphor.

Concreteness

When we use language that is **concrete**, we attempt to help our audiences see specific realities or actual instances instead of abstract theories and ideas. The goal of concreteness is to help you, as a speaker, show your audience something instead of just telling them. Imagine you've decided to give a speech on the importance of freedom. You could easily stand up and talk about the philosophical work of Rudolf Steiner, who divided the ideas of freedom into freedom of thought and freedom of action. If you're like us, even reading that sentence can make you want to go to sleep.

Instead of defining what those terms mean and discussing the philosophical merits of Steiner, you could use real examples where people's freedom to think or freedom to behave has been stifled. For example, you could talk about how Afghani women under Taliban rule have been denied access to education, and how those seeking education have risked public flogging and even execution (Iacopino & Rasekh, 1998). You could further illustrate how Afghani women under the Taliban are forced to adhere to rigid interpretations of Islamic law that functionally limit their behavior. As illustrations of the two freedoms discussed by Steiner, these examples make things more concrete for audience members and thus easier to remember.

Ultimately, the goal of concreteness is to show an audience something instead of talking about it abstractly.

Metaphor

The other commonly used form of imagery is the metaphor. A **metaphor** is a figure of speech where a term or phrase is applied to something in a nonliteral way to suggest a resemblance. In the case of a metaphor, one of the comparison items is said to *be* the other (even though this is realistically not possible). Let's look at a few examples:

- Love is a *battlefield.*
- Upon hearing the charges, the accused *clammed up* and refused to speak without a lawyer.
- Every year a new *crop* of activists are *born.*

In these examples, the comparison word has been italicized. In the second example, the accused "clams up," which means that the accused refused to talk in the same way a clam's shell closes. In the third example, we refer to activists as "crops" that arise anew with each growing season, and we use "born" figuratively to indicate that they come into being. We say this metaphor even though it is understood that people are not newborn infants at the time when they become activists.

   To use a metaphor effectively, first determine what you are trying to describe. For example, maybe you are talking about a college catalog that offers a wide variety of courses. Second, identify what it is that you want to say about the object you are trying to describe. Depending on whether you want your audience to think of the catalog as good or bad, you'll use different words to describe it. Lastly, identify the other object you want to compare the first one to,

which should mirror the intentions in the second step. Let's look at two possible metaphors:

1. Students *groped* their way through the *maze* of courses in the catalog.
2. Students *feasted on* the *abundance* of courses in the catalog.

While both of these examples evoke comparisons with the course catalog, the first example is more negative and the second is more positive.

One mistake people often make in using metaphors is to create two incompatible comparisons in the same sentence or line of thought. Here is an example:

- "That's awfully thin gruel for the right wing to hang their hats on" (Nordquist, 2009).

This is known as a mixed metaphor, and it often has an incongruous or even hilarious effect. Unless you are aiming to entertain your audience with a fractured use of language, be careful to avoid mixed metaphors.

Rhythm

Our second guideline for vivid language use in a speech is to use rhythm. When most people think of rhythm, they immediately think

about music. What they may not realize is that language is inherently musical. **Rhythm** refers to the patterned, recurring variance of elements of sound or speech. Whether someone is striking a drum with a stick or standing in front of a group speaking, rhythm is an important aspect of human communication. Think about your favorite public speaker. If you analyze their speaking pattern, you'll notice that there is a certain cadence to the speech. While much of this cadence is a result of the nonverbal components of speaking, some of the cadence comes from the language that is chosen as well. Let's examine four types of rhythmic language: parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and assonance.

Parallelism

When listing items in a sequence, audiences will respond more strongly when those ideas are presented in a grammatically parallel fashion, which is referred to as **parallelism**. For example, look at the following two examples and determine which one sounds better to you:

1. "Give me liberty, or I'd rather die."
2. "Give me liberty or give me death."

Technically, you're saying the same thing in both, but the second one has better rhythm, and this rhythm comes from the parallel

construction of "give me." The lack of parallelism in the first example makes the sentence sound disjointed and ineffective.

Repetition

As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the major differences between oral and written language is the use of **repetition**. Because speeches are communicated orally, audience members need to hear the core of the message repeated consistently. Repetition as a linguistic device is designed to help audiences become familiar with a short piece of the speech as they hear it over and over again. By repeating a phrase during a speech, you create a specific rhythm. Probably the most famous and memorable use of repetition within a speech is Martin Luther King Jr.'s use of "I have a dream" in his speech at the Lincoln Memorial on August 1963 during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In that speech, Martin Luther King Jr. repeated the phrase "I have a dream" eight times to significant effect.

Alliteration

Another type of rhythmic language is alliteration. **Alliteration** is repeating two or more words in a series that begin with the same consonant. In the *Harry Potter* novel series, the author uses alliteration to name the four wizards who founded Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Salazar Slytherin. There are two basic types of alliteration: immediate juxtaposition and nonimmediate juxtaposition. *Immediate juxtaposition* occurs when the consonants clearly follow one after the other—as we see in the *Harry Potter* example. *Nonimmediate juxtaposition* occurs when the consonants are repeated in nonadjacent words (e.g., "It is the **p**oison that we must **p**urge from our **p**olitics, the wall that we must tear down before the hour grows too late") (Obama, 2008). Sometimes you can use examples of both immediate and nonimmediate juxtaposition within a single speech. The following example is from Bill Clinton's acceptance speech at the 1992 Democratic National Convention: "Somewhere at this very moment, a child is **b**eing **b**orn in America. Let it be our cause to give that child a **h**appy **h**ome, a **h**ealthy family, and a **h**opeful future" (Clinton, 2005).

Assonance

Assonance is similar to alliteration, but instead of relying on consonants, assonance gets its rhythm from repeating the same vowel sounds with different consonants in the stressed syllables. The phrase "how now brown cow," which elocution students traditionally used to learn to pronounce rounded vowel sounds, is an example of assonance. While rhymes like "free as a breeze," "mad as a hatter," and "no pain, no gain" are examples of assonance, speakers should be wary of relying on assonance because when it is overused, it can quickly turn into bad poetry.

Imagery is the use of language to represent objects, actions, or ideas.

Concrete language is language we use to help our audiences see specific realities or actual instances instead of abstract theories and ideas.

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech where a term or phrase is applied to something in a nonliteral way to suggest a resemblance.

Rhythm refers to the patterned, recurring variance of elements of sound or speech.

Parallelism is used when a speaker is listing items in a sequence using a grammatically parallel fashion.

Repetition is designed to help audiences become

familiar with a short piece of the speech as they hear it over and over again.

Alliteration is repeating two or more words in a series that begin with the same consonant.

Assonance gets its rhythm from repeating the same vowel sounds with different consonants in the stressed syllables.

Use Inclusive Language

Language can either inspire your listeners or turn them off very quickly. One of the fastest ways to alienate an audience is through the use of noninclusive language. **<u>Inclusive language</u>** is language that avoids placing any one group of people above or below other groups while speaking.

Inclusive language is language that avoids placing any

> one group of people above or below other groups while speaking.

Let's look at some common problem areas related to language about gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disabilities.

Gender-Specific Language

The first common form of noninclusive language is language that privileges one of the sexes over the other. There are three common problem areas that speakers run into while speaking: using "he" as generic, using "man" to mean all humans, and gender-typing jobs.

Generic "He"

The generic "he" happens when a speaker labels all people within a group as "he" when in reality there is a mixed-sex group involved. Consider the statement, "Every morning when an officer of the law puts on his badge, he risks his life to serve and protect his fellow citizens." In this case, we have a police officer that is labeled as male four different times in one sentence. However, both male and female police officers risk their lives when they put on their badges. A better way to word the sentence would be, "Every morning when officers of the law put on their badges, they risk their lives to serve and protect their fellow citizens." Notice that in the better sentence, we made the subject plural ("officers") and used neutral pronouns ("they" and "their") to avoid the generic "he."

Use of "Man"

Traditionally, speakers of English have used terms like "man," "mankind," and (in casual contexts) "guys" when referring to both females and males. In the second half of the twentieth century, as society became more aware of gender bias in language, organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English developed guidelines for nonsexist language (National Council of Teachers of English,

2002). For example, instead of using the word "man," you could refer to the "human race." Instead of saying, "hey, guys," you could say, "OK, everyone." By using gender-fair language, you will be able to convey your meaning just as well, and you won't risk alienating parts of your audience.

Gender-Typed Jobs

The last common area where speakers get into trouble with gender and language has to do with job titles. It is not unusual for people to assume, for example, that doctors are male and nurses are female. As a result, they may say "she is a woman doctor" or "he is a male nurse" when mentioning someone's occupation. We might say statements like this without realizing that the statements "she is a doctor" and "he is a nurse" already inform the listener as to the sex of the person holding that job. Speakers sometimes also use a gender-specific pronoun to refer to an occupation that has both males and females. Table 1: Gender Type Jobs lists some common gender-specific jobs titles along with more inclusive versions of those job titles.

Table 1: Gender Type Jobs

Exclusive Language	Inclusive Language
Policeman	Police officer
Businessman	Businessperson
Fireman	Firefighter
Stewardess	Flight attendant
Waiters	Wait staff/servers
Mailman	Letter carrier/postal worker
Barmaid	Bartender

Ethnic Identity

Another type of inclusive language relates to the categories used to highlight an individual's ethnic identity. **Ethnic identity** refers to a group of individuals who identify with each other based on a common culture. For example, within the United States, we have numerous ethnic groups, including Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Japanese Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Cuban Americans, and Mexican Americans. As with the earlier example of "male nurse," avoid statements such as "The committee is made up of four women and a Vietnamese man." Instead, say, "The committee is made up of four women and a man" or, if race and ethnicity are central to the

discussion, "The committee is made up of three European American women, an Israeli American woman, a Brazilian American woman, and a Vietnamese American man." In recent years, there has been a trend toward steering inclusive language away from broad terms like "Asians" and "Hispanics" because these terms are not considered precise labels for the groups they actually represent. If you want to be safe, the best thing you can do is ask a couple of people who belong to an ethnic group how they prefer to label themselves.

Sexual Orientation

Another area that can cause some problems is referred to as heterosexism. **Heterosexism** occurs when a speaker presumes that everyone in an audience is heterosexual or that opposite-sex relationships are the only norm. For example, a speaker might begin a speech by saying, "I am going to talk about the legal obligations you will have with your future husband or wife." While this speech starts with the notion that everyone plans on getting married, which isn't the case, it also assumes that everyone will label their significant others as either "husbands" or "wives." Although some members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community will use these terms, others prefer for more gender-neutral terms like "spouse" and "partner." Notice also that we have used the phrase "members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community" instead of the more clinical-sounding term "homosexual."

Ability

The last category of exclusive versus inclusive language that causes problems for some speakers relates to individuals with physical or mental disabilities. [Table 2: Inclusive Language for Disabilities](#) provides some other examples of exclusive versus inclusive language.

Table 2: Inclusive Language for Disabilities

Exclusive Language	Inclusive Language
Handicapped People	Person with a disablity
Insane Person	Person with a psychiatric disability (or label the psychiatric diagnosis, e.g. "person with schizophrenia")
Person in a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair
Crippled	Person with a physical disability
Special needs program	Accessible needs program
Mentally retarded	Person with an intellectual disability

> **Ethnic identity** refers to a group of individuals who identify with each other based on a common culture.
>
> **Heterosexism** occurs when a speaker presumes that everyone in an audience is heterosexual or that opposite-sex relationships are the only norm.

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PART III
THE FINAL STEPS

In this section you will learn the final steps to strong public speaking–refining delivery. In this section we will circle back to our audience and consider our roles as audience members.

12. Delivery: A Recipe for Great Speaking

Megan Orcholski, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

> ### *Learning Objectives*
>
> - Understand the importance of delivery and its impact on public speaking.
> - Learn what tools create delivery and have a basic understanding of how to use them.
> - Be better prepared to deliver a speech!

Imagine you go to a restaurant and order a dish that sounds delicious. When they bring you the food, it is cooked without care, unseasoned, and slopped onto your plate. It doesn't look or taste very good. You're hungry, so you eat it. It still has nutritional value, but you don't enjoy it. You probably won't remember this meal, and if you do, you will probably only remember how bad it was. When food is cooked, there is a lot of thought that goes into how the person eating the food (the audience) will feel when they eat it. Delivery is similar, as it is the vehicle for how an audience consumes a speech. The audience will get the speech whether it's perfectly seasoned or

thrown together without care. You have the opportunity as a speaker to make your content and performance appetizing to your audience!

Delivery can be thought of as the "icing on the cake," but let's break that down. Can you eat cake without icing? Sure. But icing is intended to complement the cake, make it look pretty, and taste better. Similarly, bad delivery can call attention to itself or make the cake worse. As a good friend of mine says, excellent delivery can enhance the content and make it taste sweeter.

Delivery is not always valued as an essential part of presentations by speakers. For example, have you ever had a teacher who was incredibly boring, didn't look at you, or stumbled through their lectures? You, as the audience, probably wished they had practiced their delivery. To an audience, delivery is important. It can be the difference between an audience tolerating what you are saying and an audience really understanding, enjoying, and remembering your content.

Often, speakers in my class treat delivery like a magical talent that some people are lucky enough to have and others don't. However, delivery skills can be learned by practice. Imagine speaking to someone who says, "I'm bad at downhill skiing." You may reply, "Do you ski a lot?" or "Have you taken any lessons?" If someone does not practice and learn basic skills, they cannot expect to do well at a skill like skiing. Speaking is also a skill. It is something which you can practice, train, and improve. Yes, there are certainly some individuals for whom strong delivery seems to come naturally, but anyone can be an effective presenter if they are willing to practice. You do not have to like public speaking to be good at it. So get ready to get great at gifting your messages to audiences!

How to Effectively Use Your Voice

Vocalics also known as paralanguage, refers to the pieces of oral communication which convey meaning beyond the words. Have you heard the proverb, "It's not what you say, but how you say it?" Vocalics is referring to the "how." There are five distinct vocalics: volume, pitch, rate, articulation, and pronunciation. The first three (volume, pitch, and rate) are nonverbal components that are present in both oral and verbal communication. Oral, referring to the mouth, can be any sound or noise. Let's say your blowing air out of your lips, making a loud sigh or humming, you are still using volume, pitch, and rate even though you aren't saying words. Volume, pitch, and rate work nonverbally or in connection with the words to create meaning. The final two vocalics, articulation and pronunciation, are only present in verbal communication, as they address how words are formed and emphasized.

> **Vocalics**, also known as paralanguage, refers to the pieces of oral communication which convey meaning beyond the words.

Think of vocalics as the basic ingredients of delivery. By learning how to utilize them, you can make unlimited types of delivery dishes. Having an understanding of how vocalics work and the main things they communicate will allow you to have more control over how you are communicating with your audience.

Volume

Volume has to do with how loud, or soft, something is. This is probably a pretty familiar concept, but you may not have thought deeply about how volume functions as a communication tool. Volume is associated with power and control. When a person gets louder, it is often because they want to be heard. Imagine a child who is trying to get the attention of busy adults or a customer trying to get the attention of a server at a crowded restaurant. Increasing volume is a way for a speaker to direct focus to themselves. However, the relationship between volume and power is more complicated. Being louder does not necessarily translate to more power. Instead, volume can work in complex ways to create meaning. Sure, getting louder or yelling can communicate importance or control, but so too can a drop in volume. For example, when parents are trying to get children to do something, the indication of it getting serious is often when they go from yelling to talking in a soft, controlled, serious manner. I knew as a child that it was when my parents got very quiet was when I was actually in big trouble!

Try It: Talk to Grandma

For a lot of people, an appropriate volume is a huge problem. Even when they think they are loud enough, it can still be a struggle to hear them well enough to easily understand what they are saying. If you have seen the movie *Sister Act*, think about the scene where Whoopi Goldberg's character uses visualization to get the young singer to be loud enough and find her voice. Visualization may work for

you too. Start by visualizing an older relative or friend who doesn't hear very well. Imagine they are coming to see you speak. They will want to be able to hear you. In your head, place them *behind* the last row of the audience. If you are always making sure they can hear you from behind the last person, your volume should be adequate for the size of the audience and space.

When using volume as a tool of communication, speakers must consider projection. When you are speaking for an audience, you want to be loud enough to be heard. This volume often requires speakers to adjust how they project sound and focus their sound towards a target.[i] If you have had any music or theater training, you probably already understand the basics of focusing and directing your sound. You will want to have strong breath support to properly project. This breath support can be achieved by making sure you are not breathing shallowly with your shoulders, but rather pulling air all the way down to your diaphragm or about two inches below your belly button.

To get louder, people often use the throat and increase how hard the vocal cords are working, but this can strain the voice and also produce a stressed sound. A better way to achieve increased projection is to pull in a lot of air using your diaphragm so that more air can flow over your vocal cords. Your breath support will help you be able to control your volume.

Finally, you will want to focus your projection or have motivation in your volume. We do this all the time, like when we are at a sporting event and cheering your favorite player or when you are at a loud party and want to have a conversation with one person.[ii] You will adjust your volume to match your speaking situation. In these cases,

the direction of your projection helps aid your volume in communicating intention and meaning. Use changes in volume meaningfully and deliberately to focus communication, emphasize ideas, or make yourself heard.

Try It: Using your Diaphragm

Breath support is crucial for projecting your voice without straining your vocal cords. To make sure you are breathing deeply enough, place your hand below your belly button. When you fill yourself with air, your hand should rise. To start, try laying down. This technique can help you to breathe deeply and relax. You can also see your hand move! If you find that your shoulders or chest are moving, you are probably not breathing deeply enough. To help, visualize that you are pulling from your toes. Your toes are not part of the breathing process, but thinking about drawing from your whole body can help deepen your breath.

Pitch

Pitch deals with where your voice is resonating on the musical scale. If you start humming, a musician would be able to match the tone of your hum on their musical instrument. All of us have a pitch we naturally tend to. Our pitch is based on both the make-up of our body, specifically the length of one's vocal folds and size of the vocal tract, and our socialization. Pitch is determined by how much your vocal folds are vibrating. Vibrating fast at a high cycle produces a

higher pitch, whereas fewer vibrations create a lower pitch.[i] While our biology determines our abilities and range, a person may also vary or control their pitch based on cultural and social roles. Pitch is often used to communicate gender, as the physiological makeup is connected to sex. Female voices are, on average, about an octave higher than male voices. This claim is a generalization and can vary based on the individual. But this idea was demonstrated on a daily basis before everyone had a cell phone and the main phone used was a house phone. If a person unfamiliar with the house called, they had to rely solely on a person's pitch to determine gender and age. Many of us, who grew up with a house phone, have a story of being mistaken for someone else in the household or being labeled with a gender we don't identify with. Though our bodies may limit our pitch, we do have the ability to utilize pitch variation to give meaning to our words.

As with the other vocalics, pitch gets more interesting when it changes. **Intonation** refers to how your pitch rises and falls, creating vocal variety. When pitch rises, the voice communicates uncertainty or indecisiveness. This can be seen when we ask questions. However, some people tend to go up at the end of their sentences even when it is not a question.[ii] For example, imagine saying the phrase "I like your shirt" to a friend. Try it right now with your tone going up at the end. Now say it with your tone staying the same or coming down. Your intonation drastically changes the meaning.

> **Intonation** refers to how your pitch rises and falls, creating vocal variety.

As a speaker, you want to be careful you are not communicating hesitancy or uncertainty when you intend to communicate

confidence. Similarly, the dropping of pitch communicates certainty or finality. An example of this is in the *Wizard of* Oz when the Winkie guards are marching outside of the Wicked Witch's castle. You can hear them sing, "O-Ee-Yah! Eoh-Ah!"[iii] Not only can you hear them change their intonation throughout the song, but their pitch lowers at the end of the phrase, creating finality to what may otherwise be meaningless sounds.

Try It: Play Around

Speakers do not tend to use as much vocal variety as they are capable of because they are not aware of how much variation they could have. One way to explore pitch is to specifically practice trying different tonal changes when you are speaking. First, to warm up, make noise all the way up and down the tonal scale. Start by making a high pitch and then falling to as low as you can comfortably go. Then go back up. (If you have a piano, you can plunk out notes or do scales). Once you've established your range, then pick a line or two in your speech, use the Pledge of Allegiance, or anything else you know very well. Try to speak those sentences in at least ten different ways. Each time, change your tone to play with how you could say the line or phrase. Pay attention to how your tone will impact the audience's understanding of what you are saying. Focusing on your impact can be especially important on the last line of an argument or the end of the speech. Working to bring your pitch up in the middle of the sentence and dropping it at the end for finality can help you finish strong.

Rate

At its most basic, **rate** deals with speed, specifically how quickly or how slowly the words are spoken. This speed not only deals with the sounds within a word, but also the spaces between words. The speed at which words are spoken is connected to perceptions of emotional control. A fast rate is associated with uncontrolled or extreme emotion, whereas a slow rate is associated with controlled emotion. Think of an excited child trying to tell you a story. Their quick pace may sound frantic or frenzied. Now contrast that with how President Obama spoke during his public speeches. He typically has a very deliberate pace that communicated his command of the situation. You will want to pay attention to your rate in general, but you are also able to vary your rate to communicate meaning. For example, when you have something that is very important, slowing down the rate can help the point come across as important to the audience.

Speaking too quickly is a common problem, but you can train yourself to speak slower. Unfortunately, trying to "be slower!" doesn't usually help. One tip is to think of putting little tiny spacers between your words. This way, it is easier to be understood, even at a fast pace. It's like a friendship bracelet–if you put all of the beautiful, glamorous beads together, it looks gaudy. So, you separate them by clear or white spacer beads, making the beauty easier to look at and more fluid. By giving your words tiny spaces around them, your articulation will be stronger, and your words will be easier to understand. Some students also benefit from simply writing "pause" or "breath" on their note cards. These words can remind you to slow your rate, even if you are nervous during your speech.

Pacing can be an effective way of creating meaning and allowing your audience to absorb those meanings. A well-placed pause or giving more time to an explanation can help your audience understand and retain the information you are telling them. Your

speaking rate is especially important because your audience is trying to mentally digest what you are saying. They cannot control the speed with which they receive the information, but you can help your audience have time to absorb and process information by being conscious of your rate.

Speakers often throw out information without much thought to the speed or pacing. Think about spoon-feeding a baby. Baby's don't have much control over how fast they receive their food. If you feed them too fast, they will cough and choke, and baby food will potentially come out their nose! When you feed a baby, you adjust your speech based on how long it takes the baby to taste, swallow, and enjoy the food. You want to do the same thing with your audience. Pay attention to how they are reacting and how they are absorbing the information. Observation is especially important during transitions of points or topics. Have you ever fed a baby a bite of peas and then a bite of bananas? It's hilarious. The baby makes weird funny faces because their expectations were violated—they were expecting peas and got bananas instead. When you switch food, you often take a pause, maybe give the baby a sip of water. You want them to know you are moving to a different food. Similarly, a speaker should utilize their delivery to lead the audience from one point to the next. By paying attention to your pacing, your audience will be able to retain and remember more of your information.

Try It: Object Toss

One way to help you with your pacing is to picture your words as tangible objects going toward your audience. To practice this, get a bowl of cotton balls, pennies, scarves, or other lightweight objects. While you are practicing your

speech, toss the objects toward a pretend audience (a blanket works great for this). However, you have to toss and speak at the same pace! This action shows a speaker very quickly how fast they are going. Now, one potential risk of this exercise is that you may start to find a rhythm with your tossing that may lull you into an unnatural speaking rhythm. You want your rate to sound natural and conversational, so once you get the pace under control, stop physically tossing and work to speak at that comfortable pace.

Articulation and Pronunciation

Articulation deals with how the words come out of your mouth, specifically how the words are shaped. Pronunciation is articulation combined with cultural influences to create ways of saying words that are identifiable to specific regions or groups of people. While two separate concepts, they often work in tandem when we are dealing with language. As a speaker, you want to make sure the audience can understand you. Paying attention to how you form your words can help you avoid mumbling or slurring your words together.

   Pronunciation is grounded in culture and expectations can vary depending on your audience and specific speaking context. A dialect, which refers to how a person or group specifically forms their words and arranges their grammar, may impact how you are communicating with your audience. You may want to be aware if the audience has a similar or different dialect than you. For example, if you grew up in the Midwest, you may refer to Pepsi as "pop" with the o sounding more like an a. Whereas, those in the south would refer to it as a "coke" with a long o sound. And then there is the rest of the nation

who say "soda." People often forget they have a dialect and will sometimes view other dialects as inferior. But everyone has a dialect that delineates from ethnic heritage as well as regional locations. Being aware of dialect is important in public speaking because parts of your dialect may not be familiar to a group who uses a different one. You may end up using a term common to you, but unfamiliar to your audience. You may also pronounce a word in a way that the audience wouldn't understand. By being aware of these issues, you can address them in your presentation if necessary.

Try It: All it Takes is a Pencil

If you are struggling with articulation or worried you are mumbling, a pencil can help your mouth realize how it's forming words. Put the pencil in your mouth horizontally, and bite down on it. Say your speech with the pencil in your mouth until your words can be completely understood. Once you are understandable, pull the pencil out of your mouth WHILE YOU ARE TALKING. You should be able to feel the difference. This exercise can help train the muscles how to properly enunciate.

Vocal Variety

While there are different vocalics, they function together to create meaning and **vocal variety**. Be aware of how volume, pitch, rate, articulation, and pronunciation are working together in your speech to communicate to the audience. What does it do to a sentence when

you get quieter, slow down, and drop your pitch all at the same time? How about getting louder, speeding up, and raising your pitch all while over articulating? These tools are excellent for helping to craft meaning beyond your words. Being aware of how they interact with each other can increase your ability to utilize them for making meaning when you are speaking.

Types of Vocalics

Volume has to do with how loud, or soft, something is.

Pitch deals with where your voice is resonating on the musical scale.

Rate deals with speed, specifically how quickly or how slowly the words are spoken.

Articulation deals with how the words come out of your mouth, specifically how the words are shaped.

Pronunciation is grounded in culture and expectations can vary depending on your audience and specific speaking context.

Vocal variety is when there are different vocalics being used, and they function together to create meaning.

How to Effectively Use your Body

To develop strong delivery skills, speakers need to realize the extent of the body's power. Your body is an incredibly complex tool that is

continuously making meaning. To start to understand this, do some people watching. What can you determine about a person based on the way they stand or how they move? Do you know how they are feeling based on their facial expressions? Beginning speakers are often quick to take their body for granted and not consciously employ choices of movement or expression. To better understand the tools of physical delivery, we will discuss kinesics and the multiple parts of nonverbal communication. Then, we will discuss proxemics or your body in relation to other objects, before ending with a discussion of appearance.

Similar to the vocalics, your body movements add to the words you are saying. **Kinesics** refers to how the body is interpreted as nonverbal communication and how physical movements are able to communicate on their own. Think about how often you move your body and what those movements signal to those around you. From popping your hip and crossing your arms to communicate impatience to a late friend, waving at a neighbor as you pass by, or even initiating a hug to a loved one, the movement of our bodies transmits meaning to those observing us. The significance of kinesics is heightened in a public speaking context because of the specific nature and focus of the presentation.

> **Kinesics** refers to how the body is interpreted as nonverbal communication and how physical movements are able to communicate on their own.

Posture

Most of us have a basic understanding of **posture**, even if just from being told to "stand up straight" as a kid. However, posture is more than just standing up straight. It deals with the arrangement of your bones and muscles so that each area is allowed to do its job to its best ability. Good posture allows your body to support and control its structure without unnecessary tension in your frame or strain in the muscles.[i]

To think about your posture as a speaker, it's helpful to think of the ranges in which your body could arrange itself. The first range is contraction to expansion. How broad are you letting your shoulders expand? How much space are you allowing your arms to take up? The amount of space you take up communicates to the audience. The next range is withdrawal and approach. Are you leaning forward or sinking back as you speak? When you move in your speech, is it toward or away from the audience? While this happens while walking, withdrawal and approach can also be communicated while standing. Think of how a lean forward communicates advancement whereas leaning back tends to communicate moving away.

Finally, general body orientation, or where all of your parts are in relationship to each other, is important. A neutral body posture is when both feet are flat on the floor, weight is balanced, arms hang gently, and muscles are relaxed. A neutral body posture is not the way most people tend to stand. Many people pop their hip or cross their legs. These stances do not provide a strong foundation to pull breath and initiate movement. As with all of the other components of delivery, there is not an ultimate right or wrong way to stand. Rather, thinking about your stance in relation to your message and audience is the most important consideration.

Walk around a mall for a bit and you will be amazed by the popped hips, crossed legs, leaning, and general disregard for a balanced and strong posture. However, when you're giving a speech, you want your body to look powerful and confident. Instead of forcing your body into an unnatural position, help your body find perfect posture on its own. Stand up straight and find balance with your weight equally distributed between both legs. Picture your spine as building blocks and, starting at your head, roll your spine down block by block until you are comfortably doubled over (do not stretch beyond your capabilities). Here, breathe deeply a few times. As you breathe, feel your back rise and fall with the inhale and exhale. Then slowly, block by block, roll back up until your head is gently floating on tip of your neck. Picture a string connected to your spine that comes out of the top of your head. By gently "pulling" that string at the end, your body should naturally lift into the correct posture. You don't want to be tense. It may help to think "Bones up, Muscles down."

Gestures

While all of the pieces of our body are important for communicating, our arms and hands are arguably the most moveable and versatile. They can help enhance the emotional impact of your verbal message.

Gestures are when our arms and hands use their different types of movements to create emphasis, meaning, and symbols. Two of the most well-known categories are emblems and illustrators. Understanding emblems and illustrators can help you know more about how your gestures are communicating. An **emblem** happens when the body creates something which can be interpreted as a verbal word or phrase. For example, holding your index finger and your middle finger into a "V" with the other fingers closed can be interpreted as the peace sign or the number 2. To be an emblem, Steven R. Brydon and Michael D. Scott argue a gesture must do three things:[i]

1. It must have specific meaning for the audience members.
2. It must be used intentionally by the speaker to purposely generate meaning.
3. It must be easily translated into a few words.

Emblems are very specific to the context. For example, signaling to a train or truck driver by making a fist with a bent elbow and pumping it up and down means "honk your horn." But that same gesture after scoring a goal in a soccer game can mean "YES!"

Emblems are also very connected to culture. Because of this, you will want to be aware of what meaning you are communicating with your emblem. For example, most of us know that connecting your thumb and index finger into a circle with your other fingers flared up means okay in the United States. However, if you did the same gesture in Japan it means "money" and in France, it means "zero" or "worthless."

Illustrators are similar to emblems, but instead of being directly translated, they aid the verbal messages and are more generalized meanings. For example, you can describe how big or small an object is, but it is even more effective to also show with your hands. The visualization is aided because of how your motions connect to what

you are saying. To demonstrate the importance of illustrators, attempt to give directions or describe something specific without using your hands. It's very difficult to do!

Types of Gestures

An **emblem** happens when the body creates something which can be interpreted as a verbal word or phrase.

Illustrators are similar to emblems, but instead of being directly translated, they aid the verbal messages and are more generalized meanings.

Facial Expressions

Faces are fantastic places for expression and communication. **Facial expressions** are when a speaker uses their face to communicate. The face is often completely forgotten as a communicative space. Speakers should be very aware of their face to both increase their communication and prevent sending unintentional messages to the audience. When thinking about facial expressions, it's important to avoid a blank or unexpressive face. You also don't want to rely on one facial expression the whole time. Like your vocal tone, your face helps convey meaning. You want it to match your topic and change with the specific information in your speech. Smiling, for example, is incredibly underused. Many speakers get nervous about speaking and forget the elemental power of a smile. Obviously, there are times and topics for which a smile would not be the appropriate facial

expression. But just as we do in conversations with our friends, do not be afraid to use your face to help communicate.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is important for establishing a connection and communicating with the audience. **Eye contact** is when the speaker meaningfully connects to the audience with their eyes. The first step to utilizing eye contact is to know your information well enough to be able to speak while making eye contact. This step may seem like common sense, but it can be incredibly difficult to do. Most beginning speakers rely very heavily on their notes or manuscript. I have often told students that I'm jealous of the podium or notecard because it gets all their attention! It may seem scary to look up at the audience, but sustained eye contact has the power to make you feel both physically and emotionally closer to each other.[i] In Western culture, eye contact works to establish a connection, communicate confidence, and affirm credibility.

Once you're able to look up at the audience, it is important to practice looking directly in the eyes of the audience members. You cannot fake eye contact! If you can see your audience, they will know whether you are actually looking at them or if you are looking over the top of their heads.[ii] Direct eye contact is especially important if it is a smaller audience. If it is a larger audience or if you are on a lighted stage and can't see the individuals in the audience, you will still want to direct your energy at specific spots to make it feel personal. There is no set time for how long to hold eye contact, as it is another variable which changes with the situation and circumstances. However, most speakers think they are holding their eye contact for longer than they are. Audiences gain a tremendous amount of energy and connection through eye contact, so making

sure you are holding your eye contact for a significant amount of time is important.

Try It: Holding Eye Contact

One of my favorite mentors from college does this activity in class to show how really effective eye contact should make you feel. He will look at someone and say "Hi! You are my favorite. You are the only person I care about in this room. All these other people don't mean anything to me. I have to look over there for a minute, but I'll be right back...don't forget you're my favorite!" Then he looks to the next person and says, "Hi! You're my favorite. You're the only person I care about in this room..." After three or four people you understand how eye contact can make you feel like you are important and being spoken to at the individual level.[1] To practice eye contact, rehearse in front of objects with eyes. Obviously, a practice audience is the best. But if you don't have one, you can use stuffed animals, pictures, posters, or anything that has eyes you can connect with. Set a few up around the room and practice playing connect the dots with your eyes while you speak. This will help you practice moving your attention from person to person instead of glancing at the wall, the clock, the floor on your way from one individual to another.

Make your Movement Matter

To make choices about your movement, you first need to be conscious of your body while speaking. I once watched a student twirl the lanyard from the keys in his pocket for most of his speech. When he saw the video, he was shocked because he had no memory of what his hands were doing during the speech. The brain is complicated and tricky. You need to train your brain to recognize and control what your body is doing while you speak. This training is comparable to a basketball player doing layups over and over or a baseball player practicing their swing. You want to know the movements so well that your muscle memory takes over while you are speaking. Many people will either not move at all or move for no particular reason.

Remember, movement helps aid in the communication process. In the same way, you are carefully selecting your words, you also want to choose your movements. If you don't have a justified reason to move, you do not need to move. Save your energy for when the movement aids your message. One visualization that helps me is picturing my body as full of energy. That energy has to be used for certain things, such as making a sound to say the words, thinking about what comes next, and moving my head to have good eye contact. Sometimes the body does things that waste energy. Many people have ineffective habits, such as crossing legs, leaning on the podium, or pacing. Personally, I sway. If left to my own devices, I would sway the entire time I teach a course. Which would be incredibly distracting and unnecessary, not to mention tiring. So, I employ body consciousness to focus that energy into my words instead of wasting it swaying. This consciousness can take a lot of practice and mental energy. However, by employing body control and making conscious movements, you can increase your audience connection and enhance your topic.

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Parts of Kinesics

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Gestures are when our arms and hands use their different types of movements to create emphasis, meaning, and symbols.

Facial expressions are when a speaker uses their face to communicate.

Eye contact is when the speaker meaningfully connects to the audience with their eyes.

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Proxemics

Proxemics deals with space and location, specifically with how close humans are to each other. There is certainly a physical aspect to how bodies move together in spaces. There is also a cultural connection to proxemics. Think about how you are around certain people. You probably have a specific comfortable distance you usually stand away from people, and that distance most likely varies based on who the other person is. You may also have that one friend who has no personal space and will talk very close to you.

> **Proxemics** deals with space and location, specifically
> with how close humans are to each other.

Proxemics is important in public speaking. If a podium or table is in the room, you will need to make a choice whether to stand behind, in front, or move the object out of the way. You do not want to be too far away from our audience, as a connection with the audience is important. However, you also don't want to be too close, potentially making your audience uncomfortable or cutting off eye contact to parts of your audience. If you choose to move during your speech, pay attention when you are moving away and when you are moving toward them. Increasing or decreasing your distance during specific parts of your speech can enhance your message.

Appearance

How you look matters, but I often find my students oversimplify this idea. There isn't one way to look or appear. My students frequently ask if they have to "dress up" for their speeches. I point out that appearance doesn't appear anywhere in my grading rubric, but appearance impacts a speaker's ethos. It is more important that you are thinking critically about your speaking appearance than relying on one way to always look.

When you have to speak in public, consider the details of the situation. Is there anything specific you should wear to the occasion? How will your clothing communicate? Will it interact with your meaning? In an advanced public speaking course I taught, an

experienced public speaker who showed up to every speech day in a full suit and pantyhose. This student was a self-proclaimed nerd and a huge Trekkie, so for a humorous speech assignment, she chose the topic of Star Trek. In the feedback session, a classmate said, "it's too bad you don't have a Star Trek uniform. That would have really added to your speech." The student's face fell—of course she owned a uniform! But, it had never occurred to her to wear it because she was so used to dressing up for speeches. For her final speech, she wore her Star Trek uniform and noted how it was the first public speech she'd ever given in anything other than a suit, citing that as part of her growth. As long as you are critically thinking about your appearance during a speech, you will be able to make conscious choices about what to wear.

Types of Preparation and Delivery

There are four styles of delivery that tend to be most useful for public speaking: manuscript, memory, impromptu, and extemporaneous.

Speaking from a Manuscript

In my experience, **speaking from a manuscript** is the type of delivery people tend to want to try. I have had students say it makes them feel more safe and comfortable to have every word planned out. That is an advantage of speaking from a manuscript. Manuscript speaking should be used in cases where getting the exact words correct are very important. In cases of intense or emotional speaking, a manuscript can also be the best delivery method. I had the opportunity to give my father's eulogy when I was 21. This was an

instance when I choose to use a manuscript in order to have a very well-constructed speech in an emotional time. There may be formal contexts where a manuscript would be preferred or follows the norms of the occasion. Former President Obama is an excellent example of someone who employs manuscript speaking in emotional times like after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. A manuscript allowed the president to be comforting even in the face of tragedy.

If you plan to speak from a manuscript, you need to be aware of the challenges this type of speaking creates. Effectively speaking from a manuscript is harder than most people anticipate. Remember, the words are only part of the issue. As we have seen in this chapter, there are so many other components that go into delivery. Reading from a manuscript often causes speakers to talk very fast and not look up enough to connect with the audience. Because of this, manuscript speaking often leads to an uninteresting or disconnected performance. But, this does not mean manuscript delivery can't be done well. Delivery from a manuscript can be effective with a significant amount of time and practice.

Speaking from Memory

There are some instances that may benefit from a **memorized speech**. For example, you may find yourself in a situation where memorization is required, such a speaking contest. You may find times you don't want to use notes, such as at a wedding giving a toast. Memorization can be very beneficial, especially if the speech is short or the material is very familiar to you. First, memorization is the method that allows for the most audience connection. Since you don't notes or a script to look at, you can engage your body, face,

and eyes with the audience the entire time. Practicing your material thoroughly can put the speaker at ease.

But, like manuscript speaking, people greatly underestimate how much work it takes to speak from memory effectively. Different people have varying abilities when it comes to memorizing, but it almost always takes longer to memorize than people anticipate. You can't just memorize the words, but rather you must know the material deeply in order to confidently speak from memory. Additionally, while the payoff can be great, so is the risk. Even with a lot of practice, speaking from memory may increase nerves and there is always a chance of a forgetting the material. Even if a speaker is well rehearsed, blanking in the moment is possible. You will want to practice blanking and know how to handle it if it happens. Finally, you will need to work hard to speak in the moment. While this method does allow you the most freedom with your voice and body in the moment, it is common to sound over-rehearsed or on autopilot. Make sure you are staying in the moment by really talking *to* your audience instead of *at* them.

Try It: Tips for Memorizing

1. The more you can do to help your brain remember, the easier it will be to learn your speech. One way to help is to color-code your script by point. If your intro is one color, your first point is a different color and so on, it will help your brain remember the pieces of your speech. Another way to help is to stand in the places you plan to give each point. If you plan to move, placing your color-coded part in that place to help you

associate the words with the space can be very effective. This process mimics how Greek orators memorized long stories and passages. They would walk, associating the ideas with where they were.

2. Combine content memorization with word for word memorization. Use your outline to memorize the flow of ideas, the main points and where they go. Then, if you mess up or forget the individual words in a spot, you will be able to default to talking about the main ideas or jumping to the next part you remember.

3. Practice in multiple contexts. Moving contexts will help your brain recall in many different circumstances. If you only ever practice in the car, your body will not be used to standing to deliver. Practicing in multiple spaces and for actual people can help increase the trustworthiness of the memory recall.

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking happens when a person has little or no time to prepare for the speaking situation. You may be thinking that this mode of delivery sounds terrifying, but you actually already practice impromptu speaking quite often. Anytime someone asks you for a short introduction about yourself, you speak to a group about yourself for a few minutes; or, when someone asks what you thought of the movie you just saw and you give a detailed answer, you are employing impromptu speaking. This method is not one that should be chosen for a speech you have time to or are required to prepare.

Instead, think of this more as a skill or a recognition of circumstance to improve your speaking in these moments.

One key to impromptu speaking is to practice active listening. If you are in a meeting or a class where you know you may be called on to share your thoughts, intensely listening to what is happening and mentally engaging in the ideas will help you formulate your answer if someone asks you to talk. Anticipating impromptu opportunities can always be helpful in mentally preparing. I have been to several funerals and memorials where they open up the floor for people to share memories or say a few words. In these cases, I start thinking about what I want to say in advance by going over the order of my brief message in my head. In some cases, you may even want to jot down a few quick notes to help you stay focused.

Extemporaneous Speaking

The definition of **extemporaneous speaking** is to speak from limited notes. Extemporaneous speaking often gets confused with impromptu or off-the-cuff speaking, with people assuming you don't have to prepare much before the speech. But, extemporaneous speaking is actually an engaged process that forces you to do a lot of research, organizing, and writing before you actively practice your delivery. There are several advantages of extemporaneous speaking. First, you are prepared but flexible in the moment. This level of preparation can prevent you from sounding robotic and encourage you to react to your specific audience in the speaking moment. Second, this type of speaking allows you opportunities to connect with the audience while not having to rely on your memory recall to know every word. Finally, you can adapt to your audience and the situation. If the audience laughs or reacts really well to something, you can mention it or add a reaction. If you are running out of time,

you can make adjustments quickly to make sure you get out the most important information with the remaining speaking time.

The main disadvantage of extemporaneous speaking is that most people are not familiar with this process and it takes some getting used to. Beginning speakers, even if they are attempting extemporaneous speaking, will often make outlines with too many details and not practice enough which usually turns into reading a script. The process for practicing a strong extemporaneous speech can feel very different than other types of speaking methods. Instead of spending the majority of the time crafting each word, you need to practice talking. This practice can feel non-intuitive to writers or people who want their speech to sound perfect. Instead of writing every word, you want to craft a strong outline to use while you speak. Then, you want to stand up and practice it. I will say that again so you really believe me—stand up and try it!! Do not wait until you think you have everything perfect. You will run out of time, as it will never be perfect. And, practicing will help you make your outline stronger. Strengthening your outline with help you speak better in the moment. Go back and forth until you think you have a strong grasp on the concepts and can speak from your notes in the strong way you practiced.

This type of delivery is often the most effective and the one you will probably utilize the most beyond speaking classes. I highly encourage you to learn this skill and to practice it. You want to have a grasp of all of the styles of delivery. If you are in a class, that is a great place to practice extemporaneous speaking and get better at it. That way you understand and can use the multiple methods of delivering speeches. Extemporaneous speaking is often the most employed style in prepared speeches. It is what you will likely use in your job or at events you've been asked to speak. Learning how to do it well will be incredibly useful.

Remember, the most important thing is to choose the method that fits you and the situation best. You may also want to consider your

strengthens and weaknesses as a speaker. The more you are critically thinking about the speech and it's circumstances, the better qualified you are to make choices about how to best get your message to the audience.

Delivery and Audience Connection

You are not a TV

Many speakers suffer from what I have termed "the TV effect." Have you ever noticed your TV doesn't care about you? If you are watching it and you have to leave to get a snack, the TV just keeps on playing. It doesn't wait, and it doesn't pause. Or, you laugh out loud at something in a show. The TV doesn't pause for your laughter or even recognize you have laughed. At times, speakers act this way. They are nervous and just want to get the speech done. So, they get up and go! However, the brilliance of performance is how we can adjust in the moment and react to what is happening in our current situation. Your speaking is enhanced by the audiences' reactions, the space you are speaking in, and how you are performing in the moment. Keep working to utilize the tools in this chapter to enhance your delivery during live performances.

You are not a train

The fear of doing something "wrong" often prevents speakers from achieving an audience connection. They are afraid they will mess up.

I've even seen speakers ask to "start over" as if I am in control of them. Speakers often act like they are a train on train tracks. When it's time to go, they go! They are chugging along, not looking up, not pausing, not paying attention to the audience, because they are afraid they will mess up and fall off the tracks. If a train is disturbed in its route, it doesn't have a lot of options. It can go forward, backward, or just fall over. You are not on train tracks. Rather, you are in a field on a fairly trampled path. You have crafted the way to go but may veer off for one reason or another. If that happens, pick some berries, and find a way back to the path. Your audience may think that's part of the journey or might be pleasantly surprised by the detour.

You are a tour guide!

Remember, your speech is a new destination where your audience has never been, and you are their tour guide. If you throw them onto the bus, hit the gas at 100 miles an hour, and never point out the sights, they are not going to enjoy the tour. You have the power to make it enjoyable for them. Help them onto the bus. Make sure they are comfortable. Connect with them. Go at a decent pace for them, so they don't feel like you're going to "crash." Remember, that pace might be different than you want to go as the driver. Have you ever ridden with someone who is driving just a little too fast? They know they are in control because they are driving. But, the passenger does not necessarily feel comfortable. Adjust your pace with the audience in mind. Point out the important parts of your speech using emphasis. Make sure they can hear you. By being a good tour guide, your audience will definitely enjoy the trip!

Being yourself

When learning how to speak, speakers often fall into a few delivery traps when they are trying to deliver the speech "correctly." They rely on reading or ignore their audience. Even when they conquer some of these basic delivery strategies, they still revert back and sound like a generic speaker. They fall into vocal patterns and don't choose the pacing for their material or audience. They sound fine on the surface, but they don't sound like themselves. In an attempt to do the speech "right," speakers end up not actually being effective because they are not making conscious choices with themselves and the audience in mind.

Even if you are nervous, keep working to channel the verbal and physical qualities that are unique to you. Audiences want personality. Do not be afraid to let yours come through. You do not need to sound scripted or robotic to be an effective speaker. In fact, most people prefer someone who they can tell is a person beyond the confines of the speaking moment. One thing that can help you relax into being your engaging self is to think of yourself as an audience member. What do you enjoy? How do you want to be talked to? If you don't enjoy monotone speaking (and few do), then work to have vocal variety. If you don't want to work to hear and understand the words, work to be loud enough. If you prefer someone who is smiling, connected and engaging you, then work to be that person! You have the power to be entertaining! It takes practice, but you are capable of engaging the audience as yourself.

Audience participation

It is tempting to think of a speech as a speaker standing in front of an audience dumping information on them. But, as we have learned

in this chapter, delivering a speech is an interactive performance that involves both the speaker and the audience. The level of audience participation may vary based on the speech and situation. For example, there may be times you ask questions to the audience that you actually want them to answer. Make sure you are patient and give them enough time to answer, as they may be used to answering a speaker's questions.

Regulators, or gestures that control the flow of interaction can be used here. This may involve head nodding or moving your arms in a way to encourage your audience to participate. You may even find yourself in situations where there is a question and answer session as part of your speaking opportunity. The more you know about your topic, the more at ease you will be during this period. It is common to fear that an audience member might ask a question and you don't know the answer. If this happens, there is no need to fake your way through an answer. Just explain how you don't have that specific information and potentially discuss where they could find it.

> **Regulators** are gestures that control the flow of interaction.

Actively listening to the question posed will help you formulate an answer. Don't be afraid to be short and sweet. Often by that time, the audience has sat through your whole speech. While there are certainly times and occasions for drawn-out answers and discussions, be aware of how long you take to answer. They may be looking for a short supplement to what you already covered.

You have the power!

In the end, remember you are in charge of your vocal and physical choices as a speaker. It doesn't always feel that way, but with practice and exercises, you will gain more awareness of what your voice and body are doing during a speech. Then, you will be able to make conscious choices to control them in order to make your speech more impactful. By working on delivery alongside the construction of your speech, you ensure your audience with be engaged and listening to you. Your practicing will help get your audience interested in your topic, retain what you are saying, and think deeply about your concepts.

13. Presentation Aids

Learning Objectives

- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of the ways to use presentation aids.
- Understand the range of choices for presentation aids.
- Explain the role of careful planning and good execution when using presentation aids.

What Are Presentation Aids?

When you deliver a speech, you are presenting much more than just a collection of words and ideas. Because you are speaking "live and in person," your audience members will experience your speech through all five of their senses: hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch. In some speaking situations, the speaker appeals only to the sense of hearing, more or less ignoring the other senses. The speaking event can be greatly enriched by appeals to the other senses using presentation aids.

Presentation aids are the resources beyond the speech itself that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience. The type of presentation aids speakers most typically use are visual aids: pictures, diagrams, charts and graphs, maps, and the like. Audible

aids include musical excerpts, audio speech excerpts, and sound effects. A speaker may also use fragrance samples or food samples as olfactory (smell) or gustatory (taste) aids. Presentation aids can be three-dimensional objects, animals, and people, and they can unfold over a period of time, as in the case of a how-to demonstration.

As you can see, the range of possible presentation aids is almost infinite. However, to be effective, each presentation aid a speaker uses must be a direct, uncluttered example of a specific element of the speech. It is understandable that someone presenting a speech about Abraham Lincoln might want to include a picture of him. However, because most people already know what Lincoln looked like, the picture would not contribute much to the message (unless, perhaps, the message was specifically about the changes in Lincoln's appearance during his time in office). Other visual artifacts are likely to deliver information more directly relevant to the speech. For example, when giving a speech about Lincoln, a speaker may use a diagram of the interior of Ford's Theater where Lincoln was assassinated, a draft of the messy and much-edited Gettysburg Address, or a photograph of the Lincoln family. The key is that each presentation aid must directly express an idea in your speech.

Moreover, presentation aids must be used at the specific time you are presenting the ideas related to the aid. For example, if you are speaking about coral reefs and one of your supporting points is about the location of the world's major reefs, it will make sense to display a map of these reefs while you're talking about their location. If you display it while you are explaining what coral actually is, or after you have completed your speech, the map will not serve as a useful visual aid. In fact, it's likely to be a distraction.

Presentation aids must also be easy to use. At a conference on organic farming, one of the authors watched as the facilitator opened the orientation session by creating a *conceptual map* of our concerns, using a large newsprint pad on an easel. In his shirt pocket, there were wide-tipped felt markers in several colors. As he was using the

black marker to write the word "pollution," he dropped the cap on the floor, and it rolled a few inches under the easel. When he bent over to pick up the cap, all the other markers fell out of his pocket. They rolled about too, and when he tried to retrieve them, he bumped the easel, leading the easel and newsprint pad to tumble over on top of him. The audience responded with amusement and thundering applause, but the serious tone of his speech was ruined. The next two days of the conference were punctuated with allusions to the unforgettable orientation speech. Markers falling across the floor is not how you will want your speech to be remembered.

To be effective, presentation aids must also be easy for the listeners to see and understand. In this chapter, we will present some principles and strategies to help you incorporate hardworking, effective presentation aids into your speech. We will begin by discussing the functions that a good presentation aid fulfills. Next, we will explore some of the many types of presentation aids and how best to design and utilize them. We will also describe various media that can be used for presentation aids and will conclude with tips for successful preparation and use of presentation aids in a speech.

Presentation aids are the resources beyond the speech itself that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience.

Functions of Presentation Aids

Why should you use presentation aids? If you have prepared and

rehearsed your speech adequately, shouldn't a good speech with a good delivery be enough to stand on its own? While it is true that impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech, it is also important to recognize that a good speech can often be made 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 complicated 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. These types of images show how interpretations

can differ. Your presentations must be based on careful thought and preparation to maximize the likelihood that your listeners will understand the intention of your presentation.

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 1: The Coriolis Effect would be helpful 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 1: The Coriolis Effect
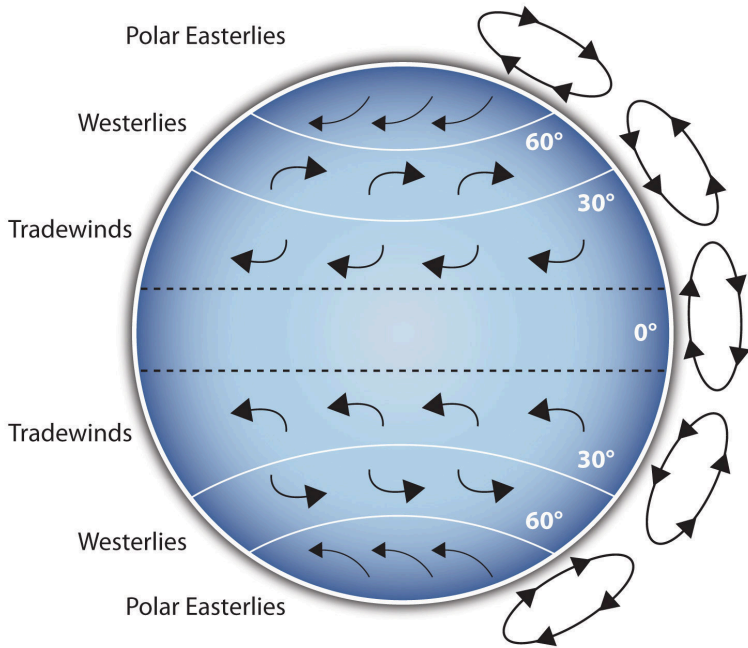
[Figure 2: Model of Communication](#) is another example of a diagram that maps out the process of human communication. In this image, you clearly have a speaker and an audience (albeit slightly abstract), with the labels of the source, channel, message, receivers, and feedback to illustrate the basic linear model of human communication.

Figure 2: Model of Communication
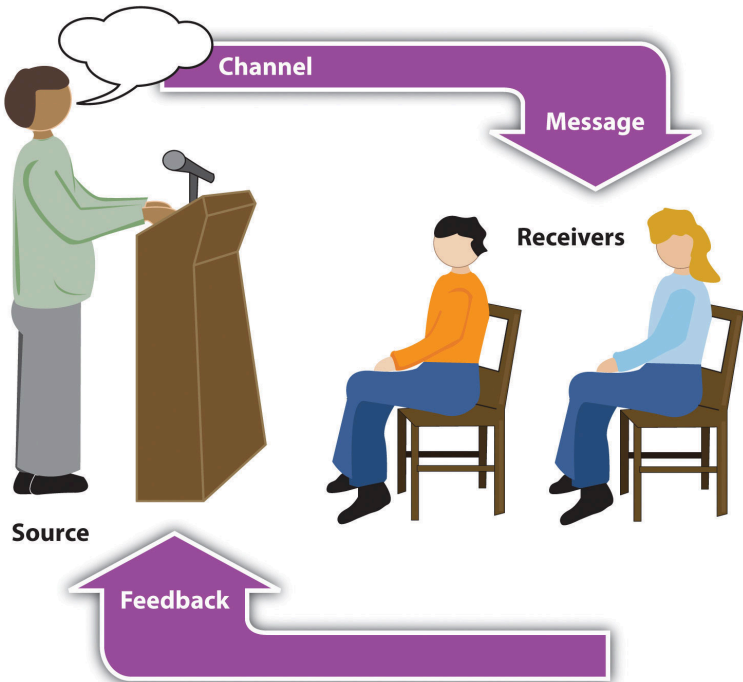
Another aspect of clarifying occurs when a speaker wants to visually help audience members understand a visual concept. For example, if a speaker is talking about the importance of petroglyphs in Native American culture, just describing the petroglyphs won't completely help your audience to visualize what they look like. Instead, showing an example of a petroglyph, as in [Figure 3: Petroglyph](#), could help your audience form a clear mental image of your intended meaning.
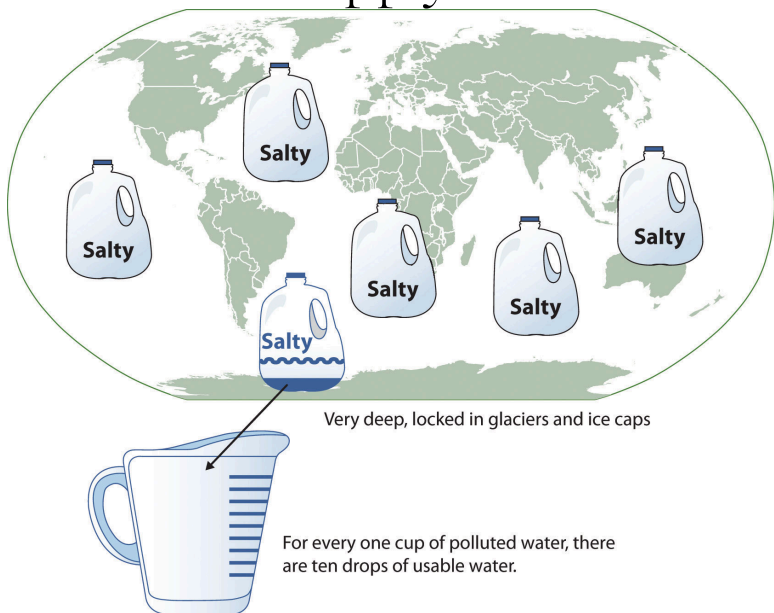
Figure 3: Petroglyph

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 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 draws attention to this important information in your speech.

Figure 4: Planetary Water Supply

Very deep, locked in glaciers and ice caps

For every one cup of polluted water, there are ten drops of usable water.

Another way to visually emphasize information in your speech is to

zoom in on a specific aspect of interest within your speech. In [Figure 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.

Figure 5: Chinese Lettering Amplified

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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). Mostly, people learn 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 initially 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 can 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 organization 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

The third function of presentation aids is 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 great 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 could 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. Meaning, 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. Additionally, 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, and look professional and are well handled, 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.

Types of Presentation Aids

As we saw in the example of the 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 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. These scenarios are 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 items 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 prepared you should be 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 a specific thing to listen for. Similarly, if you use a video clip, it is up to you as the speaker to point out the characteristics of 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 **<u>chart</u>** is 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. 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

For most audiences, statistical presentations must be kept as simple as possible, and they must be explained. Unless you are familiar with statistics, a 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 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. Figure 6: Effects of Smoking on Different Body Systems is surely an example of a visual aid that, although it delivers a limited kind of information, does not speak for itself.

Figure 6: Effects of Smoking on Different Body Systems

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

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Sequence-of-Steps Charts

Charts are also useful when you are trying to explain a process that involves several steps. The visual aid in [Figure 7: Steps in Cell Reproduction](#) depicts the process of cell division called mitosis using a sequence-of-steps chart. The chart labels the phases, which can help your audience understand the process.

# Figure 7: Steps in Cell Reproduction
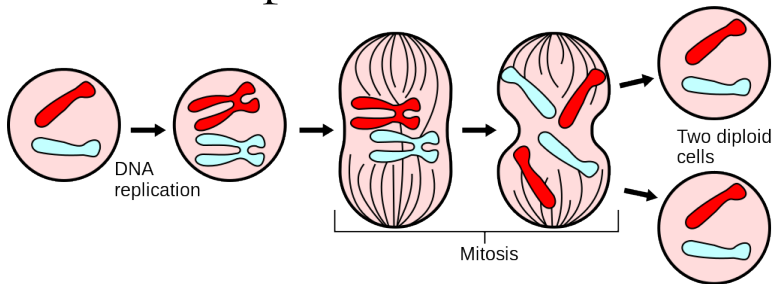
[Wikipedia](#) – public domain

DecisionTrees

Decision trees are useful for showing the relationships between ideas. The example in [Figure 8: 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.

Figure 8: To Play or Not to Play
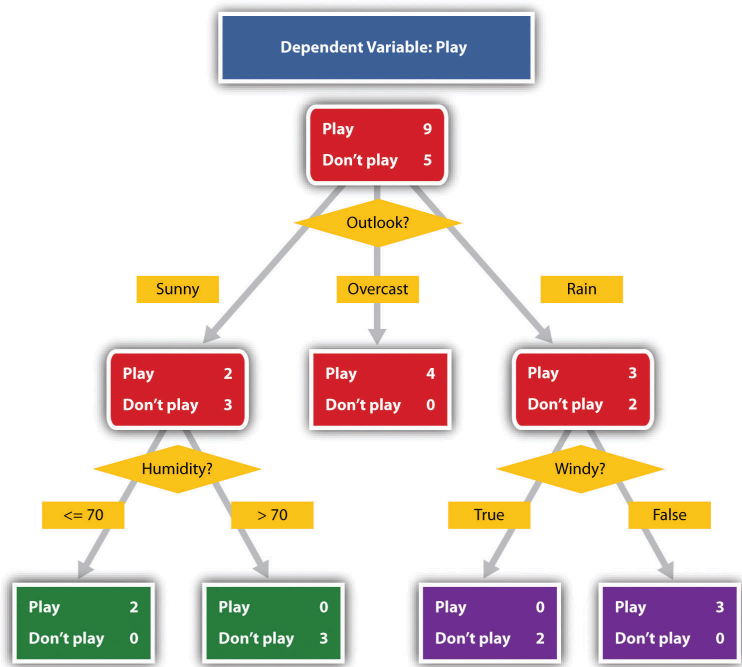
[Wikimedia Commons](#) – public domain.

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 number 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 use graphs from 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 types of graphs speakers frequently utilize in their speeches: line graphs, bar graphs, and pie graphs.

Line Graph

A line graph is designed to show trends over time. In Figure 9: Enron's Stock Price, we see a line graph depicting the fall of Enron's stock price from August 2000 to January 2002. Notice that although it has some steep rises, the line has an overall downward trend clearly depicting the plummeting of Enron's stock price. Showing such a line graph helps the audience see the relationships between the numbers. The audience can also understand the information by seeing the

graph much more easily than they could if the speaker just read the numbers aloud.

Figure 9: Enron's Stock Price

Enron Stock Price from August 23, 2000 to January 11, 2002
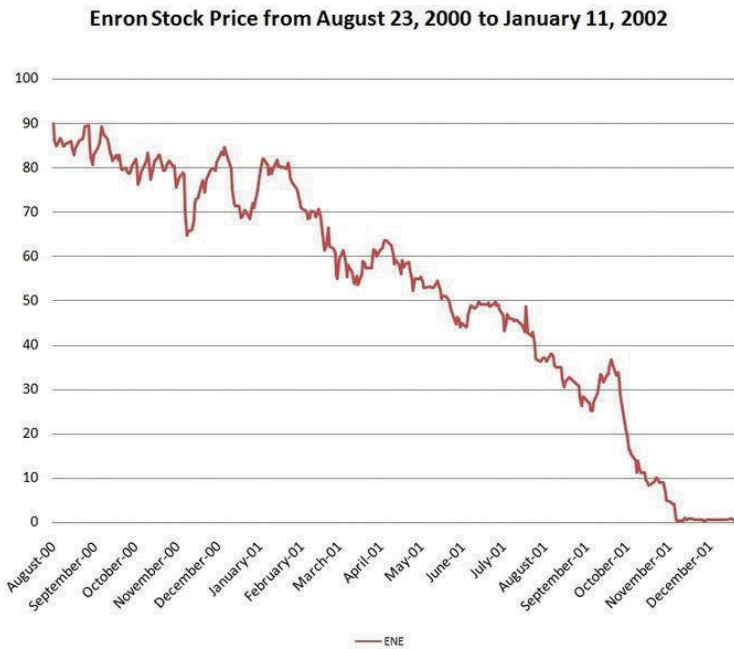
Bar Graph

Bar graphs are useful for showing the differences between quantities. They can be used for population demographics, fuel costs, math ability in different grades, and many other kinds of data. The graph in Figure 10: 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: Natural Death vs. Homicide
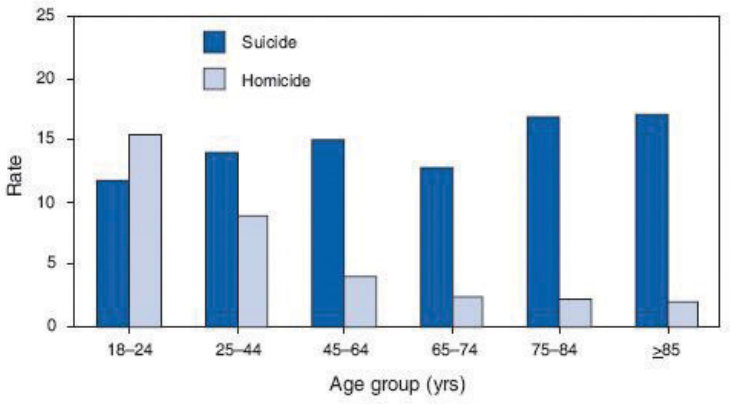
Pie Graph

Pie graphs should be simplified as much as possible without eliminating important information. As with other graphs, the sections need to be plotted proportionally. In the pie graph shown in [Figure 11: 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 this 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 11: Causes of Concussions in Children

	Fall
	Collision
	Struck by object
	Struck by person
	Assault
	Unknown
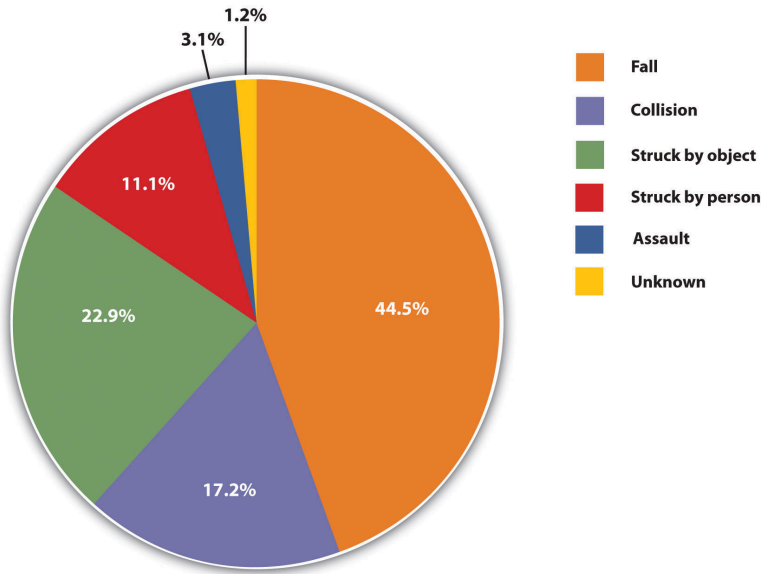
The pie graph in [Figure 12: World Populations](#) is jumbled, illegible, confusing, and overwhelming in every way. The use of color coding doesn't help. Overall, this graph simply contains too much information and is more likely to confuse an audience than help them understand something.

Figure 12: World Populations
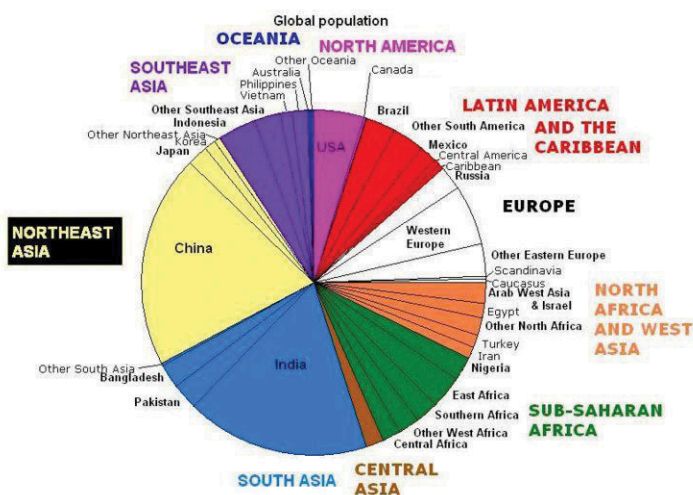
[Wikimedia Commons](#) – public domain.

Representations

In the world of presentation aids, **representation** 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 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.

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 13: The Human Eye, you might wish to highlight that the light stimulus is reversed when it is processed through the brain or that the optic nerve is not a single stalk as many people think.

Figure 13: The Human Eye
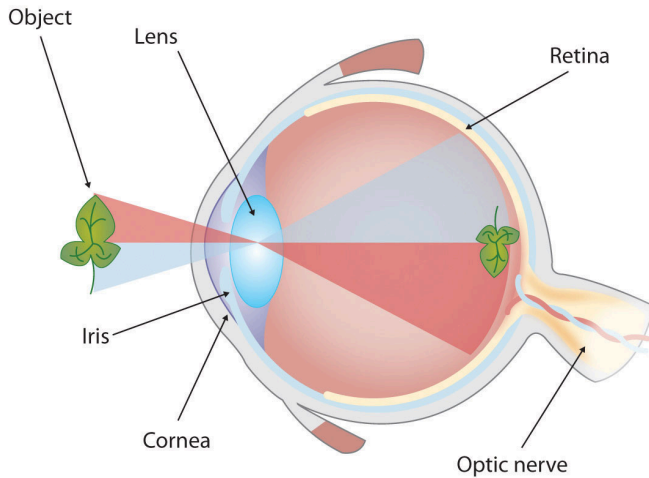
Maps

Maps are useful if the information is clear and limited. There are all kinds of maps, including population, weather, ocean current, political, and economic maps. You should be able to find the right type for the purpose of your speech. Choose a map that emphasizes the information you need to deliver.

The map shown in Figure 14: African Map with Nigerian Emphasis is simple. It clearly shows the geographic location of Nigeria. This map can be valuable for some audiences who might not be able to name and locate countries on the continent of Africa.

Figure 14: African Map with Nigerian Emphasis

Figure 15: 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.

Figure 15: Rhode Island Map
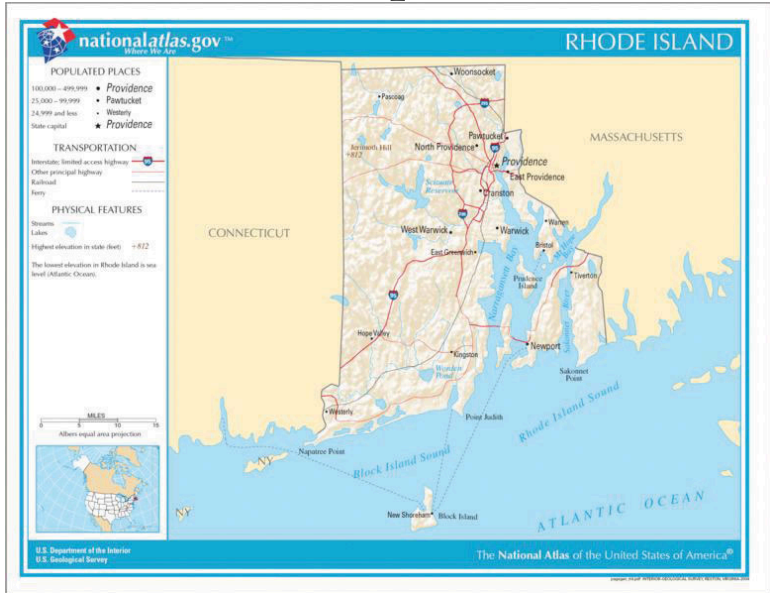
Source: Map courtesy of the National Atlas of the United States.

Photographs and Drawings

Sometimes a photograph or a drawing is the best way to show an unfamiliar but important detail.

The photograph of the tall ship in [Figure 17: Ship's Rigging](#) could be used to emphasize the sheer amount and complexity of the ship's rigging.

Figure 17: Ship's Rigging

Video or Audio Recordings

Another 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 they decided to get the Lap-Band surgery. 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! Additionally, 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 before speaking. If you are unfamiliar with the equipment, you'll have a hard time trying to figure out how it works. Fiddling around with the technology will not only take your audience out of your speech, but it will also have a negative impact on your credibility.
3. Don't fail to cue the clip to the appropriate place before 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 other forms of presentation aid that can be very helpful in getting your audience to understand your message. **<u>Objects</u>** 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.

<u>Models</u>, 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.

Animals and People

The next category of presentation aids is people and animals. We can often use **<u>animals and people</u>**, whether it be an animal, ourselves, or another 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 like 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 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 them as much as necessary to splint their foot. You must also be 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.

A **chart** is a graphical representation of data (often numerical) or a sketch representing an ordered process.

A **graph** is a pictorial representation of the relationships of quantitative data using dots, lines, bars, pie slices, and the like.

A **representation** is a group of aids designed to represent real processes or objects.

An **object** refers to anything you could hold up and talk about during your speech.

A **model** is a re-creation of a physical object that you cannot have readily available with you during a speech.

Animals and people can be used as presentations aids to adequately demonstrate an idea during your speech.

Media to Use for 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. 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 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 co-founder 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 many presentation software programs that are free or relatively inexpensive and that can be learned quickly by nonspecialists. [Figure 18: Presentation Software Packages](#) lists several of these options.

Figure 18: 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	http://prezi.com	Free/$
ThinkFree Show	http://member.thinkfree.com	Free
Zoho Show	http://show.zoho.com	Free

The user needs to take responsibility for the technology used to support the speech. They should not get carried away with the many special effects the software is capable of producing.

When creating your presentation aid, rely on the universal principles of good design. These principles 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. Also, since the display size may vary according to the monitor you are using, practice 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." Clickers are 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 more 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 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 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.

A 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 the video that delivers meaning. Second, "cue up" the video so that you can just push play, 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 on 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 it is very predictable. There's little that can interfere with using it. Additionally, low-tech media can be inexpensive to produce. However, unlike digital media, it can be prone to physical damage in the form of smudges, scratches, dents, and rips. It can be difficult to keep a poster professional looking if you have to carry it through a rainstorm or blizzard. You will need to take steps to protect it 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.

Additionally, 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.

Foam Board or Poster 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 a 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 to do 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 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.

Types of Low Tech Media

1. Chalk or Dry-Erase

<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ececec;">

Board

2. Flipchart
3. Foam board or poster board
4. Handouts

</div>

Tips for Preparing Presentation Aids

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 down the topic of your speech, and likewise, you must narrow down 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 regarding 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.

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 font 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 font 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. 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.

> **Aesthetics** refers to the beauty or good taste of a presentation aid.

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 font 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 should 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 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 significant 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 stopping 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 an 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 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 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 one or two 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 their 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 checked the room where you will be presenting, 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.

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14. Ceremonial Speaking

Alan Bell – Entertaining – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

There are many occasions in which one may be called to speak that do not focus on informing or persuading an audience in the ways we've already discussed. Special occasions mark life events, celebrate milestones, and commemorate people and situations. The speeches delivered at these types of events provide perspective on the occasion, help the audience make sense of its significance, and can become a lasting part of the memories formed from the event. Whether you are standing up to give an award speech, a wedding toast, or a eulogy, knowing how to deliver

speeches in a variety of different contexts is an important skill of public speaking. In this chapter, we will explore the functions of special occasion speeches, as well as several specific types of special occasion speeches, and four key items to remember when you are asked to deliver one these speeches at an event.

Functions of Special Occasion Speeches

Chris Hill – [Chris Hoy – Acceptance Speech](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Entertain and Celebrate

While speeches intended to entertain an audience may be either informative or persuasive, the rhetorical situation often provides a clear indication of when a speech falls into the special occasion category. Consider roasts and toasts; both entertain and celebrate, albeit in different ways. An awards banquet and weddings are examples of special occasions that call for a speaker to present an upbeat, light speech designed to amuse the audience while celebrating a person, event, or situation.

Commemorate

When we think of a speech crafted to commemorate something or someone, perhaps a eulogy is the first type to come to mind. That is likely because a commemorative speech is one of tribute, and often remembrance, such as a eulogy or when a speaker recalls an anniversary or a milestone event. Speeches of commemoration can also include building or monument dedications that are designed to honor the memory of the person or situation that inspired the site.

Inspire

Often the rhetorical situation calls for a speaker to present words of wisdom and guidance based upon their personal experiences or what they've learned through shared experiences of the audience they are addressing. Examples of this kind of inspirational speaking include one you've all likely already witnessed, the commencement speech. Another example is a keynote address at a conference or convention.

An inaugural address is another type of speech designed to inspire audiences through the promise of the speaker's vision for the future.

Advocate

This textbook is dedicated to encouraging students to stand up and speak out and this type of special occasion speech encompasses the speeches in which individuals do just that. Speeches of advocacy focus on goals and values. They are often cause-oriented or crafted to impact policy-setting or change in some way. Speakers present advocacy speeches at special occasions such as fundraisers, campaign rallies, and even protests or marches.

Types of Special Occasion Speeches

If we consider the functions of special occasion speeches we've just reviewed, chances are we could come up with a myriad of different types of speeches that could be included in this section. For our purposes, we are going to focus on several special occasion speeches that you are likely to encounter in your academic, professional, and personal lives. By looking at common types of speeches, we hope to enable you with the tools to stand up and speak out in events and situations in which you may find yourselves given a platform to deliver a speech.

Speeches of Introduction

The first type of speech is called the speech of introduction. A **speech of introduction** is a short speech that introduces another speaker. There are two main goals of an introduction speech: to provide a bit of context, including who the speaker is and why that speaker will be giving a speech at the particular event, and to entice the audience to pay attention to what the speaker has to say.

Just like any other speech, a speech of introduction should have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. The information should be delivered as concisely but informative as possible. 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 speech of introduction should be devoted to telling the audience about the speaker's topic, why the speaker is qualified, and why the audience should listen (notice we now have our three body points). First, tell your audience in general terms about the overarching topic of the speech. You may only have a speech title and maybe a paragraph of information to help guide this part of your speech. Remember, your role is to be concise and to the point. The speaker is the one who will elaborate on the topic. 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? Think about what you've learned about building ethos and do that for the speaker. Lastly, you need to briefly explain to the audience why they should care about the upcoming speech.

The final part of a good introduction speech is the conclusion.

The conclusion is generally designed to welcome the speaker to the lectern. Many introduction speeches 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," "shake the speaker's hand," or "give the speaker a hug" depending on the circumstances of the speech.

Speeches of Presentation

The second type of ceremonial speech is the speech of presentation. A **speech of presentation** is a brief speech given to accompany a prize or honor. A speech of presentation could 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 political 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 their work. Lastly, if the race or competition was conducted in a public forum and numerous people didn't win, you may want to recognize those people for their efforts as well. While you don't want to steal the show away from the winner (as Kanye West did to Taylor Swift during the 2009 MTV

Music Video Awards (https://vimeo.com/173170491), 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 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 of 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 their own. We all have families, friends, and/or colleagues who support us and help us achieve what we do in life. 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 those to whom the project has been dedicated.

When preparing the speech of dedication, start by explaining your connection to the project and why you've been asked to speak. Next, you want to explain what is being dedicated and who was involved with the project, who made it possible. 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. You also want to explain why the structure is important and the impact it may have on the local community. For instance, if the dedication is for a new store, you could talk about how the store will bring in new jobs and shopping opportunities. If the dedication is for a new wing of a hospital, you could talk about how patients will be served and the advances in medicine the new wing will provide the community.

Toasts

It is likely that if you haven't yourself given a toast at this point in your life, you've witnessed one at a social event. A **toast** is a speech designed to congratulate, appreciate, or remember. 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. We also toast people to remember them and what they have accomplished. Think about

a time when you may have heard someone exclaim "let's raise our glass!" in honor of someone who may or may not be present at that moment.

When preparing a toast, the first goal is always to keep your remarks brief. Toasts are generally given in the course of some festivity (e.g., wedding, retirement party, farewell party), and you don't want your toast to take away from the festivity for too long. Second, the goal of a toast is to focus attention on the person or persons being celebrated—not on the speaker. As such, while you are speaking you need to focus your attention on the people you are toasting, 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." While that will verbally signal the conclusion of the toast, some occasions may also call for you to physically raise your glass in the direction of the honoree. This action will invite the audience to join in the toast.

Roasts

A **roast** is an interesting and peculiar speech because it is designed to both praise and good-naturedly poke fun at 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 created a series of celebrity roasts which showcases public figures jokingly insulting other well-known figures in front of a live audience.

In this clip (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSE_saVX_2A#action=share), watch as Stephen Colbert,

television host of The Colbert Report, roasts President George W. Bush.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://uwm.pressbooks.pub/uwmpublicspeaking/?p=121#oembed-1

How does one prepare for a roast? You want to 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 fun at them, not embarrass them or tarnish their reputation. When selecting which aspects to highlight in your roast, you want 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 as these are intended to create a fun atmosphere for all. It is up to the speaker to ensure neither the individual being roasted or the audience, is left feeling uncomfortable. Always remember the point of a roast is to honor someone. 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 them.

Eulogies

A **eulogy** is a speech given in honor of someone who has died. If

you are asked to deliver a eulogy, it's important to understand the expectations of this type of speech and ensure you are prepared. You need to be prepared both for the sake of the audience as well as your own. Watch the following clip (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRsH92sJCr4&feature=youtu.be) of then-Senator Barack Obama delivering a eulogy at the funeral of civil rights activist Rosa Parks in November of 2005.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://uwm.pressbooks.pub/uwmpublicspeaking/?p=121#oembed-2

In this eulogy, Senator Obama delivers the eulogy by recalling Rosa Park's 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 knowledge if you were close to the deceased, it is always a good idea to ask friends and relatives of the deceased for their memories. Other people's input 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 goodbye to one part of their life as they move 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 workforce. Whatever the case may be, periods of transition are often marked by speeches of farewell. Watch the following clip (https://youtu.be/HJrlTpQm0to) 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.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://uwm.pressbooks.pub/uwmpublicspeaking/?p=121#oembed-3

In this speech, Derek Jeter is not only saying goodbye to Yankee Stadium but also thanking the fans for their continued support. When preparing a speech of farewell, the goal should be to thank people and

let them know how much you appreciate them as you make the move to your next role 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. You will also 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, not recount any less pleasant aspects. It's a good idea to 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 this 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. Although other speeches we've already explored can incorporate inspirational messages, we will now look at two specific 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 persuasive, they try not to be obvious about the persuasive intent. They are often delivered as information-giving

speeches that focus on an individual or organization's positive attributes.

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. Nearly all of us have sat through commencement speeches at some point in our lives. Perhaps you just finished high school and earned your degree, or you recently attended a commencement for a sibling or other family member. If you have not yet attended a commencement ceremony, you will soon as you work toward earning your college degree. Numerous celebrities and politicians have been asked to deliver commencement speeches at colleges and universities. One famous commencement speech was given by famed Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling at Harvard University in 2008 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkREt4ZB-ck).

⌨ *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*
https://uwm.pressbooks.pub/uwmpublicspeaking/?p=121#oembed-4

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 not a 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! Remember, the graduates are there to get their diplomas, and 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 tremendous honor and responsibility to be asked to deliver a commencement speech. Take the time to really think through and prepare your speech.

Keynote Speaking

Acumen_ – [Keynote Speech](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

The last type of special occasion 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. 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 kinds of events with the purpose of setting a specific tone for the occasion. As mentioned, keynote speeches often are meant to inspire an audience. This inspiration can anything from motivating staff at a sales convention to discussing organizational values and imparting wisdom on a group with a shared goal or purpose.

Some keynote speakers will work for a speakers bureau, an agency that represents celebrity and professional speakers. One important organization for all aspiring keynote speakers is the National Speaker's Association, or NSA. (http://www.nsaspeaker.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 Speeches

Ironically, an after-dinner speech does not have to occur after a formal dinner, though it does get its name from the idea that these

speeches historically followed a meal of some kind. After-dinner speakers are generally asked (or hired) to speak because they have the ability both to effectively convey a message and to make people laugh. This characteristic does not mean its only goal is to entertain. The after-dinner speech could serve any of the functions previously detailed in this chapter, and all the basic conventions of public speaking discussed in this text apply to after-dinner speeches. However, the overarching goal of these speeches is to entertain and create a light-hearted, jovial atmosphere.

After-dinner speaking is a challenging type of speaking because it requires a balance of entertainment and humor by providing substantive insight into the topic of the event or situation. Finding this balance will allow speakers to deliver a rewarding speech that leaves a lasting impact on the audience. For an example of an after-dinner speech, read the following speech delivered by Mark Twain on his seventieth birthday: (https://www.pbs.org/marktwain/learnmore/writings_seventieth.html).

Here are some things to consider when preparing an after-dinner speech.

First, use all that you have learned about informative or persuasive speeches to prepare for this speech, and then consider the four items of note we will outline later in this chapter for creating a successful special occasion speech. You must prepare, consider the occasion, understand your audience, and be mindful of time constraints surrounding your speech and the event.

Second, remember that this is not an opportunity to try your hand at stand-up comedy. The after-dinner speech has a specific goal or purpose, which you must identify and attempt to accomplish. Doing so requires that your speech has a recognizable structure like your more formal speeches: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. While you ideally want to entertain and amuse your audience, you also want to be sure you achieve your speech goal in the given timeframe.

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 attempt to influence listeners to purchase a product or agree with an ideology, 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, or religious, club, and 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 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMlmbz8-_Xg) presents a speech by Steve Sax, a former major league baseball player.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*
> https://uwm.pressbooks.pub/uwmpublicspeaking/?p=121#oembed-5

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 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NasfjwL8wTc), Becky Olson discusses her life as a cancer survivor.

📖 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*
https://uwm.pressbooks.pub/uwmpublicspeaking/?p=121#oembed-6

Becky Olson goes all over the country talking with and motivating cancer survivors to beat the odds.

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 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E52eIa1VSgQ), the then CEO of Xerox, Anne Mulcahy, speaks before a group of students at the University of Virginia discussing the spirit of entrepreneurship.

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https://uwm.pressbooks.pub/uwmpublicspeaking/?p=121#oembed-7

In this speech, Mulcahy shares the leadership lessons she had learned as the CEO of Xerox

Review of the Types of Special Occasion Speeches

A **speech of introduction** is a short speech that introduces another speaker.

A **speech of presentation** is a brief speech given to accompany a prize or honor.

The **speech of acceptance** is a speech given by the recipient of a prize or honor.

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 those to whom the project has been dedicated.

A **toast** is a speech designed to congratulate, appreciate, or remember.

A **roast** speech is designed to both praise and good-naturedly poke fun at a person being honored.

A **eulogy** is a speech given in honor of someone who has died.

A s**peech of farewell** allows someone to say goodbye to one part of their life as they move on to the next part of life.

An **inspirational speech** elicits an emotional state within an audience. Inspirational speeches include speeches to ensure goodwill and commencement addresses.

A **keynote speech** is delivered to set the underlying tone and summarize the core message of an event. Keynote speeches include after-dinner and motivational speeches.

Delivering Your Special Occasion Speech

Special occasion speeches may be common, but that doesn't mean they don't require effort and preparation. A frequent trap is that people often do not consider the impact these speeches can have on the occasion. For instance, a wedding toast not only leaves a lasting impression on the couple getting married but also all of the guests in attendance (not to mention it will likely be recorded and posted on social media). As a result, one may not prepare seriously but instead, stand up to speak with the idea that they can "wing it" by acting silly and telling a few jokes. Rather than being entertaining or commemorating the occasion, the speech appears ill-prepared and falls flat. To help us think through how to be effective in delivering special occasion speeches, let's look at four key items to remember: preparation, adaptation to the occasion, adaptation to the audience, and mindfulness about the time.

Prepare

First, and foremost, the biggest mistake you can make when standing

to deliver a ceremonial speech is to be underprepared 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 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 poised to deliver a more thoughtful speech that matches the needs of the occasion.

Consider 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 is not 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 mark each occasion in front of the various audiences in attendance? Remember that being a competent speaker is about being both personally effective and socially appropriate. Different occasions will call for different speech functions. As a speaker, it is important to understand the needs of the occasion and adapt your content accordingly. One of the biggest mistakes 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 to each specific occasion by asking questions and investigating the details of each event or situation. When we customize our speech for the special occasion, people are more likely to remember the speech than if we give a generic speech.

Consider Your Audience

Understanding your audience remains one of the most critical aspects of preparing your speech for any occasion. Different audiences will respond differently to speech material. The more you know about your audience and the more you are able to adapt your content to their needs and wants, the more likely your speech will have an impact and you will effectively achieve your speaking goal. One of the coauthors of this text was at a conference specifically for teachers of public speaking. The keynote speaker stood and delivered a speech on the importance of public speaking. Remember, a function of keynote speaking is to inspire the audience. Though this particular speaking was highly informed on the topic and even entertained the audience, the speech did not go over very well with the audience. Why do you think this was? Speaking to an audience of public speaking instructors, a safe assumption is that they already believe in the importance of the subject. Thus, we can also assume that the

speaker may not have considered the audience when preparing the speech, and therefore it is likely the keynote did not fulfill its function of inspiring them.

Be Mindful of the Time

There are very few times in life, whether it be academic, professional, or personal, that you will be given an infinite amount of time to do anything. This is an important consideration to keep in mind when preparing your special occasion speech (as well as your informative and persuasive speeches!). Special occasions often consist of more than just speeches. Each has its 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 and prepares them to appreciate that person's remarks. Conversely, commemorative speeches, commencement speeches, and keynote addresses tend to be longer as they include more content and have different goals.

When it comes to speech timing, the other three items we've discussed in this section can come in very handy. With preparation and practice, you can ensure your speech adheres to a specific timeframe. Considering your occasion and understanding your audience will also help you when crafting your speech and determining an appropriate amount of time for speaking. Think about a wedding you've attended when a toast honoring the couple has gone on and on and on, and everyone, including the happy couple, just wanted to get up and dance. There are also examples of instances when an audience may have been eager to be inspired and motivated but left disappointed when the speaker presented a quick and vapid

speech. It can go either way, and that's why it is important to be prepared, consider the occasion, and understand your audience.

It is also perfectly acceptable to ask questions about the expected time frame for a speech. Either ask the person who has invited you to speak, or you can do some quick research to see what the average speech times in the given context tend to be.

References

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15. Critical Listening

"Are you listening to me?" Often this question is 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 thought of 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).

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

Listening vs. Hearing

Listening or 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.

Listening, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. **Listening**, at its best, is active, focused, and concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker. We are not always the best listeners. Later in this chapter, we will examine some of the reasons why and some strategies for becoming more active critical listeners.

> **Hearing** is an accidental and automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort.

> **Listening** is active, focused, and concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker.

Benefits of Listening

Try not to take listening 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 only survived because audiences were eager to listen. Nowadays, however, you can gain information and entertainment through reading and electronic recordings rather than through real-time listening. If you become distracted and let your attention wander, you can go back and replay a recording. Despite that fact, you can still gain at least four compelling benefits by becoming more active and competent at real-time listening.

You Become a Better Student

When you focus on the material presented in a classroom, you will be able to identify the words used in a lecture and the way they were emphasized. Listening instead of hearing will help you understand the more complex meanings of the words said in a lecture. You will take better notes, and you will more accurately remember the instructor's claims, information, and conclusions. Many times, instructors give verbal cues about what information is important, specific expectations about assignments, and even what material is likely to be on an exam, so careful listening can be beneficial.

You Become a Better Friend

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

People Will Perceive You as Intelligent and Perceptive

When you listen well to others, you reveal yourself as being curious and interested in people and events. Also, your ability to understand the meanings of what you hear will make you a more knowledgeable and thoughtful person.

Good Listening Can Help Your Public Speaking

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

Listening Styles

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

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

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

Our audiences today are likely to be much more heterogeneous. Think about the classroom audience that will listen to your speeches in this course. Your classmates come from many religious and ethnic

backgrounds. Some of them may speak English as a second language. Some might be survivors of war-torn parts of the world such as Bosnia, Darfur, or northwest China. Being mindful of such differences will help you prepare a speech in which you minimize the potential for misunderstanding.

> **Listening style** is the way an audience member listens to the speech.

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

People

The **people-oriented listener** is interested in the speaker. People-oriented listeners listen to the message in order to learn how the speaker thinks and how they feel about their message. For instance, when people-oriented listeners listen to an interview with a famous rap artist, they are likely to be more curious about the artist as an individual than about music, even though the people-oriented

listener might also appreciate the artist's work. If you are a people-oriented listener, you might have certain questions you hope will be answered, such as: Does the artist feel successful? What's it like to be famous? What kind of educational background does he or she have? In the same way, if we're listening to a doctor who responded to the earthquake crisis in Haiti, we might be more interested in the doctor as a person than in the state of affairs for Haitians. Why did he or she go to Haiti? How did he or she get away from his or her normal practice and patients? How many lives did he or she save? We might be less interested in the equally important and urgent needs for food, shelter, and sanitation following the earthquake.

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

Action

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

Action-oriented listening is sometimes called task-oriented listening. In it, the listener seeks a clear message about what needs to be done and might have less patience for listening to the reasons

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

Content

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

Imagine you're delivering a speech on the plight of orphans in Africa. If you just talk about the fact that there are over forty-five million orphans in Africa but don't explain why you'll sound like an

infomercial. In such an instance, your audience's response is likely to be less enthusiastic than you might want. Instead, content-oriented listeners want to listen to well-developed information with solid explanations.

Time

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

In your professional future, some of your audience members will have real-time constraints, not merely perceived ones. Imagine that you've been asked to deliver a speech on a new project to the board of directors of a local corporation. Chances are the people on the board of directors are all pressed for time. If your speech is long and filled with overly detailed information, time-oriented listeners will simply start to tune you out as you're speaking. Obviously, if time-

oriented listeners start tuning you out, they will not be listening to your message. This is not the same thing as being a time-oriented listener who might be less interested in the message content than in its length.

Types of Listeners

The **people-oriented listener** is interested in the speaker.

The **action-oriented listener** is primarily interested in finding out what the speaker wants.

The **content-oriented listener** is interested in the message itself, whether it makes sense, what it means, and whether it's accurate.

The **time-oriented listener** prefers a message that gets to the point quickly.

Why Listening Is Difficult

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

Noise

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

Physical Noise

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

Psychological Noise

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

Physiological Noise

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

Semantic Noise

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

> **Noise** can be defined as anything that interferes with your ability to attend to and understand a message.
>
> **Physical noise** consists of various sounds in an environment that interfere with a source's ability to hear.
>
> **Psychological noise** consists of distractions to a speaker's message caused by a receiver's internal thoughts.

Physiological noise consists of distractions to a speaker's message caused by a listener's own body.

Semantic noise occurs when a receiver experiences confusion over the meaning of a source's word choice.

Examples of Noise

Physical Noise

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

Psychological Noise

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

Physiological Noise

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

Semantic Noise

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

Many distractions are not the fault of the listener or the speaker.

However, when you are the speaker, being aware of these **sources of noise**, or distractions that keep a person from listening, can help you reduce some of the noise that interferes with your audience's ability to understand you.

Attention Span

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

The limits of the human attention span can interfere with listening, but listeners and speakers can use strategies to prevent this interference. As many classroom instructors know, listeners will readily renew their attention when the presentation includes frequent breaks in pacing (Middendorf & Kalish, 1996). For example, a fifty- to seventy-five-minute class session might include some lecture material alternated with questions for class discussion, video

clips, handouts, and demonstrations. Instructors who are adept at holding listeners' attention also move about the front of the room, writing on the board, drawing diagrams, and intermittently using slide transparencies or PowerPoint slides.

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

Receiver Biases

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

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

about a speaker, those biases can interfere with our ability to listen accurately and competently to the speaker's message.

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

Listening or Receiver Apprehension

Listening or receiver apprehension is the fear that you might be unable to understand the message or process the information correctly or be able to adapt your thinking to include the new information coherently (Wheeless, 1975). In some situations, you

might worry that the information presented will be "over your head"—too complex, technical, or advanced for you to understand adequately.
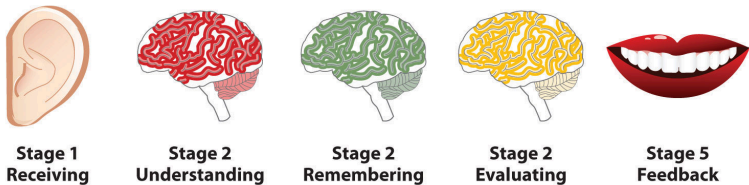
Many students will actually avoid registering for courses in which they feel certain they will do poorly. In other cases, students will choose to take a challenging course only if it's a requirement. This avoidance might be understandable but is not a good strategy for success. To become educated people, students should take a few courses that can shed light on areas where their knowledge is limited.

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

Stages of Listening

Figure 3: Stages of Feedback

| Stage 1 Receiving | Stage 2 Understanding | Stage 2 Remembering | Stage 2 Evaluating | Stage 5 Feedback |

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

Receiving

Receiving is the intentional focus on hearing a speaker's message, which happens when we filter out other sources so that we can isolate the message and avoid the confusing mixture of incoming stimuli. At this stage, we are still only hearing the message. Notice in Figure 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 you must hear the message before you can continue the process of listening.

Understanding

In the **understanding** stage, we attempt to learn the meaning of the message, which is not always easy. For one thing, if a speaker does

not enunciate clearly, it may be difficult to tell what the message was—did your friend say, "I think she'll be late for class," or "my teacher delayed the class"? Notice in Figure 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 your professor advises students to get an "early start" on your speech, he or she probably hopes that you will begin your research right away and move on to developing a thesis statement and outlining the speech as soon as possible. However, students in your class might misunderstand the instructor's meaning in several ways. One student might interpret the advice to mean that as long as she gets started, the rest of the assignment will have time to develop itself. Another student might instead think that to start early is to start on the Friday before the Monday due date instead of Sunday night.

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

Remembering

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

It's also important to know that you can improve your memory of a message by processing it meaningfully—that is, by applying it in ways that are meaningful to you (Gluck, et al., 2008). Instead of simply repeating a new acquaintance's name over and over, for example, you might remember it by associating it with something in your own life. "Emily," you might say, "reminds me of the Emily I knew in middle school," or "Mr. Impiari's name reminds me of the Impala my father drives."

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

Evaluating

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

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

Responding

Responding, sometimes referred to as feedback, is the fifth and final stage of the listening process. It's the stage at which you indicate your involvement. Almost anything you do at this stage can be interpreted as feedback. For example, you are giving positive feedback to your instructor if at the end of class you stay behind to finish a sentence in your notes or approach the instructor to ask for clarification. The opposite kind of feedback is given by students who gather their belongings and rush out the door as soon as class is over. Notice in Figure 3: Stages of Feedback that this stage is represented by the lips because we often give feedback in the form of verbal feedback; however, you can just as easily respond nonverbally.

Stages of Feedback

Receiving is the stage where you intentionally focus on hearing a speaker's message. This focus happens when you filter out other sources so that you can isolate the message and avoid the confusing mixture of incoming stimuli.

Understanding is the stage where we attempt to learn the meaning of the message.

Remembering is the stage that begins with listening. If you can't remember something that was said, you might not have been listening effectively.

Evaluating is the stage where we judge the value of the message.

Responding is the stage where you give the speaker feedback.

Formative Feedback

Not all response occurs at the end of the message. **<u>Formative feedback</u>** is a natural part of the ongoing transaction between a speaker and a listener. As the speaker delivers the message, a listener signals their involvement with focused attention, note-taking, nodding, and other behaviors that indicate understanding or failure to understand the message. These signals are important to the speaker, who is interested in whether the message is clear and accepted or whether the content of the message is meeting the resistance of preconceived ideas. Speakers can use this feedback to decide whether additional examples, support materials, or explanation is needed.

Summative Feedback

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

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

> **Formative feedback** is a natural part of the ongoing

transaction between a speaker and a listener during the speech (note taking, nodding, smiling, etc.).

Summative feedback is given at the end of the communication (asking questions, peer reviewing, etc).

Listening Critically

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

Critical listening, in a public speaking 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.

Critical listening, in a public speaking context, means using careful, systematic thinking and reasoning to see whether a message makes sense in light of factual evidence.

Six Ways to Improve Your Critical Listening

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

Recognizing the Difference between Facts and Opinions

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

In American politics, the issue of health care reform is heavily laden with both opinions and facts, and it is extremely difficult to sort some of them out. A clash of fact versus opinion happened on September 9, 2010, during President Obama's nationally televised speech to a

joint session of Congress outlining his health care reform plan. In this speech, President Obama responded to several rumors about the plan, including the claim "that our reform effort will insure illegal immigrants. This, too, is false—the reforms I'm proposing would not apply to those who are here illegally." At this point, one congressman yelled out, "You lie!" Clearly, this congressman did not have a very high opinion of either the health care reform plan or the president. However, when the nonpartisan watch group Factcheck.org examined the language of the proposed bill, they found that it had a section titled "No Federal Payment for Undocumented Aliens" (Factcheck.org, 2009).

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

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

Uncovering Assumptions

If something is **factual**, supporting evidence exists. However, we still

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

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

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.

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.

Relate New Ideas to Old Ones

As both a speaker and a listener, one of the most important things you can do to understand a message is to relate new ideas to previously held ideas. Imagine you're giving a speech about biological systems and you need to use the term "homeostasis," which refers to the ability of an organism to maintain stability by making constant adjustments. To help your audience understand homeostasis, you could show how homeostasis is similar to adjustments made by the thermostats that keep our homes at a more or less even temperature. If you set your thermostat for seventy degrees and it gets hotter, the central cooling will kick in and cool your house down. If your house gets below seventy degrees, your heater will kick in and heat

your house up. Notice that in both cases your thermostat is making constant adjustments to stay at seventy degrees. Explaining that the body's homeostasis works in a similar way will make it more relevant to your listeners and will likely help them both understand and remember the idea because it links to something they have already experienced.

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

Take Notes

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

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

It's important to find a balance between listening well and taking

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

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

Listening Ethically

Ben Smith – [String telephone](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

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

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

speaker with respect even when we disagree, don't understand the message, or find the speech boring.

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

> Like so many of us, I used to take listening for granted, glossing over this step as I rushed into the more active, visible ways of being helpful. Now, I am convinced that listening is the single most important element of any helping relationship.
>
> Listening has great power. It draws thoughts and feelings out of people as nothing else can. When someone listens to you well, you become aware of feelings you may not have realized that you felt. You have ideas you may have never thought 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.

> **Ethical listening** is a concept that rests heavily on honest intentions. It is when we extend to other speakers the same respect we want to receive when it's our turn to speak.

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