

A Speaker's Resource

Listener-Centered Public Speaking

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Listener-Centered Public Speaking

Liz O'Brien

Phoenix College



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Dedication

**To my students—
past, present,
and future.**

**Speak up
and speak out.
You can and
you must.**



About the Author



Liz O'Brien serves as residential faculty and immediate-past chair of the Communication/American Sign Language/Theatre & Film Department at Phoenix College, one of the Maricopa Community Colleges. She earned a BA in communication from the University of Arizona and an MA in communication from the University of Maryland. She accepted her position on the communication faculty at Phoenix College in 1990 and continues to thrive on the teaching-and-learning interactions with her diverse, urban student population. She received her campus's Distinguished Teaching Award in 2000 and has been honored with several other awards for teaching excellence. Her creative outlets include producing and directing the Storybook Stagecoach, a Phoenix College performing troupe that brings storybooks to life on the stage for young audiences.

Additionally, she is a professional watercolor artist. Liz lives in a historic home in central Phoenix with her husband Steve Emrick, cats Masala and Haggis, a garden full of plants, and a pond full of fish.

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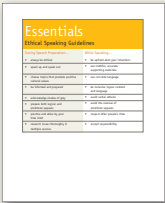
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	Essentials boxes summarize the tips and guidelines for effective public speaking that are discussed in each chapter. Students can quickly scan the boxes to review and increase their understanding of the main ideas. See Essentials at a Glance on the inside back cover of <i>A Speaker's Resource</i> for a summary of all Essentials boxes found in the text.

Preface

•Public speaking is one of those college courses that simply never forgets to complete the course as unquestioned different people,, more confident, self-assured, better speakers, and better thinkers."

I've listened to countless speeches. They include two decades of classroom speeches and innumerable speeches that I've heard as a student, employee, and citizen. Not surprisingly, some of these speeches have been better than others.

But what made them so?

The best speeches were not merely a sum of well-executed parts. The success of a speech seemed to involve more than having a clearly stated thesis, supporting points, and a confident delivery. Something more was going on, and I wanted to help my students discover what it was.

I kept thinking about this. I read a lot and talked to others. Three common themes emerged. First, successful public speakers were doing more than following a recipe. Their approach to preparation and delivery was personal, not formulaic. They owned their topics.

Second, most people, including my students, viewed public speaking as a performance. The majority of students come to class with a competitive mind-set. Their life in school, sports, and American culture caused them to see public speaking as a performance situation, a practice centered on themselves and not necessarily on the needs of the listener. As a consequence, many of their speeches fell short of success.

Third, the most effective public speakers were not giving a performance; instead, they were having a public conversation using real words and communication skills that people practice in their everyday interactions with others.

I challenged myself as an instructor. Could I find a way to translate these realizations into a more effective approach to teaching the public speaking course?

A LISTENER-CENTERED APPROACH

I came to recognize that the better speakers made listening much easier. Without compromising their ideas, the best speakers made choices in their presentations that made it easier for the listener to grasp, understand, and interact with their ideas.



- Create and communicate an organized message; your listeners won't have to work so hard to follow the progression of your ideas.
- Tell stories; your listeners will immediately latch on.
- Speak in your own voice with your own words; your listeners will relate.
- Use speaker- and audience-centered pronouns; your listeners will feel included in your conversation.
- Be yourself, not someone you think the audience expects to see; your listeners will accept you.



In class, I began talking to my public speaking students in a new way. I started experimenting with what I began calling “listener-centered” ideas and techniques. Here are just a few things I said to encourage a more listener-centered mind-set:

- Find a topic you love, and communicate it with passion; your listeners will feel it.
- Aim to communicate, not to impress; your listeners are interested in your ideas, not how fancy a speaker you are.

Students bought into this mind-set, and the results were remarkable. They were speaking in a natural, more confident and engaging manner. Speeches, as a whole, were unquestionably better than those I had previously experienced in class. And it was all happening very early in the term. My students and I looked forward to speech rounds because of the exciting results we were getting.

This listener-centered approach was working. Focusing on what students naturally brought to the course reduced their anxiety about making speeches and improved the quality of their communication. The speeches themselves were much more enjoyable and successful. My students were step-

ping away from the lecture, and away from the formal trappings of public speaking, to engage instead in lively public conversation.

The listener-centered approach also made my job as an instructor easier. Shifting the emphasis of the course away from a “performance” orientation reduced the number of stressed-out students in need of personal attention. Excuses that often come on speech day were greatly reduced. Students were making meaningful speeches earlier in the term and enjoying the process. *Listenability*—the degree to which a speech is made easy to listen to—created a supportive atmosphere in the classroom, providing a sense of community among my students. Their “public conversations” encouraged better classroom relationships, because they were actually listening to each other rather than just sitting there politely.

A Speaker's Resource is the distillation of many years of practicing and refining my listener-centered approach in the classroom. The text is designed as a classroom companion for teachers who want their students communicating with their own voices in a confident and conversational style. The book was written in the hope that its lessons remain relevant beyond the classroom. It's designed to be the kind of textbook students will want to retain for many years to come, for a lifetime's worth of public speaking situations.

 KEYS TO LISTENABILITY				
STRATEGY KEYS	STRUCTURE KEYS	SUPPORT KEYS	STYLE KEYS	
Ensure listener-centered choices in advance of your presentation about the topic, audience, and occasion.	Organize your ideas, and communicate them in a way that your listeners can follow and understand.	Substantiate, enhance, and reinforce your message to engage your listeners and help them understand, believe, or act.	Present your speech in a listener-friendly manner.	
Manage your energy to create confident presentations. (Ch. 3)	Finalize your thesis statement. (Ch. 12)	Find and incorporate relevant research. (Ch. 10)	Choose an appropriate method of delivery. (Ch. 17)	
Be ethical and civil throughout the speech-making process. (Ch. 4)	Organize your message. (Ch. 12)	Use a variety of forms of support. (Ch. 11)	Create appropriate speaking notes. (Ch. 18)	
Know and evaluate yourself as a communicator. (Ch. 6)	Outline your message. (Ch. 13)	Use narrative. (Ch. 23)	Practice wisely. (Ch. 19)	
Adopt the framework of listenability as a guiding principle. (Ch. 7)	Introduce your ideas. (Ch. 14)	Prepare and use visual support. (Ch. 24)	Use language inclusively and accurately. (Ch. 20)	
Analyze the audience and the speaking situation. (Ch. 8)	Summarize your ideas. (Ch. 15)	Maintain listener engagement. (Ch. 25)	Use your vocal qualities to support and complement your verbal messages. (Ch. 21)	
Determine your speech purpose. (Ch. 9)	Use transitions throughout your message. (Ch. 16)	Establish and maintain your credibility. (Ch. 26)	Let your body help communicate your message. (Ch. 22)	
Choose and narrow your topic. (Ch. 9)		Apply reasoning. (Ch. 29)		



REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

Çough you prepare the introduction late in the speech-preparation process, believe me when I say you can't view it as an afterthought. That intro is the first impression the audience has of you. A light and unimaginative intro gets you nowhere, because you're likely to lose your listeners even before you begin. I know—I thought I could wing my first intro. But take it from me: you definitely want to have a plan for what you're going to say, because it makes a difference.

ÇAs far as the introduction goes, my class liked the descriptive phrase "tell them what you're going to tell them." It's succinct and right on target.

- **Speaking of Culture.** Based on in-depth face-to-face interviews, "Speaking of Culture" boxes provide insight into the special challenges faced by international students who are studying public speaking in the United States. The interviewees' powerful words help native-born speakers, other international students, and teachers build empathy for and gain an understanding of speakers from different parts of the world.
- **Did You Know?** These boxes add richness to chapter concepts. Titles include "Why It's Smart to Pay Our Intellectual Debts," "Mindmapping to Generate Ideas," "Truthiness," "History of Cool," "Uptalk," and "What's That Smile Really Saying?"
- **Essentials.** "Essentials" boxes summarize the tips and guidelines for effective public speaking that are discussed in each chapter. Students can quickly scan the boxes to review and increase their understanding of the main ideas.

Essentials

Ways to Get the Audience's Attention

- Tell a story.
- Engage the audience.
- Make a reference to the audience, occasion, or point in time.
- Ask a question.
- Show images or play sound.
- Use humor.
- Deliver a quotation.
- Surprise or startle.
- Pique curiosity.

Media Resources for Students

Students will find an extensive set of resources to reinforce the concepts and methods found in *A Speaker's Resource*. These are available at the student Online Learning Center for the book at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.

Real Students, Real Speeches. *Real Students, Real Speeches*, available at the book's website, provides sample speeches prepared and delivered by real student speakers in a classroom setting. The speeches, given by students and one American Sign Language faculty member at my college, are meant to be instructive and promise to spur meaningful classroom dialogue. Students and instructors alike can analyze any speech for its listenable qualities—what makes it work—and for things the speaker could have done differently to increase his or her listenability. None of these speeches is “perfect” but every one of them is honest. These sample speeches are no different than the public speaking that goes on in classrooms around the country on any given day. Viewers will be inspired by the passion and enthusiasm these speakers bring to the stories and ideas they share and by the diversity of their voices and interests.

The videos are available at the student Online Learning Center at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>. Viewers can access full speeches as well as examples of specific techniques. The full speeches are presented with and without my commentary. Clips of specific speech techniques cover such elements as stating the thesis, previewing the main points, engaging the audience, creating credibility, using visual support, providing an explanation, providing a take-away, plus many more. The speeches are also available on a DVD for instructor use in the classroom.

Other Online Resources

The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes several other helpful study aids and tools for the student. These include: *Outline Tutor*, an interactive program for creating speech outlines; self-quizzes for each chapter; *BiblioMaker*, a program for automatically formatting printed bibliographies in styles provided by the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and the Council of Science Editors (CSE).

Internet Resources. In addition, students can access a suite of online exercises and links designed to reinforce skills and knowledge of public speaking, including *Internet Links* mentioned in the book and a *Glossary* of key terms.

Additional Resources for Instructors

Resources for the instructor are found on a companion DVD as well as the instructor portion of the Online Learning Center.

Real Students, Real Speeches DVD. This DVD includes the same sample speeches—prepared and delivered by actual students—that appear in the student portion of the book's website. Because these speeches aren't “perfect,” they make for great instruction. Instructors can analyze them in class for their listenable qualities—what makes them work—and for things the speakers could have done to increase their listenability.

The Online Learning Center also hosts a special section only for instructors using *A Speaker's Resource*. Instructors are invited to register at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e> to take advantage of the following downloadable tools and content:

Instructor's Resource Manual. Written by the author, along with Joe Faina of Arizona State University, this instructor's guide provides chapter-by-chapter tips on teaching the course using *A Speaker's Resource*. There are portions of the manual tailored for new instructors as well as for those who are already experienced with the public speaking course.

Test Bank. The computerized test bank questions, written by Jennifer Linde of Arizona State University and Josie DeGroot of Ohio University, Athens, include multiple-choice, true-false, short answer, and essay questions for each chapter. The tests are designed to assist the instructor in testing students on basic public speaking concepts, application, and practices as well as the recall of factual information. Correct answers and page references are provided for all questions.

PowerPoint Slides. A full complement of PowerPoint slides is provided for those instructors who choose to teach using slides.

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Chapter 1

Speaking in Public

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I learned a lot about public speaking in this class, but I also learned a lot about life. I learned that people don’t want to see a presentation of you; they want to see you, the real you, just as you are. I’ve learned, as absolutely corny and grade school as it sounds, that it’s OK to be myself. I now feel confident that I have the tools and experience necessary to succeed and communicate in an honest and effective way with whomever I want. If anyone doubts the value of this class, just compare the videos of my first speech with my last!”

“I learned to experience public speaking as a communication event. It is not about a person who stands up and ‘spits out’ ideas to passive audience members who are just sitting there to be nice. It is not a one-sided event where the speaker is the only person participating. It is so important to talk with our listeners, relate our ideas directly to them, and embrace them throughout the speech. And when we do this, we’ll see that they are there, truly listening and sending messages of their own right back at us.”

1A**Recognize the Benefits of Knowing How to Speak in Public**

1. *Academic benefits*
2. *Career benefits*
3. *Personal benefits*

1B**Manage Your Learning Process**

1. *Frustrations and accomplishments are part of any learning process*
2. *See your classmates as valuable resources*

1C**View Public Speaking as Communication**

1. *Public speaking as transactional communication*
2. *The components of the transactional process*

1D**Appreciate the Nature and History of the Public Speaking Course**

Key Terms

channel	▶ 13
context	▶ 13
decoder	▶ 11
encoder	▶ 11
feedback	▶ 13
frame of reference	▶ 12
interpersonal communication	▶ 10
mass communication	▶ 10
message	▶ 12
noise	▶ 13
public speaking	▶ 10
receiver	▶ 11
rhetoric	▶ 14
sender	▶ 11
small group communication	▶ 10
transactional communication	▶ 10

This course is dedicated to public speaking, a type of human communication in use for at least the last few thousand years and still widely used today in a variety of interactive contexts. Public speaking is all about the real world; the concepts and skills it requires are invaluable for living, working, and thinking in today's interconnected world. The communication training you'll receive in this course and in this book is designed to help you build the skills you need for preparing to speak, engaging in the actual speaking event, and evaluating your own presentation upon completion. This first chapter outlines some benefits that public speakers enjoy and examines the unique process of studying the art of speaking. You'll then learn about the nature of public speaking as communication and get a brief look at its rich history.

1A

Recognize the Benefits of Knowing How to Speak in Public

As a citizen of our modern age, you enjoy added benefits when you can stand up before a group of other people to discuss our past, make sense of our present, or negotiate our future. Perhaps you already participate in these societal conversations. If you're not yet doing so, there are many good reasons to join in the dialogue. From your life as a student to your life in the working world and to your life at home and in your community, proficiency in public presentation enhances your interaction with others by allowing you to share important ideas, shape opinion and policy, and participate meaningfully in special occasions. You'll enjoy personal benefits as well.

1. Academic benefits

- **Speaking skills.** Your schooling is sure to entail speaking assignments. Rare is the student today who is not required to orally present a paper or project in at least one course. One recent survey of undergraduates showed that nearly 85 percent of first-year students and 95 percent of seniors gave formal presentations.¹ Knowing how to present your ideas to classmates is a recipe for success in any academic or workforce area of study. One graduate of a public speaking course, an engineering major, shared her experience:

I made a presentation in my calculus class today, and I think it's fair to say I was among the best. Most others read off their papers in a monotone voice and never even looked at the audience. I'll admit I walked away from some of those presentations with no new understanding of calculus. In contrast, I spoke conversationally from only a few notes and really engaged my classmates. My visuals were big, bright, and helpful, and people even asked questions at the end. They were listening! And I got an A on the assignment.

- **Critical-thinking skills.** Critical thinking is a requirement for college success. Public speakers have multiple opportunities to exercise their analytic and evaluation skills because they use these skills at every step of the speaking process. As a speaker, you

decide what to say and do based on your assessment of the speech purpose, the audience, and the speaking occasion.

You also exercise your critical-thinking abilities through your role as a public listener. As you listen, you work to identify your classmates' central themes, evaluate the effectiveness of their organization, and question the support they use to sustain their arguments. You should find your critical listening improving with each listening opportunity.

- **Writing skills.** Public speaking students also testify to an enhanced understanding of writing. Though public speaking and composition writing are two very different forms of communication, there are some areas of overlap. Public speaking students repeatedly report that they notice such improvements as tighter essay writing, an increased ability to craft clearer central messages, and a greater understanding of how to structure and support those messages.
- **Expanded campus involvement.** Most colleges and universities offer extensive opportunities for formal and informal involvement with others in the campus community. The skills you learn and practice as a speaker can increase and enhance your social, philanthropic, or political interaction with others. The “Speaker’s Story” box (◀ p. 7) profiles one student’s improved engagement with campus life as a result of a public speaking course.

2. Career benefits

You’ll enhance your current and future professional life when you learn how to speak in public. Expertise is one of the most critical economic resources in this interconnected world. Whether you work for yourself, for a small business, for a nonprofit, for a government agency, or for a multinational corporation, chances are you’ll need or want to communicate your ideas in front of others at some point, if not many times, in your working career.

- **In the interview.** Public speakers possess skills directly related to succeeding in the job interview. Successful job applicants must articulate their experience and vision in an organized manner. They must tailor their responses to the specific needs and culture of the interviewing organization. Eye contact, formal use of language, clear pronunciation, and a confident speaking voice—essential interviewing skills—are all skills used by public speakers.
- **On the job.** Speaking opportunities and requirements abound on the job. Speaking up at meetings, training other employees, selling ideas to clients, and presenting at conferences are only some of the public communication situations for today’s working people. Employers value the skills possessed by effective public speakers, including verbal skills, listening skills, analytic and research skills, problem-solving skills, planning and organizing skills, as well as multicultural awareness, reasoning, creativity, adaptability, and self-confidence.² Employers are happy to train you in job specifics but are not always willing to spend valuable organizational resources to teach you such general employability skills. Your public speaking training and experience can give your employer increased confidence in your ability to interact with clients, customers, and others within the organization.

A Speaker's Story I Finally Got Out There



Jacqueline

I have always been a reserved person, not the type who was loud and out there. I kept to myself unless asked a question. But all this changed after I took public speaking. I still don't yell or draw attention to myself, but I now participate more in my classroom discussions. I remember getting more involved in my world politics class because I was now comfortable sharing my thoughts. If it hadn't been for public speaking, I wouldn't have gone to the United Nations Assembly, an optional class credit my professor put together so students could represent countries and debate issues. I went and did well. I spoke in front of a large group not once, not twice, but numerous times. My mom was shocked when I told her what I had done!



Survey your friends, family, and acquaintances working in education, law, business, public service, the military, entertainment, various trades, government, law enforcement, science, health care, and numerous other occupations. Most of them likely engage in some degree of public presentation. Some address large audiences; others, smaller groups at work. But for most, presenting to customers, supervisors, clients, and colleagues is part of the job. Mike Rumpeltin, an architect at RSP Architects in Tempe, Arizona, is typical:

I am responsible for the design direction of all the work within my studio. This translates into countless client meetings, public reviews of certain projects, and so on. In short, I present my ideas, thoughts, and designs constantly to a wide array of people with varying backgrounds. This means that even within a single presentation, I may have to represent an idea or concept in multiple ways but still keep a certain level of excitement and engagement with the audience. I am certain that my techniques, along with the energy and passion I communicate about my work, are what lead to my repeat clientele.

Public speaking skills are also essential for people who are self-employed or working in seemingly solitary professions. Mark Duran, a self-employed commercial photographer specializing in "planes, trains, and automobiles," attributes his success, in part, to his public speaking skills:

I have to make presentations to companies to convince them to hire me. Though my knees literally knocked the first few times I did it, I am now quite comfortable with speaking. First of all, I'm prepared. There's nothing that substitutes for that. I then go into the presentation seeing it as my room to work. I know I have more expertise in photography than anyone else sitting there. I'm confident. And I believe it gives me an edge. It's usually a slam dunk that I get hired for the job.

Duran also uses his speaking skills to train others. He makes presentations on photography tips to students and talks to marketing departments on topics such as “What to Expect When You Hire a Photographer.” Duran’s engaging personality and confidence as a public speaker get him asked back repeatedly.

3. Personal benefits

Finally, public speaking skills are advantageous in your personal life. Speakers repeatedly report increased levels of engagement in their communities and increased confidence in social situations. One speaker, reflecting on her public speaking training, said, “These are life skills you learn.”

- **Increased levels of engagement in your community.** Many people participate in their communities. Parents may join school boards, car enthusiasts may gravitate toward the local hot rod club, and a variety of caring individuals may get involved with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Public speakers have added influence in the start-up, maintenance, impact, and success of these community organizations.
- **Increased confidence in social situations.** The increased confidence public speakers describe also transfers to social situations. People often say that “finding their voice” through their public speaking experience leads to stronger feelings of personal empowerment. They value their ability to teach, influence, and reach others through words and actions. Many also testify to increased levels of self-esteem and to feeling less intimidated in social situations.

1B

Manage Your Learning Process

The prospect of standing before a group and competently communicating ideas leaves people feeling either eager and excited or anxious and apprehensive; few look on the act with a “take it or leave it” attitude. Whether you are starting this course with much, some, or no past speaking experience, you should walk away a changed person, with new tools in hand for negotiating the paths of life.

It’s natural to experience this course in your own way. If you have spoken in the past, you may want to use your class time to fine-tune your current speaking strengths and experiment with higher-level skills. Bear in mind that there’s always something new to learn in any subject we study.

If you are experiencing public speaking for the first time, consider yourself in good company. Hundreds of thousands of people each year learn to speak in classes and workshops taught around the country and the world. Every well-known public speaker, including presidents, CEOs, and circuit speakers earning \$50,000 per speech, started from point zero at one time and moved forward from there.

1. Frustrations and accomplishments are part of any learning process

Public speaking differs from many of your other college courses in that it requires you to exercise your voice and body in the learning process. While most of us did this freely as children, as adolescents many of us probably preferred being part of the background. Yet this course asks you to conspicuously place your body before your peers and open your mouth with the intention of having something brilliant emerge. Our society's preoccupation with outward appearance makes it all too easy to worry about how others will perceive us. Your aim, however, is not to impress; instead, it's to effectively communicate your ideas to a group of people. Each opportunity you get to practice doing that is beneficial.

Like riding a bike, public speaking is a skill you have to *do* in order to learn. Expect to face some bumps along the way. You may not articulate an important element of your argument as well as you had planned; your visual support may not make the impact you thought it would; you may say *um* more than you would like. But frustrations are part of any worthwhile endeavor. Your instructor is doing all he or she can to create a safe environment for trial and error. Your job is to try your best, to learn from your mistakes, and to press forward. You *will* live to complete the course and emerge a stronger person. As one first-year student noted, "This is a challenging but rewarding course. It kept me on my toes, and I needed that."

Achievements are also part of the learning equation. You may choose an especially engaging topic. You may use a new piece of technology smoothly and expertly. You may incorporate some impressive research into your presentation. You may discover that you're very comfortable in the spotlight. You have real opportunities to make a genuine impact on your classmates and instructor. Many others have done it before you. Audience members have learned new things, reconsidered their viewpoints, and been inspired to change their behavior based on class presentations. When you communicate relevant ideas in a passionate manner, listeners can't help but get caught up in the action.

2. See your classmates as valuable resources

Students are consistently surprised at how much they enjoy their public speaking course. One explanation lies in the relationships that form among classmates. People realize that they're "in this together," so the support system for the individual speaker is strong. Your classmates are a rich resource for guidance and feedback. Look to them as you brainstorm and contemplate topics. Because they're familiar with the assignment criteria, they are uniquely qualified to provide assistance as you organize and develop your ideas. You should also find them a highly supportive and welcoming audience on the days you speak. The course is not a competition; you're all learning together.

You'll also benefit from the speaking choices your classmates make while they prepare and present. Pay critical attention as other people try their hand at the same skills you are learning. Both their successful and their not-so-successful speaking choices are highly instructive for everyone in the class. One first-year student was surprised at how much she learned from her classmates:

At first I thought I'd be learning about public speaking only from my teacher and the book and maybe a video or two. But I probably ended up learning more from watching and

listening to my classmates. One of them, Eric, was an amazing role model. He walked up there, and on his first speech he stole my attention. He was obviously prepared. He looked relaxed, spoke naturally, and engaged the audience. And he only got better after that!

1C

View Public Speaking as Communication

Communication is the act of sharing meaning. **Public speaking**, the exchanging of messages between one speaker and an identified audience for a specific purpose on a specific occasion, differs from several other general types of human communication. Let's see how.

- **Interpersonal communication** is the exchange of messages between two people who have some sort of relationship with one another, such as siblings, coworkers, and significant others.
- **Small group communication** is the exchange of messages between a small number of people gathered for a specific purpose. Study groups at the library, business meetings around a conference table, and monthly book club meetings at friends' homes are all situations where small group communication occurs.
- **Mass communication** is the delivery of a message from one source to a large audience through a form of mass media. Web broadcasts, television broadcasts, and magazines are examples of mass communication.

The "Did You Know?" box (◀ p. 11) provides a brief look at an organization dedicated to the study of human communication of all kinds.

1. Public speaking as transactional communication

Communication scholars describe public speaking as **transactional communication**. This means that during a presentation, messages flow in two directions simultaneously, with the speaker and the audience acting as both senders and receivers. For example, while listening to a speaker deliver a message, audience members send messages of their own. They may break in with applause, nod in agreement, make comments, or even get up to leave. The speaker, while presenting, also acts as a listener, being alert to these audience messages, interpreting them, and responding.

Transactional communication is electric. Rather than describing the speaking process as the expression of the speaker's ideas to a passive audience, the transactional perspective says that the exchange of messages between speaker and audience creates new meaning and evokes new ideas. Audiences need speakers to teach, to inspire, and to provide fresh perspectives. Speakers need audiences to understand their messages and to help create new ideas and action. Guido Russo, a senior account executive for an IT firm, provides a living example. Russo spends his days convincing clients to contract his company's IT infrastructure services and frequently makes persuasive presentations to groups of twenty-five or more:

Sales is a journey. I work one step at a time, building relationships and allowing a lot of time for my ideas to become my clients' ideas. My presentations are about furthering interaction. I have already laid a lot of groundwork with a few people in the organiza-

Did You Know?

National Communication Association

The National Communication Association (NCA), based in Washington, DC, is an organization dedicated to promoting communication scholarship and education. Founded in 1914 as the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking, NCA today encompasses all aspects of the field of communication, including intercultural, interpersonal, organizational, and mass communication. NCA sponsors an annual convention where its many educators, practitioners, and students from more than twenty countries gather to meet, present research, and exchange ideas. NCA also publishes nine academic journals, including *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, and *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. Learn more about NCA at www.natcom.org.

Source: National Communication Association, <http://www.natcom.org> (accessed December 12, 2007).

tion and now have to convince an extended group of decision makers that I can provide solutions to their IT needs. My presentations are highly interactive. I talk and I listen. At the end, I know from their questions and comments what my next steps have to be.

2. The components of the transactional process

Several components are at play during a public speech (Figure 1.1, p. 12).

Sender The **sender** is the speaker, the person motivated to share his or her ideas. These ideas may be informative, persuasive, or geared to a special occasion such as an anniversary party or funeral. In the role of **encoder**, the speaker creates meaning by taking ideas and

translating them into various perceptible codes such as words, gestures, facial expressions, pictures, and tone of voice.



Receivers The audience members are the **receivers** in a public speaking event. Sometimes known as **decoders**, they are the listeners who assign and create meaning from the speaker's words and behaviors. Some decoding is basic: only receivers who speak English can assign and create meaning for English words, and only then for the English words within their vocabulary. Most decoding is more complex and

The transactional nature of public speaking.

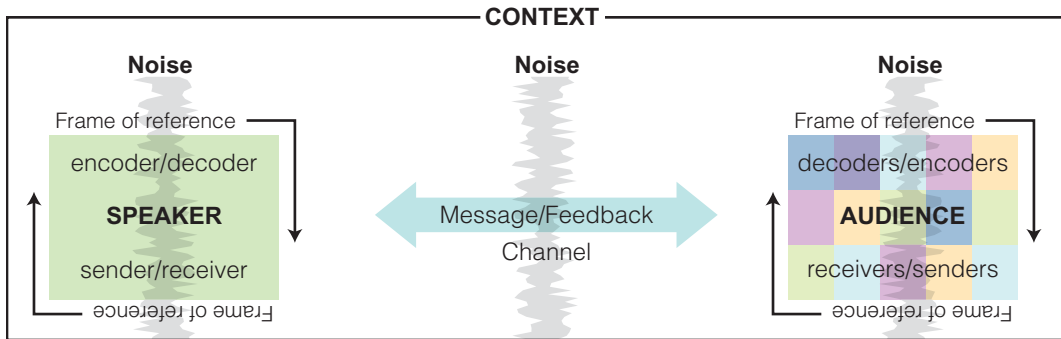


Figure 1.1 The Transactional Communication Process

subjective. When receivers see a speaker with straight posture, they make an assumption about his or her confidence. When receivers hear a speaker go off on a long tangent, they may lose the speaker's original message and make judgments about his or her preparation. When receivers hear a speaker make a claim without providing sufficient evidence, they may view the speaker's entire message with suspicion.

As mentioned earlier, the transactional nature of public speaking indicates that presenters are receivers too. As audience members transmit their own feedback and messages, the speaker interprets them and responds in turn. For some beginning speakers, high levels of adrenaline may make it hard to see and process audience feedback. If this happens to you, understand that it's quite normal. After a few presentations, the "fog" will lift, and you'll be able to perceive and consider the messages your audience is sending back to you.

Frame of reference All communicators in the public speaking transaction, both sender and receivers, bring with them a **frame of reference**, an individual worldview based on background, age, education, gender, values, politics, economic status, culture, occupation, health, and ethnicity. As a speaker, you have a frame of reference that influences the creation of your message; each of us says and does things based on who we are.

Individual audience members also have a frame of reference that influences their reception and interpretation of your message. A peace activist and a military leader, for example, may interpret a speech on U.S. foreign policy differently. A penniless student listening to a presentation on investment strategies would not perceive things in the same way as a wealthy worker nearing retirement. Your instructor perceives and interprets your speech work differently than you or your classmates do.

An audience as a whole is also considered to have a frame of reference. Your role as speaker is to do your best to understand, prepare for, and respond to the audience's frame of reference through a process called audience analysis.

Message The **message** is the set of ideas the speaker transmits to the audience. Speakers send messages in the form of content—what they want their audience to learn, believe, do, or feel. Speakers also send messages about themselves—their knowledge of the topic, their confidence, their preparation, and their personal feelings about the audience, the topic, and the situation. Listeners pick up these messages with their eyes and ears and interpret meaning through their frame of reference.

Listeners send messages as well, known as **feedback**. Audience members communicate their degree of participation, their interest in the speaker, or their understanding of the content. Some feedback is immediate and simultaneous. Applause, awkward shifting in a seat, direct eye contact, a show of hands, smiles, and nods all let the speaker know how the message is being received as it is being delivered. Other kinds of feedback are delayed. Questions and comments at the end of a presentation are one type of delayed feedback. Reviews and evaluations from an instructor, a supervisor, or audience members may arrive hours or days after the speech. Listen to any feedback you receive with an open mind. You may not agree with it, but accept it as another person's perception. Feedback helps you see how your message played to your listeners, those for whom you shaped your talk.

Essentially, messages of all kinds are being sent both ways during an average public speaking transaction. If they could be made visible, you would see literally hundreds of messages flying back and forth through the air.

Channel Your goal in any communication event is to transfer the ideas in your mind into the minds of your listeners. The means by which messages and feedback are transmitted between speaker and audience is called a **channel**. Visual channels include gestures, posture, eye contact, dress, photographs, and pie charts. Auditory channels include spoken words, tone of voice, and sound clips. Some speakers use a form of media to get their message to their audience. Web broadcasts, radio, and television are broader examples of channels.

Noise It is nearly impossible for a speaker's message to arrive purely as intended at a listener's ear. **Noise** is anything that prevents the audience from partially or fully understanding your message. Speakers and listeners are both responsible for lessening or eliminating noise. As you can see from the "Did You Know?" box (◀ p. 14), there are many different types of noise—not just the obvious—and there are practical ways to avoid or deal with noise.

Context Each public speaking transaction takes place in a specific environment or situation. This **context** affects how speakers create their messages and how listeners create meaning from those messages. A speaker presenting at an established organization's formal ceremony prepares differently than the speaker arguing for neighborhood rights at City Hall. New employees at a workplace orientation listen differently than family members at a fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration.

1D

Appreciate the Nature and History of the Public Speaking Course

Public speaking enjoys a rich history. Most human societies have created the need or the opportunity for one person to stand before others with the intent of teaching, convincing, or even entertaining. Though they may go back even further, the roots of contemporary public speaking lie in the great cultural shift from aristocracy to democracy that took place in ancient Greek society 2,500 years ago.³ Whereas "tyrants may have ruled other nations by torture and the lash, the Greeks made their decisions by persuasion and debate."⁴ Soon, a man's skill in persuasion—more than his class—became a key factor in his success and public influence.⁵ (Women were rarely, if ever, participants in political life.)

Did You Know?

Types of Noise

TYPE OF NOISE	EXAMPLES	WAYS TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE NOISE
Psychological/ internal noise	Daydreaming, worries, distractions	<i>For speakers:</i> Stress the relevance of your ideas. Use listener-engagement techniques (described throughout the text). <i>For listeners:</i> Make a conscious choice to be present in the moment. Your daydreams and worries can wait.
Environmental/ external noise	Ringing electronic devices, crying babies, loud air-conditioning systems, people shuffling in late	<i>For speakers:</i> Ask people to turn off electronic devices. Close doors to noisy hallways. Keep seats available near the door for latecomers. <i>For listeners:</i> Do your part to keep the noise down so as not to distract the speaker or fellow listeners.
Social noise	Biases, unyielding attitudes, prejudices	<i>For speakers:</i> Openly address the controversial nature of your content. <i>For listeners:</i> Acknowledge your bias, but work to hear the speaker out before making judgments.
Organizational noise	Poor structure; listeners can't follow the speaker's train of thought	<i>For speakers:</i> Have a clear structure, know it well, and openly communicate it to listeners. <i>For listeners:</i> Take notes. Listen for main ideas. Listen actively.
Physiological noise	Listeners are hungry, tired, or sick	<i>For speakers:</i> If possible, schedule more complex presentations earlier in the day. Provide food and drink. <i>For listeners:</i> Eat before you arrive. Try to manage physical discomfort or distraction. <i>For both:</i> Understand the relationship between mind and body!

Greek teachers and philosophers such as Protagoras, Plato, and Aristotle studied and taught specific methods of persuasion, known as **rhetoric**, to their fellow citizens. Romans such as Cicero and Quintilian followed a few centuries later. Sought out enthusiastically by those who could afford their services, these men enjoyed high status. For example, a course in the rhetorical arts from one famed Greek teacher, Isocrates, cost 1,000 drachmas at a time when a day laborer made roughly 1 drachma per day.⁶

The teachings of these early scholars are still studied and remain relevant today. A good number of the concepts and skills found throughout this book, including the arrangement of ideas, speaker credibility, and audience-centered language, stem from classical origins. In fact, no other area of study, except philosophy and grammar, has such deep roots.

As times change, however, so does a subject of study. Thinkers in the late eighteenth century began questioning some of the classical ideals.⁷ These later philosophers believed that they could discover truth through experience, rather than purely through persuasion,

Essentials

Components of the Public Speech

- Sender/encoder—the person motivated to share ideas; the speaker
- Receivers/decoders—the listeners who assign and create meaning from the speaker's words and behaviors
- Frame of reference—a view of the world, held by the speaker, individual audience members, and the audience as a whole
- Message—the set of ideas the speaker transmits to the audience and the ideas the audience transmits to the speaker in the form of feedback
- Channel—the way the message gets from the speaker to the audience
- Noise—events or conditions that get in the way of understanding between the speaker and listeners
- Context—the specific speaking environment or situation that affects how speakers create their messages and how listeners create meaning from those messages

and that they could communicate this new truth only by re-creating or narrating their experience for listeners. The narrative, a valued component of presentations today, thus became important. The speaker “was expected to develop his or her own understanding by reflecting on experience, and then explain those ideas to the audience by appealing to the faculties of mind, which included both understanding and imagination.”⁸ Nineteenth-century orators (still male only) were expected to be “larger than life,” and in a time before television or radio, they drew large crowds and enjoyed celebrity status. To learn the presentation skills of the day, students joined debating societies that allowed them to sharpen their talents. Books taught people how to participate in “deliberative assemblies.” Schools trained children through the use of anthologies of published speeches.

We continue to study, practice, and discuss public communication. Today, men *and* women in many countries study public speaking in schools, colleges, and universities—but not all in the same way. The “Speaking of Culture” box (◀ p. 16) shares reflections from some international students.

While based on concepts and skills tested and refined over millennia, the speaking methods you learn today have been adapted for today's culture and audiences. Public speaking success in the twenty-first century requires unique methods and tools and, certainly, a different speaking personality than was valued in past eras. We have moved beyond the age of speaker-centered oratory to the age of listener-centered presentation. This book, your instructor, and perhaps even your fellow classmates will all play a role in teaching you the latest techniques for effectively presenting your contemporary ideas in modern public settings.



Speaking of Culture

Public Speaking in My Country

Chii

"In Zimbabwe we have a strong focus on competitive speaking. It's a very practiced style where you write something, often with the help of your parents, and then spend weeks committing it to memory. I even took private speaking lessons so I could do well in the competitions. The conversational-styled public speaking I learned here took some getting used to, but I now use it all the time. I find myself spending a lot less time preparing while having a lot more success genuinely connecting with my audience."

Areli

"Speaking was not part of the curriculum where I come from in Mexico. We would do plays but not speaking. But Mexican history is dotted with people who can express themselves, so the skill is valued. Also, we saw tapes of Americans like Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, and César Chávez, and we knew it was in part their public speaking that made them leaders."

Reem

"In Syria there is cultural value in being part of the group and going with the flow. Public speaking is an active skill for individuals and is just not taught in schools. Private coaching exists, but it is very expensive and out of reach for average people."

Summary

- This course is dedicated to one general type of human communication, public speaking, wherein a speaker exchanges ideas with an identified audience for a specific purpose and for a specific occasion.
- As a public speaker, you enjoy advantages in your life as a student, your life in the working world, and your life at home and in your community.
- Public speaking is considered a type of transactional communication in which messages flow in two directions simultaneously, with the speaker and the listeners acting as both senders and receivers.
- Public speaking enjoys a rich history. Many classical concepts and skills are adapted for modern-day relevance and use in your course.

EXERCISES

1. *In groups, take turns discussing why you are in this class. What are your thoughts as you begin the course?*
2. *Interview a person working in your chosen field of study or in one that interests you. Ask this person to tell you about the role public presentations play in his or her work life. Does this person give presentations? Listen to them? How often? What kinds of messages are typically shared during these presentations? Who is in the typical audience? Report your findings to your teacher and classmates.*
3. *Reflect on a skill or activity—whether rock climbing or webpage designing—you recently learned or undertook. Describe the challenges you faced and the steps, both physical and psychological, you went through during the learning process. Do you think that experience can help you in this class? How so?*
4. *With a group, imagine a speech scenario in which at least fifteen examples of noise occur. Create your examples from the five types of noise listed on page 14, and describe the scene. Now, explore ways in which the speaker and/or audience could reduce or eliminate each example of noise.*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 2

Giving Your First Speech: The Public Speaking Process

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Learning the process of speechmaking is just like learning any other process. You give concentrated focus to the steps, and pretty soon you’re putting them all together fluidly and seamlessly. The steps make sense.”

“The Keys to Listenability made for a great toolbox of skills. I soon saw that everything I did as a public speaker fell into one of the key categories. The amount and details of the keys grew in complexity as the class progressed, but those four key categories were there each and every time. I liked knowing they were there.”

2A

Understand the General Process of Preparing, Organizing, and Presenting a Speech

1. *Preparing the speech*
2. *Organizing the speech*
3. *Presenting the speech*

2B

Use the Keys to Listenability to Manage the Speechmaking Process

Key Terms

audience analysis	▶ 21
body	▶ 23
civility	▶ 20
conclusion	▶ 24
ethics	▶ 20
general speech purpose	▶ 21
introduction	▶ 24
listenability	▶ 20
main points	▶ 23
preparation outline	▶ 23
speaking outline	▶ 25
Strategy Keys	▶ 27
Structure Keys	▶ 27
Style Keys	▶ 27
Support Keys	▶ 27
take-away	▶ 24
thesis	▶ 22
topic	▶ 21

Students are often asked to give a presentation within the first few weeks of the term. It may seem counterintuitive to do so before making your way through the chapters, but public speaking is a skill you *can* dive into right away. If you have prior speaking experience, you might be eager to present again. If you're a beginner, you'll need a first experience to serve as a baseline for understanding and charting future growth. In later chapters, you'll read about each speechmaking topic in detail; this chapter, however, walks you through the presentation process in broad strokes, giving you enough foundation for a first speech. The chapter then introduces the Keys to Listenability, a toolbox of skills to help you manage the details of preparing, organizing, presenting, and evaluating a speech.

2A

Understand the General Process of Preparing, Organizing, and Presenting a Speech

1. Preparing the speech

You might be tempted to march to the front of the room and just start talking, but there's work to be done before presentation day. Use this preparation time as an opportunity to think and plan so that all goes as expected when you finally step before your audience and share your ideas.

Get in the right frame of mind: It's not about you Your psychological approach to public speaking, like your mental preparation for other challenges you've faced, is worth getting right. **Listenability**, the foundational framework for this book, is the notion that your task is to communicate ideas to a group of listeners in real time, in ways that are as *easy to listen to* as possible. Listener-centered speaking is a simple concept to grasp, even if you've never thought about public speaking that way before. Listenability should serve as a guiding principle for all you do during the preparation, organization, and presentation phases of speechmaking.

Commit to strong ethical and civil principles As a speaker, you must abide by a high standard of **ethics**, doing what is right according to society's standards. Your ethical responsibilities include being up front about your intentions, telling the truth, and citing sources when the ideas you present belong to others. Listeners are quick to discredit speakers they deem unethical; you don't want to risk losing your audience's attention and goodwill by making up facts, plagiarizing, slandering those who can't defend themselves, or doing other things that are questionable or simply wrong.

The actions we take in public speaking have consequences, so you are also wise to commit to a spirit of **civility**, taking actions that enhance—rather than damage—your relationship with your audience. Showing courtesy, using good manners, listening to others, and being fair are all hallmarks of civility. Keep your audience listening by communicating your respect for them and others.

Analyze the audience As a public speaker,

- you present not for yourself but for the purpose of informing, persuading, or helping to mark a special occasion for *others*, and
- you present to a *specific* gathering of people.

For these two reasons, an **audience analysis** is one of the first steps you'll take in preparing for presentation day. You must make it your business to know—to the best of your ability—some important characteristics of your group of listeners. You may need to perform research or ask questions to find out things like their average age, male-female ratio, occupations, educational levels, and political preferences. You'll also want to be aware of any prevailing attitudes, values, and beliefs. You should have a sense of how your group feels about the topic, the occasion, and you. Know why your audience is gathered and what they expect from your presentation.

Once armed with audience data, you can begin making decisions to construct a presentation that is relevant and of interest to your specific group of listeners.

Example: *I'm giving a speech to my public speaking classmates. There is roughly the same number of men as women, and they're quite a mixed group in regard to age and culture. What they have in common is that they're all in this class and are facing the same first speaking assignment.*

Determine the speech purpose Presentations fulfill one of three **general speech purposes**—to inform, to persuade, or to mark a special occasion.

- *Speeches to inform* help audiences understand new or useful ideas from the world around them. Informative speeches examine objects, people, events, processes, concepts, and issues that broaden listeners' intellectual horizons.
- *Speeches to persuade* can create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. Persuasive speech topics run the gamut from the accepted to the controversial and are based on questions of fact, value, or policy.
- *Speeches marking special occasions* honor important people or places, memorable events, or emotional ideas. People gathered for ceremonies or rituals often participate in special-occasion speaking to evoke feelings, strengthen relationships, or create memories.

Know your purpose. If, for example, your general goal is to persuade, look for research and create and arrange arguments that will deliberately lead listeners to a conclusion. You'll want to do more than present facts, give explanations, and provide descriptions. Where do you want to take your listeners? Only by imagining a clear outcome can you take listeners where you want them to go.

Example: *This is a speech to inform. The assignment asks me to teach my classmates something about which I have a degree of expertise.*

Choose the topic Once you know your audience and have a general sense of your speech purpose, it's time to zero in on an appropriate **topic**, or subject matter. To ensure your own motivation and enthusiasm, select a topic in which *you* have some interest and, just as important, one that's appropriate, of interest, and meaningful to your listeners.

When you speak to a general, mixed audience, choose a topic of wide interest and broad appeal. All people eat, need clean water, and are interested in health issues. Most people value family and friends; are concerned about safety, technology, and self-improvement; and like to be entertained. Many people pay attention to and are concerned about the state of the world. Consider a topic that

- explores the human condition.
- shapes the world today.
- is historic or future-related.
- satisfies people's general sense of curiosity.

You may also occasionally speak to a gathering of listeners with specific mutual interests. In these contexts, play up what your audience members have in common, and choose a topic that

- provides new and useful information appropriate to audience members' mutual interest.
- promotes or furthers the attitudes, beliefs, or values of the group.
- can inspire action that this group is especially well positioned to take.
- reinforces listeners' bonds with one another.

Example: *My family and I have been raising and showing Chihuahuas for fifteen years. Most people like animals, and Chihuahuas tend to attract a lot of attention. They're also well known through pop culture. My topic will be Chihuahuas.*

Determine the thesis Now you're ready to narrow your topic to a central idea, or thesis statement. The **thesis** is the sentence or two that lets your listeners know *what the speech is about*. Typically offered in the introduction of your talk, it communicates exactly what point you're trying to make and how you intend to make it. Devise your thesis early in the speechmaking process. All subsequent components of your presentation, including main points, visuals, and stories, depend on your thesis.

Example: *Breed standards for show Chihuahuas call for specific criteria.*

Find supporting materials After determining your thesis, gather support materials—data and visuals substantiating your ideas. While some speeches are based only on personal knowledge, experience, or opinion, the majority of your presentations at school and at work require at least some research. Look for relevant facts, statistics, examples, explanations, descriptions, and testimony. Competently and ethically incorporating research into your presentation increases your credibility and makes your listeners confident that the ideas they're hearing are sound, accurate, and current.

Some of the ideas you plan to share may benefit from visual or audio support. That support may be as basic as one photo or a clip from a song or as elaborate as animated graphs, videos, and demonstrations in a multimedia format. Visual and audio support serve to gain the audience's attention and, more importantly, to help you communicate your ideas.

Example:

- *Review current breed standards from major organizations like the American Kennel Club and Fédération Cynologique Internationale.*
- *Look up current statistics on the numbers of Chihuahuas bred for showing and those kept as pets.*



- Create slides to explain accepted show-dog proportions. Have another slide showing the size of a show Chihuahua in comparison to a few other breeds.
- Collect pictures of our past show dogs.

2. Organizing the speech

Once you've chosen your ideas and gathered supporting materials, your next major step is to organize your ideas so that your listeners can follow along and understand them.

Organize the main points First, determine and organize the major ideas that will support your thesis. These **main points** must relate to one another and be organized according to a recognizable pattern. It's useful to arrange main points for an informative speech topically or according to relationships of time, cause-effect, contrast-comparison, or space. Arrangements such as "reasons why," "ways how," or "problem-solution" work well for persuasive presentations.

Example: (main points arranged topically):

1. Show Chihuahuas must adhere to a specific weight range.
2. Show Chihuahuas must display distinct characteristics.

Outline the body, introduction, and conclusion Now that you know your thesis and main points, it's time to outline the whole of your speech. A **preparation outline** presents all your thoughts in one place, letting you plan the order of your ideas and ensure that they relate to one another logically, are well balanced, and are adequately supported.

Concentrate first on the speech **body**, the place where you develop the thesis. You've already selected your main points, but each of these now needs subpoints that support it. These subpoints may need their own sub-subpoints. All the points in your presentation must relate to each other in one of three ways: ideas are either superior, subordinate, or parallel to each other. Their placement in your outline shows their relationships.

THESIS: Breed standards for show Chihuahuas call for specific criteria.

Main Point #1: While they may vary in height and color, show Chihuahuas must adhere to a specific weight range.

Subpoint A: AKC (American Kennel Club) regulations disqualify any dog over 6 lb.

Subpoint B: Other groups have different ranges.

Sub-subpoint 1: FCI (Fédération Cynologique Internationale) says that dogs must be between 1.5 and 3 kg (3.3 and 6.6 lb.).

Sub-subpoint 2: ANKC (Australian National Kennel Council) prefers dogs between 2 and 4 lb.

Main Point #2: *Show Chihuahuas must display distinct characteristics.*

Subpoint A: *Body should be small and compact.*

Subpoint B: *Head must be shaped like an apple.*

Sub-subpoint 1: *Ears must be large and flaring.*

Sub-subpoint 2: *Eyes must be large and round but not protruding.*

Sub-subpoint 3: *Scissor bite is preferred, no over- or underbite.*

Subpoint C: *Gait should be brisk and forceful.*

Sub-subpoint 1: *No high stepping.*

Sub-subpoint 2: *No turning in or out of feet.*

Once you've structured and outlined the body, do the same thing for your introduction and conclusion. The **introduction** prepares your listeners for the body of the speech. Its components include

- **some material to open the presentation and gain the listeners' attention.**

While Chihuahuas in movies and commercials are nearly always used—successfully I might add!—for comical effect, raising and showing these dogs is no joke.

- **a mention of your topic and reason why listeners want to tune in to listen to this discussion.**

Many of you know these dogs only through the media, but you may be interested in knowing more about why some people take these funny little dogs very seriously. Some of you may even be interested in someday showing dogs yourself.

- **support for your credibility as a speaker. Tell the audience why they should have confidence in you as you discuss this topic.**

My family and I have been raising and showing Chihuahuas for fifteen years.

We've had many successes in the show ring.

We keep up to date on the latest kennel club requirements and changes.

- **a statement of your thesis.**

This morning I'll be explaining the specific criteria that show Chihuahuas must meet.

- **a preview of the main points you'll cover in the body.**

Show Chihuahuas must adhere to a specific weight range.

They must also display distinct physical characteristics.

Your **conclusion** summarizes the ideas you've just communicated. It reminds the audience why the ideas are important and provides them with a **take-away**, or direction for further action—What should listeners do or think after hearing your points? Components to outline in your conclusion include

- **a review of the thesis and the main points.**

You've learned this morning that standards for Chihuahuas, such as weight range and distinct characteristics, are specific and are taken seriously by those who show these dogs in the ring.

- **a suggested take-away. Tell your audience how they can think about or do something with the ideas you've just shared.**

If you've ever been curious about or have ever considered showing Chihuahuas or any other kind of breed, you now have some insights into the demands and rewards of the job.

- **some closing material that creates a sense of finality and ends the presentation.**

Most of all, I hope you have a new measure of respect for the funny little dogs that popular culture loves to toy with.

The preparation outline you've just built gives you confidence in your structure. Before speaking day, you'll convert this preparation outline—with its full sentences—into a **speaking outline**, a briefer version of your ideas, in the order you'll be communicating them. Your speaking outline contains key words and phrases only, triggers that remind you what you want to say yet allow you to speak conversationally with your audience. Here's a sample speaking outline for the speech we just prepared:

Intro

(Opening)

- *Movies and commercials = comical effect*
- *Raising and showing no joke*

(Topic and audience)

- *You know through the media*
- *May be interested in why some people take seriously*
- *Someday showing dogs yourself*

(Credibility)

- *15 years*
- *Successes in the show ring*
- *Latest kennel club requirements*

(Thesis and main points)

- *Show Chihuahuas = specific criteria*
 - *Weight range*
 - *Distinct characteristics*

Body

#1: *weight range*

- *AKC no dog over 6 lb.*
- *Other groups have different ranges*
 - *FCI 1.5–3 kg (3.3–6.6 lb.)*
 - *ANKC prefers 2–4 lb.*

#2: *distinct characteristics*

- *Body small, compact*
- *Head = apple*
 - *Ears large and flaring*
 - *Eyes large and round, not protruding*
 - *Scissor bite, no over- or underbite*
- *Gait brisk and forceful*
 - *No high stepping*
 - *No turning in or out of feet*

Conclusion

(Thesis and review of main points)

- *Standards = (1) weight range and (2) distinct characteristics*

(Take-away)

- *Curious about showing Chihuahuas? You now have some insights*

(Closing)

- *New measure of respect for dogs that pop culture toys with*

3. Presenting the speech

You've prepared and structured your ideas, and presentation day is approaching. The final three steps in the speechmaking process are practicing, presenting, and evaluating the speech.

Practice the speech Whether you're a novice or a seasoned speaker, practice is an essential element in the success of any presentation. Practice serves to familiarize yourself thoroughly with your ideas, improve your technique, and build your confidence. Some people need more practice than others, and as the course continues, you'll find out how much practice *you* need. Three to five run-throughs are often enough. More complex speeches may need more practice. As you practice, pay attention to the structure of your ideas, what you want to say about them, how and when you want to incorporate any visual or audio support, and how long it's taking to discuss your ideas so you can make any necessary adjustments to your outline and visual support.

The "Did You Know?" box (🔍 p. 27) recommends a helpful metaphor for practicing and presenting your ideas.

Present the speech The big day has arrived. You take your place in front of your audience and begin communicating your message through your language, voice, and body. Each of these channels is a rich source of communication, conveying content while also providing clues about yourself and your attitudes toward your subject matter, the audience, and the occasion. Effective public speakers know that words mean real things to people and they therefore use language that creates bridges—not barriers—between people. They use inclusive, accurate, contemporary language while letting their personality emerge.

Your voice is another powerful channel of communication. Though audiences certainly listen to *what* you say, they interpret additional information from the *way* you say it. Effective speakers use appropriate tone, volume, fluency, articulation, pace, pitch, and inflection to support and complement the words they use. They aim to avoid vocal distractions and contradictions.

Finally, listeners interpret meaning from the way you use your body. During a presentation, your eyes, face, hands, posture, and other body movements are sending messages of their own. Effective public communicators don't choreograph their body movements but rather let their bodies move naturally, much as they do during normal everyday interactions. Of course, some normal body movements may contradict the verbal message or distract listeners from it, so there's value in analyzing your body's effectiveness in front of a group.

Evaluate the speech No speech project is complete without some kind of post-presentation evaluation. Your instructor will provide you with substantial feedback. You might also do a self-evaluation or receive a critique from one or more classmates. As the course continues, you'll learn what to look for when watching and listening to yourself speak and then how to make any necessary adjustments. After all, you are your own best teacher.

2B

Use the Keys to Listenability to Manage the Speechmaking Process

You've already read that adopting the framework of listenability (🔍 p. 20) as a guiding principle is a major factor for speaking success. The Keys to Listenability¹ create the toolbox

Did You Know?

Speaker as Tour Guide

Melinda Womack, professor of communication at Santiago Community College, says to “consider the metaphor of the ‘tour guide’ as your map and compass. . . . it is your task to take us, your audience, on a ‘tour’ of your idea. We are ready to be guided along a ‘mind trip.’ You have the responsibility to be prepared to introduce the ‘tour,’ lead us [along the path of your] main ideas, relate to our needs, keep us interested, motivate us to participate actively in the ‘idea tour,’ [and summarize where we’ve ‘been’].”

The tour-guide metaphor is easy to relate to. Think about tours you’ve taken at a museum, a factory, or national park. The tour guide probably spent some time welcoming you and explaining what would happen on the tour. The tour then began. Your guide stopped and talked in depth about certain features and then told you when it was time to move on to the next point of interest. At the last stop, the guide most likely gave some concluding remarks and provided an opportunity for questions. The analogy ends here, because tour guides have a way of steering you in the direction of the gift shop, but the point is well taken—your tour is one of ideas, and it’s your responsibility to lead your listeners along the path of those ideas.

Source: Melinda S. Womack, *Speak to Me!* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1991), 67–69.

of essential skills you’ll need to meet your listener-centered communication goals. The four categories of keys—strategy, structure, support, and style—are a quick and easy way to classify the skills you need to manage the steps of preparing, organizing, presenting, and evaluating each speech you give. When taken as a sum, the keys measure how listenable your speech is.

- **Strategy.** You’ll usually have the advantage of time to plan and prepare your presentations. **Strategy Keys** guide the listener-centered choices you make in advance of the presentation about your topic, audience, and occasion.
- **Structure.** You need to organize your message to make it accessible to listeners. **Structure Keys** ensure that you order your ideas and communicate them in a way that your audience can follow and understand.
- **Support.** How do you bring your ideas to life? **Support Keys** substantiate, enhance, and reinforce your message to engage your listeners and help them understand or believe in your ideas.
- **Style.** You want your delivery to attract and appeal to your audience. **Style Keys** include those channels you use to send your message, including language, voice, and body.

Table 2.1 (📍 p. 29) presents the actual keys in each “S” category. As you work your way through this book, look for notations at the beginning and end of the chapters that show how the concept you’re studying fits into the Keys to Listenability.

Essentials

Preparing, Organizing, and Presenting a Speech

Prepare

- Adopt a listener-centered mindset.
- Commit to strong ethical and civil principles.
- Analyze the audience and speaking situation.
- Determine the speech purpose.
- Choose a relevant topic.
- Determine the thesis.
- Find supporting materials.

Organize

- Organize the main supporting points.
- Outline the body, introduction, and conclusion.

Present

- Practice the speech.
- Present the speech.
- Evaluate the speech.

The Keys to Listenability are relevant and are always at play, whether it's your first, tenth, or one-thousandth presentation; whether your talk is five or fifty minutes long; and whether your listening audience is small, large, or somewhere in between. For the first presentation of the term, you may focus on only a few keys in each category, for example:

Strategy Keys

- Adopt a listener-centered mindset.
- Abide by the topic choice assigned by your instructor.
- Meet the minimum time limit.

Structure Keys

- Use a simple thesis.
- Have two main points in the body.

Support Keys

- Incorporate one simple visual aid such as an object or picture.
- Use a brief narrative.
- Cite research sources.

Style Keys

- Practice.
- Use a conversational tone.
- Aim for eye contact with at least half the audience.

Table 2.1 The Keys to Listenability

 KEYS TO LISTENABILITY			
STRATEGY KEYS Manage your energy to create confident presentations.	STRUCTURE KEYS Finalize your thesis statement.	SUPPORT KEYS Find and incorporate relevant research.	STYLE KEYS Choose an appropriate method of delivery.
Be ethical and civil throughout the speech-making process.	Organize your message.	Use varied forms of support.	Create personalized speaking notes.
Know and evaluate yourself as a communicator.	Outline your message.	Use narrative.	Practice wisely.
Adopt the framework of listenability as a guiding principle.	Introduce your ideas.	Prepare and use visual support.	Use language inclusively and accurately.
Analyze the audience and the speaking situation.	Summarize your ideas.	Maintain listener engagement.	Use your vocal qualities to support and complement your verbal messages.
Determine your speech purpose.	Use transitions throughout your message.	Establish and maintain your credibility.	Let your body help communicate your message.
Choose and narrow your topic.		Apply reasoning.	

As you gain experience, the number of keys in your personal toolbox grows. By the time you give your major persuasive speech at the end of the term, for example, you may be using the following keys:

Strategy Keys

- Be fully listener-centered throughout the speechmaking process.
- Choose an appropriate, meaningful topic.
- Show that you have appropriately analyzed the audience and context.
- Work to meet an established personal goal.

Structure Keys

- Have a full five-part introduction.
- Create and communicate a complex thesis statement.
- Use three main points in the body that follow a specific pattern of organization.
- Use transitions and other organizational markers.
- Have a full four-part conclusion.

Support Keys

- Incorporate at least one example each of objective, subjective, and illustrative support.

A Speaker's Story

How the Keys to Listenability Worked for Me

“

Stephanie

I'm an English major and a confident writer, so I came to the class with a strong grasp of the Structure Keys. I didn't need to spend much time thinking and learning about thesis statements and patterns of organization. I also had a relatively good sense of the Support Keys. The Style Keys are where I needed to put my energies. I'm a quiet person by nature, and it was a challenge for me to use my voice and body in front of others. Ends of my sentences trailed off, I fidgeted with my clothes, and I was uncomfortable with eye contact. I experimented with a variety of delivery techniques on each speech, persisting until my confidence grew and I got positive feedback from my listeners.

”

- Use at least two forms of visual support.
- Properly and ethically cite your research sources.
- Use a sufficient amount of personal pronouns.
- Apply solid reasoning.

Style Keys

- Practice.
- Use natural eye contact with the entire audience.
- Use a conversational tone throughout.
- Use inclusive language.
- Avoid verbal junk.
- Use a maximum of three notecards.

You'll probably use some keys better than others, at least at the beginning of your speaking career. Many people who use the Keys to Listenability find them a powerful individualized guiding system for growth. Read the "Speaker's Story" box above to see how one student worked with them.

In a world where many things are in a constant state of flux, the Keys to Listenability provide you with four always-present, fixed categories for organizing the skills needed for speechmaking and evaluating yourself accordingly. Use them as you adapt to each changing topic, audience, setting, and occasion. The toolbox of keys you'll use is *yours* to build, add to, and strengthen. Your current study and practice of public speaking is a great place to start.

Summary

- Speakers can follow a clear step-by-step process for preparing and organizing the message before presenting it.
- The steps for preparing your speech include adopting the framework of listenability, committing to ethical speaking, analyzing the audience, identifying the overall speech purpose, determining the topic and thesis, and selecting supporting materials.
- Organization steps include choosing and organizing the main points and outlining the details of the body, introduction, and conclusion.
- For speaking day, you'll spend some time practicing. After presenting, many speakers engage in some sort of self-evaluation.
- The Keys to Listenability provide an individualized toolbox of skills for managing the many details of the speechmaking process. The keys comprise four major categories—strategy, structure, support, and style.

EXERCISES

1. Prepare a two-minute speech introducing yourself. Record the process in terms of how you tackled each step discussed in Section 2A. Turn this record in on the day of your presentation.
2. In small groups, share your prior speaking experience. If you have given some presentations, discuss your strengths and weaknesses as a speaker. Do you have any advice to offer others? If you are a new speaker, what are your thoughts as you begin this journey?
3. As one large group, begin to analyze the demographic and attitudinal characteristics of the class members. Discuss how this information can be useful for the speeches you'll be giving this term.
4. On first glance of the Keys to Listenability, in which category or categories do you think your speaking strengths lie? How about your challenges?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 3

Creating Confident Presentations

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“At the beginning of the term, I was terrified about talking for two minutes in front of the class. I was shaking and had a horrible stomachache. I can’t believe I just spoke for ten minutes (on my last speech) in front of a full classroom with all eyes looking at me! Public speaking is not scary if you prepare for it. If I can do this, anyone can.”

“Not performing was the hardest thing for me but also the most rewarding. I was able to learn that I wasn’t acting for the class; I was talking to them. In my first speech, I was over the top and, to everyone but myself, obviously playing a part. Watching my video now makes me wonder how I could be so fake. However, as the class went on I was able to adopt the communication orientation. By my last speech you can see that I believe in what I am saying and that it’s genuine.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

Manage your energy to create confident presentations.

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

3A

Understand Why You Feel Nervous

3B

Make Adrenaline Work For You Rather Than Against You

1. *Dismiss the performance orientation: it leads to unnecessary stress*
2. *Adopt the communication orientation*
3. *Keep your listeners in communication mode*
4. *Call your “nerves” speaker’s energy to make them work for you*

3C

Use Strategies for Reducing and Managing Excess Speaker’s Energy

1. *Psychological tips to use before the presentation*
2. *Physiological tips to use before the presentation*
3. *Tips to use during the presentation*

Key Terms

adrenaline	▶ 35
communication orientation	▶ 37
important conversation	▶ 40
perception	▶ 34
performance orientation	▶ 36
speaker’s energy	▶ 39

Contending with nerves is a concern for nearly all speakers, even those with experience. You're not alone if your stomach performs triple backflips at the mere thought of speaking before others. Public speakers learn to harness the body's energy and to use it for positive outcomes by understanding what's happening to them and adjusting their preparations accordingly. This chapter explores some of the reasons you may get nervous before speaking in public, and it offers solutions—from the perceptual to the psychological to the physical—for using that energy in a positive way.

3A

Understand Why You Feel Nervous

Jerry Seinfeld once quipped, “According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that seem right? That means to the average person, if you have to go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”¹ Seinfeld may or may not have his facts exactly straight, but his observation hits home for many. Speaking before a group is often listed (along with confined spaces, heights, spiders, and thunderstorms) among the top human phobias. But phobias are usually based on perceptions rather than on reality. For example, you’re much more likely to be hurt in a car accident than to get struck by lightning, yet most of us hop into our cars every day without a second thought.

Whereas few people experience true glossophobia (fear of public speaking), many, though not all, experience feelings of discomfort prior to a public speech. If you’re experiencing such feelings, take comfort that you’re not alone. Your feelings are normal—and solutions await.

You’ll likely find it helpful to understand why many people react with anxious feelings when faced with the prospect of speaking in public. Here are some common reasons; you’ll find a few others in the “Speaking of Culture” box (🔗 p. 35).

- **It’s an unfamiliar experience.** It’s natural to feel awkward in the face of the unknown. And in spite of knowing better, you may find yourself focused on what could go wrong instead of what could go right.
- **You sense a lack of experience.** It’s easy to feel insecure when you sense that others have more understanding or skill than you. And, naturally, you want to make a good impression on others.
- **You’re uncomfortable being the center of attention.** Humans are social creatures; most of us prefer to blend in rather than stick out from the crowd. Public speaking requires you to be conspicuous—for a short time.

For many of us, these **perceptions** or individual interpretations about public presentation act like a negative filter on the experience. But they don’t have to. The fact is, people have been speaking in public for centuries, and all have lived to tell the tale! To speak well in public, you need to be willing to be temporarily vulnerable and face potential hurdles to the acceptance of your ideas. But you saw in Chapter 1 that the benefits greatly outweigh the risks. You stand to gain far more than you may realize.



Speaking of Culture

My Additional Adrenaline Challenges

Arelí (Mexico)

"Withholding my opinion in my informative speeches was hard. Mexicans are opinionated. Knowing that I shouldn't be opinionated when informing increased my anxiety and made me not be myself; I had to hold part of myself back. The persuasive speeches gave me much more pleasure."

Marleny (Panama)

"I was worried that people would look at me strangely because they wouldn't understand me, or that they would laugh at me for mispronouncing words. Thankfully, neither of these things happened. I had to do a lot of positive self-talk to stay in this class. And I learned it was good to mispronounce words because it is the only way to learn correct pronunciation."

Chol (Sudan)

"In my culture, people need to listen to others out of respect, so there's no need for speakers to raise their voice. I felt very strange using a loud volume, wondering why I needed to do so. I was also very shy about my teeth. It's a sign of status in Dinka culture to have gaps and missing teeth. I learned Americans value tight teeth with no gaps. Finally, back home, younger people would never speak to older people; it's always the other way around. I couldn't always tell the ages of my classmates, and it made me nervous to think I may be speaking in front of people older than me."

But one more worry troubles a lot of people: sheer physical nervousness. When you offer to speak, or are asked or required to do so, your body reacts by releasing **adrenaline**, a hormone that helps the body adjust to sudden stress. Adrenaline increases the strength and rate

of your heartbeat, heightens brain activity, and encourages the famous fight-or-flight reaction by sending energy to your muscles. It's this increased adrenaline that makes your body feel as it does.

Everyone's body manifests adrenaline differently. For some, the stomach feels chaotic, and the heart seems to relocate to the throat. For others, hands or knees may get jittery, the voice may quaver, skin may flush, or palms may sweat.

Your challenge lies in interpreting your physical sensations. You might be quick to label these feelings "fear," "apprehension," or "anxiety." But once you attach a negative label, you'll probably want to avoid whatever it is that brings the feeling on: *When my body feels like this, it means I'm afraid. I don't like to experience fear. I should avoid public speaking.*

But there are other, more positive interpretations of these physical sensations. Experienced speakers channel them into beneficial energy and look forward to putting them to use. The rest of this chapter shows how you can harness adrenaline for its benefits.

In rare cases, people experience severe, deeply rooted public communication anxiety beyond the situational anxiety experienced by the typical public speaker. If none of the perceptual shifts and other suggestions in this chapter work for you, you may need additional assistance. Your instructor can point you in the direction of available and relevant outside resources.

3B

Make Adrenaline Work For You Rather Than Against You

1. Dismiss the performance orientation: it leads to unnecessary stress

Michael T. Motley, a professor of communication at the University of California–Davis, has found in his research that a **performance orientation** toward public speaking creates unnecessary and uncomfortable physical stress. Motley says that when we perceive a public speech as a performance,

[we] view the speaker's role as that of satisfying an audience of "critics" set on evaluating our behaviors—gestures, language, eye contact, etc. Speakers with the performance orientation cannot exactly describe with much precision just what kinds of behavior the audience-critics expect, but they assume that "proper" public speaking behaviors should be rather formal and artificial—somehow "better" than their everyday natural speech.²

In other words, if we believe that we're being judged mainly on the quality of our gestures, eye contact, language, and other delivery skills, we decide that nothing less than a speech *performance*, free of all delivery errors, is most important to achieve. The burden of trying to produce a flawless performance—like that of a professional dancer or musician—increases nervousness. Once we feel all these symptoms, we interpret them irrationally, often as fear of failure. What is it that we fear in a performance? Being evaluated? Being criticized? Needing to be a "perfect 10"? These interpretations lead to further physical stress and the negative cycle is born. The end result is a speaker with high psychological and physical anxiety.

Other research supports Motley's view. One group of researchers joins him in believing that most public speaking anxiety stems from the perceptions a speaker holds well before the speech even begins.³ The anxiety associated with a performance-oriented perception,

Essentials

Performing versus Communicating

The Performance Orientation	The Communication Orientation
The speaker perceives the need for perfection and views the speaking event as a competition.	The speaker relies on his or her communication experience and applies it to the public speaking context.
Self-centered uncertainties and anxieties arise about the upcoming performance.	The exchange of ideas is encouraged and facilitated.
The speaker's focus turns inward to the performing self.	The speaker's focus is outward, toward the audience and the exchange of ideas.
The needs of the audience become secondary.	The needs of the audience remain primary.
Listeners are invited to unleash their inner critic.	Listeners are more likely to remain in communication mode.

they say, can also be damaging because it can steer us away from otherwise desired courses or careers just because we know or expect that they entail public presentation. If speaking is unavoidable, performance-oriented speakers are more likely to prepare so as to minimize speaking time. Such speaking situations lead to increased stress for the speaker and, most likely, a shallower speech for the audience to listen to.

Another problem with viewing public speaking as a performance is that it turns the focus of our presentation inward, and we start asking ourselves self-centered questions about whether we have the needed skills and the ability to perform them: *Do I have what it takes to be considered a good speaker? Will the audience like my speaking style?* Or we start to see the speaking occasion as a competition: *Will I be better or worse than the other speakers? Can I beat my previous speaking performance?* Once you focus inward, your audience becomes secondary. Yet the audience is exactly where your focus should be.

2. Adopt the communication orientation

Motley's research shows that nerves diminish once people move away from a performance orientation and its emphasis on pleasing an audience of critics. A **communication orientation**, with its familiar goal of conveying ideas to other people (similar to what you do during your everyday interactions with other people), can be both gratifying and fun, and just as importantly, it is much less stressful. The body still releases adrenaline, but communication-oriented speakers use the additional energy to improve their focus and appear more animated and interesting. A communication orientation allows you to think more rationally. You feel

A Speaker's Story

The Communication Orientation Saved My Job



One hospital administrator credits the communication orientation with her continued career success:

Elsie

My job requires me to speak to various groups once or twice a month, and I have never liked it. During my last job performance review, my supervisor and I discussed the issue. I asked if there was any way someone else on the staff could take over those speaking responsibilities for me; it would free up so much of my work stress. A demotion was humorously offered, but my supervisor and I both know I am too good at my job for me to take a lower position, so we agreed that some additional speaking coaching or training was a good idea. The workshop I attended introduced me to the communication orientation. It was such a simple trick. The concept is certainly not difficult, but I had never been invited to view public presentation in that way. You could say it was a crystallizing experience. I enjoy my hospital work and have finally come to look forward to those speaking experiences, allowing me to share what I know with others in a more relaxing way.



excited and ready to share your prepared ideas. You know that the listeners are there to interact with those ideas and will accept delivery “mistakes” should they happen, just like listeners do in any normal communication interaction. The end result is a speaker alive and alert in mind and body.

The communication orientation allows you to direct your energies out toward your listeners and the occasion: *I have a worthwhile message, and I want my audience to pay attention to it, to understand it, and to interact with it.* You are no longer facing pressure to perform a set of skills labeled “perfect public speaking.” Read the “Speaker’s Story” box above for one person’s experience in switching to the communication orientation.

3. Keep your listeners in communication mode

The type of orientation you adopt as a speaker also influences your listeners’ reactions. Performance-oriented speakers, trying to live up to those unknown audience expectations, usually end up delivering their presentations in an affected and unnatural style. When confronted with this style, audience members are more likely to become performance-oriented listeners—more evaluative, wanting to be pleased, more focused on delivery, and less accepting of mistakes. The resulting irony is that the very audience characteristics a



*Adrenaline is something you **want**.*

performance-oriented speaker dreads facing are exactly those brought on through a performance-styled speech. Yet another negative cycle is born.

Research even suggests that a performance-oriented style eliminates some of the responsibility an audience feels to provide feedback.⁴ Audiences feel less obligated or inspired to be responsive when they sense that the speaker is presenting mainly for external rewards, such as gaining public speaking experience or getting a good grade, rather than for genuine communication purposes. If the speaker is

not interested in communicating, why should the audience expend the energy and interest to listen?

A natural and direct delivery style consistent with a communication orientation, on the other hand, encourages audience members to remain in listener mode. Listeners stay focused and are interested in understanding and interacting with the ideas presented.

4. Call your “nerves” speaker’s energy to make them work for you

You’re getting ready to speak, and perhaps you’re feeling those familiar and uncomfortable sensations as adrenaline fills your body. Another important step toward controlling those feelings is to see them as the advantage they are. Those aren’t nerves—they’re energy!

Language theory tells us that thoughts and experiences can be affected or influenced by the words we use. As you’ve read, performance-oriented speakers tend to label the sensations of adrenaline flow “stage fright,” “apprehension,” “speaker anxiety,” or “nervousness.” All these terms drum up negative emotions. Who, after all, wants to suffer apprehension or endure anxiety?

Speaker’s energy is the label preferred by a communication-oriented speaker. Energy is a term loaded with positive connotations. You should be energetic and on your toes during important communication interactions; a public speaker with no speaker’s energy (adrenaline) would likely be dull and uninteresting. It’s speaker’s energy that is making your eyes bright, bringing liveliness to your voice, helping you think on your feet, and making your posture strong. It’s speaker’s energy that is flowing out of you and influencing your audience. Who doesn’t want to have energy? The “Speaker’s Story” box (📖 p. 41) is a testimonial about the positive effects of relabeling the sensation. Just remember: you are what you feel.

3C

Use Strategies for Reducing and Managing Excess Speaker’s Energy

All right, you’ve learned to welcome the effects of speaker’s energy. But what if you still have excess energy that may be hard to control during your presentation? Here are some

tried-and-true tips for dealing with too much of a good thing before and during your presentation. Remember that you don't want to eliminate your adrenaline; you want to have some level of speaker's energy to get you through your speech.

1. Psychological tips to use before the presentation

- Stay idea-centered rather than self-centered. Keep reminding yourself that your job is to communicate your ideas to your audience.
- Genuinely adopt a communication attitude, and use the style of **important conversation** you rely on when talking to someone you respect—someone like your boss, your professor, your child's school principal, or a loan officer at the bank. Use the style of conversation you use when presenting your best self.
- Be prepared. The sooner you're prepared, the more time you have to practice aloud and own the material. The more you own the material, the higher your confidence will be and the better the speech will go. Don't procrastinate! Talk through your full presentation out loud at least three times. Practicing in your head is not enough.
- Use positive self-talk. Rather than saying, *I'm going to forget everything and look like an idiot*, think, *If I get a little distracted from what I meant to discuss, the audience won't notice. They don't know what I've prepared, and I'll recover.* Rather than saying, *Everyone will see my knees knocking together like castanets, and I'll be embarrassed*, think *No one cares if my knees shake a bit. Anyway, the audience will be looking at my visuals and interacting with my ideas.*
- Use positive visualization. Find a quiet space, and close your eyes. Envision yourself in the speaking room, being called on, walking up confidently, and preparing your notes and visuals. See an engaged, interested audience looking back at you. Picture yourself beginning to speak and doing so confidently and competently . . . You get the idea. When you forecast success, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts, increasing your chances of achieving it when the actual event arrives.

2. Physiological tips to use before the presentation

- Treat your body well. Get a good night's sleep before you present.
- Pass on that extra cup of coffee or can of Red Bull. Some people need caffeine to get through the day, but nobody needs an additional jolt of it prior to a presentation. Likewise, avoid pharmaceutical depressants (unless prescribed by your physician) and alcohol. They tend to flatten your affect and make you less interesting to listen to.
- Stay sensibly hydrated with juice or water, and eat something nutritious an hour or two before the speech. Some speakers claim that adrenaline quells their appetite, but force yourself, if you must. It helps to have something substantial in your stomach to "soak up" the extra energy. Carbohydrates are an especially good choice. If it's part of your normal diet, something like oatmeal, a bagel, pancakes, pasta, a sandwich on whole-grain bread, a hearty bean soup, or a baked potato can fill you up just enough and give you the energy you want. A quick snack of an apple, some dried fruit, pretzels, or a granola bar is easy to carry with you and can give you a last-minute boost of healthful energy. Avoid a heavy meal before your presentation; you want the blood flowing to your head, not your stomach. It may take a little trial and

A Speaker's Story **The Monsters under My Bed**

“

Brant had good intentions of taking his public speaking requirement during his freshman year. He knew he needed it for his major, and he realized that taking it sooner rather than later would help him in his other classes. His advisor continually recommended the class, but Brant was good with excuses: his load was too heavy; his roommate wasn't taking it until next year, and they wanted to take it together; his sister was getting married, and he had to be gone for a long weekend; he felt a good cold coming on. Brant was soon out of excuses, and his senior year was upon him. He bit the bullet and enrolled.

I hardly slept the night before my first speech. I was sure my blood pressure was off the charts, and I kept envisioning the worst. I seriously considered dropping the class as soon as I got to campus the next morning. I didn't care what my advisor would say. I guess I had been dreading this for so long that I was completely psyched out. The monsters under my bed evidently did a good job of making my body so uncooperative. I was a physical and mental wreck.

I got through that first speech. Somehow. At the next class meeting, I realized that I wasn't the only one feeling like I did, because our professor spent some time talking about how our psychology interacted with our physiology, for better or worse. She talked about reinterpreting feelings of physical stress as something positive that we could work with. I had learned that trick long ago as an athlete and I should have made the connection to public speaking, but I just missed it. Turning “nerves” into “energy” seemed so logical, and I soon came to see public speaking as a mind-over-body battle. I knew that my mind could win, and it did. Obviously, I stuck with the class. And I even earned an A!

”

error before you find an eating recipe that's right for you. Your pre-speech “training program” can also heighten your sense of control over the presentation.

- Breathe deeply for a minute or so prior to speaking. Count to a slow six for each breath in and out.
- Borrow a stress-reducing technique from the practice of *shiatsu*, a traditional form of Japanese massage therapy. Gently massage the pressure point in the web between your thumb and first finger for three to five minutes. Speakers for whom this technique works (and there are many) report a sensation of calming and centering.
- Choose clothing that breathes well, lets you move easily, and won't show perspiration. Light-colored cotton is better than dark-colored silk or polyester. A jacket can help boost your confidence.
- Take a brisk walk, and literally shake the excess energy out of your hands and feet.

- Visit the restroom. You can also perform a last-minute appearance check. The confidence you get from looking your best can carry over to the presentation.
- If you suffer from a dry mouth, enjoy a mint or a candy to get the juices flowing. Be sure to finish it or throw it away before beginning to speak.
- Sit up straight while waiting to be called. Good posture improves your breathing and gives you confidence.

3. Tips to use during the presentation

- Recognize that walking up to the front of the room and getting started is the hardest part. Most speakers progressively relax as the speech continues.
- Know that most of your physiological reactions to excess speaker's energy remain unseen. Because you may feel your sweaty palms or increased heartbeat so intensely, you think your listeners can see it, but they can't. Some people may experience visible signs such as blotching skin or shaking hands, but wearing a high-collared shirt and avoiding demonstrations requiring fine-motor control (like threading a needle) can effectively mask these manifestations. Anyhow, audiences want to hear what you have to say; they're not there to notice your body's reaction to adrenaline.
- Bring water with you—it's perfectly acceptable to pause while speaking to take a quick sip. There's no need to apologize for needing water. Drink it purposefully and assuredly; don't rush it and find yourself in a fit of coughing!
- Should your mind suddenly go blank, pause, coolly and calmly review your notes, and get back on track. If you can't remember where you left off, humbly ask listeners to remind you. They're usually happy to do so.
- If shaking hands cause you to drop your notes, a piece of visual support, or the laser pointer, just pause, calmly pick the item up, and return to what you were discussing. There's no need to make loud apologies or to point out how nervous you are. Audiences accept the fact that you're human.
- If you mispronounce a word, simply go back and correct it. If you realize you've forgotten to share an idea, quickly do so if it's still appropriate or just move on. Don't beat yourself up or let "mistakes" distract you. At the same time, don't get overly impressed with yourself for something especially well done. Instead, keep your focus on the audience: *Did I explain that clearly enough? Perhaps I should define that word. I can see they really liked that last example.*
- Don't put yourself through additional anxiety if you don't explain something as smoothly as intended. The audience doesn't know what you planned and likely won't notice the slip unless you draw attention to it through panicked words or actions.
- Some speakers fear audience hostility, heckling, or aggressive questioning. Such feedback is rare. Most audiences want to see you accomplish your goals. In the rare case that you face an antagonistic or belligerent audience member, keep your cool and politely but firmly hold your ground. Audience members who attack you personally or question you aggressively are the ones who usually end up looking unreasonable. Maintain the high road. Don't take the bait or stoop to their level of personal attack.
- Don't fear audience members who question your ideas appropriately. Such questions reveal how your ideas are being received, may identify holes in your argument that you can repair, or give you things to think about for the future. Whatever

Essentials

Decreasing Excess Speaker's Energy

Psychological tips before the presentation

- Stay idea-centered, not self-centered.
- Adopt the communication orientation.
- Be prepared.
- Use positive self-talk.
- Use visualization.

Physiological tips before the presentation

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Avoid extra caffeine.
- Stay hydrated.
- Eat well.
- Breathe deeply.
- Practice a shiatsu massage technique.
- Choose clothing for confidence.
- Shake out excess energy from hands and feet.
- Visit the restroom.
- Enjoy a mint or candy.
- Sit up straight before being called.

Tips during the presentation

- Get started. You'll relax as the speech continues.
- Know that the majority of your nervous symptoms remain unseen.
- Bring a bottle of water with you for sipping—just in case.
- Should you go blank or drop something, simply pause, collect yourself, and get started again.
- It's natural to correct yourself should you mispronounce a word or forget to mention something.
- Your audience doesn't know what you have planned, so it's doubtful they'll notice when things don't go as you intended.
- Maintain the high road against the rare heckler.
- Welcome legitimate questions that better prepare you for your next presentation.
- Enjoy your endorphin rush after the speech!

the questions you receive from your audience, they'll leave you better prepared to defend your ideas next time.

- A natural high actually awaits most speakers. When you present well, the brain releases biochemical compounds called endorphins (different from adrenaline). Many speakers report a pleasant, floating sensation and an increased level of overall

positive energy after their presentations due to the release of those endorphins into the bloodstream.

Extra feelings of energy are a natural part of the speaking experience. As you continue speaking, you learn to manage, through experience and personal techniques, those sensations you perhaps once felt intensely. Harness that energy, and appreciate its role in the overall success of your public communication.

Summary

- It's normal to experience some feelings of discomfort prior to a public speech.
- A communication orientation toward public speaking, with the speaker's focus directed out toward the audience, is preferred to an inward-focused performance orientation.
- The body releases adrenaline prior to a public speech. Rather than seeing its effects as uncomfortable or negative, think of them as a manifestation of speaker's energy, and use them to sharpen your affect and improve your communication.
- Learn to use psychological and physiological strategies such as visualization, positive self-talk, and deep breathing for reducing and managing excess speaker's energy prior to and during a public presentation.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY KEY

Audience members are there to listen to you, not critique you. Your adrenaline flow is a good thing. Embrace it and channel it out toward your listeners so they can't help but interact with you and your ideas.

EXERCISES

1. Pair up with a partner in class. Take turns discussing your degree of anxiety about public speaking. Explore the reasons why each of you feels the way you do. Ask yourself whether your feelings are based on perception or reality.
2. Once your first speech is completed, pair up with your partner again. Talk out the experience with each other. Were there any commonalities between what you were thinking and feeling? Any differences? What can you learn from each other?
3. Look at the lists of tips in Section 3C (p. 43) for lessening excess speaker's energy. Are any of these tips realistic for you? Which ones will you use?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 4

Applying Ethics

REAL STUDENTS

REAL WORDS

“One of my classmates told a story that she claimed had happened to her. It was about a dog, a neighbor’s dead rabbit, and a hairdryer. The story sounded vaguely familiar, so I asked her privately after class if that had really happened to her or if I had somehow missed the larger point she was making by telling the story. She again claimed ownership. Still doubting it, I did a little Internet research when I got home and found the story immediately; it’s a classic urban legend. The whole thing made me lose respect for her. I subsequently lost interest in listening to her for the rest of the term.”

“It’s easy to get jaded about ethics. It’s important for the media to be on top of any kind of unethical behavior, yet I feel that the flood of stories creates a perception of a country where people care about no one but themselves. Obviously, you’re never going to see headlines such as ‘Kentucky Man Is Ethical during Speech’ (except maybe in ‘The Onion!’), but it’s easy to forget that the majority of people are ethical. I’m glad we talked about ethics in this course. It was a good reminder that ethics is something you have to consciously consider, both as a public speaker and as a public listener.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

Be ethical and civil throughout the speech-making process.

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

4A

Know What Ethics Are

- 1. *How is ethics defined?*
- 2. *Who decides what is right or wrong?*

4B

Recognize Ethical Challenges and Their Consequences

- 1. *Ethical challenges in our culture*
- 2. *Consequences of unethical speaking*

4C

Make the Choice to Be Ethical

4D

Follow These Guidelines for Ethical Speaking

- 1. *Be ethical in your speech preparation*
- 2. *Be ethical while speaking*

4E

Avoid Plagiarism: An Essential Ethical Practice

- 1. *Plagiarism is a serious matter*
- 2. *Avoid plagiarism while speaking*

4F

Use Civility as a Companion to Ethical Speaking

Key Terms

civility	► 59	incremental	
doublespeak	► 53	plagiarism	► 55
ethics	► 47	patchwork	
fair use	► 58	plagiarism	► 55
fighting words	► 49	plagiarism	► 55
First Amendment	► 49	power of the	
global plagiarism	► 55	podium	► 51
hate speech	► 49	slander	► 49

Your goal in public speaking is to gain a desired response from your listeners. But you don't have the freedom to use any means necessary. Every culture has standards and rules—some clearly defined, some less so—defining right and wrong ways to interact with each other. Because listeners expect a speaker to abide by these ethical standards, your integrity and reputation are tested each time you speak. Your trustworthiness, your ability to convince, and even your grades suffer greatly when listeners perceive you as unethical. This chapter examines the role of ethics in the public speaking interaction and offers guidelines and suggestions for ethical speaking. The chapter also looks at the role civility plays in ethical speaking.

4A

Know What Ethics Are

1. How is ethics defined?

Exact definitions vary, but in general, **ethics** are the standards society uses to determine right action from wrong, or good action from bad.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) asked this profound question: “If it would be wrong for everyone to do what you are doing, would you still do it?”¹ If, for example, telling untruths were a common public speaking practice, then anything any individual speaker said would be questionable. If every public speaker felt free to attack the personal reputation of others without solid evidence of wrongdoing, then few people would listen when personal criticism was warranted. If people could say and do anything they pleased at the podium without retribution, we would not be well served as a society. Thus, every public speaker—including you—must consciously consider the role of ethics in his or her presentation. Nearly every stage of the speaking process, from topic selection to research and from visual support to language choice, requires that you make ethical decisions.

But *who* gets to say what is right and wrong or good and bad?

2. Who decides what is right or wrong?

People construct ethical standards by establishing guidelines for themselves and for groups to which they belong, letting them live together and interact in relative safety, trust, and harmony. Ethics may apply to a larger culture (such as the United States or China), to a broad field (biomedical ethics or business ethics), or to an occupation (law enforcement or therapist ethics). The field of public speaking, too, has its own ethical guidelines, which we'll explore in this chapter.

Why does it matter if someone violates these ethical guidelines, either intentionally or unintentionally? Who is harmed, for example, if you “borrow” an idea from an article and pass it off as your own? The response is that each individual action *does* matter. The way each of us makes and acts on decisions affects our own spiritual health as well as the fabric of our society. Because of your power to inform and persuade others while speaking, you have a serious responsibility to abide by ethical guidelines.

Essentials

What Are Ethics?

- Ethics are standards to determine right action from wrong or good action from bad.
- People construct ethical standards by establishing guidelines that allow members of a society to live together and interact in relative safety, trust, and harmony.
- Because of their power to inform and persuade others, speakers have a serious responsibility to abide by ethical guidelines.

4B

Recognize Ethical Challenges and Their Consequences

1. Ethical challenges in our culture

Choosing to act ethically can at times be a challenge, especially given some of our cultural messages and cultural habits, as well as the perception that some people appear to be rewarded for unethical behavior. While some of society's messages can influence self-esteem and promote creativity, innovation, and progress, not all take into account the consequences of an individual's actions on others (or themselves). While some of society's habits may afford an individual temporary gain or convenience, they create problems for society at large. And while it may appear that unethical behavior is sometimes rewarded, these gains are often short-term, and offenders pay high prices when caught.

Because ethical speaking operates within the larger culture, it can be difficult for an individual speaker to successfully navigate an ethical path. Ethical speaking is a choice, and some choices are difficult to make. While some people violate ethical speaking codes knowingly and willingly, most people do so unintentionally through a lack of awareness or training. That's where this chapter can help you.

2. Consequences of unethical speaking

Unethical speaking has consequences. Here are just a few recent higher-profile examples:

- Michael Richards (who played *Seinfeld's* Kramer) suffered an enormous blow to his professional reputation when he flung racial epithets at a comedy club audience.
- Dr. Bryan Le Beau resigned from a deanship at the University of Missouri–Kansas City after allegations that he had plagiarized a speech.²
- Commentator Ann Coulter received heated criticism from both ends of the political spectrum for hate-speech comments she made during a presentation.³
- Actor Isaiah Washington lost his job on *Grey's Anatomy* for making homophobic comments.

Whether unethical public communication behavior takes place in the national spotlight or in your classroom, it has effects on the speech outcome, on the speaker, and on the listeners.

Effects on the Outcome

- Listeners want to respect a speaker and to perceive him or her as honest, open, prepared, trustworthy, credible, and nonmanipulative. But unethical speaking behavior strains or destroys your present and future relationship with the audience and reduces your chance of meeting communication goals.

Effects on the Speaker

- Unethical behavior in academic contexts can reduce your grades.
- Unethical speaking behavior in the workplace can weaken your position and put the success of your organization at risk. Most organizations operate under a combination of company policies; city, state, and federal regulations; and the guidelines of accrediting agencies or professional organizations. Employers rarely tolerate employees who violate these. See the “Did You Know?” box (◀ p. 50) for one example of occupational ethics.
- Unethical speaking behavior in your community can hurt your reputation. People do not want unethical members or leaders in community groups or civic or religious organizations.

Effects on the Audience

- A speaker who communicates complete or partial untruths passes such messages on to unsuspecting listeners. These listeners, in turn, may spread the untruths, thereby threatening their own reputations.
- Listeners may be inspired to act in unethical ways themselves. Hitler’s influence on the German people during World War II is an infamous example.

4C

Make the Choice to Be Ethical

Fortunately, most speakers do consider ethics important and take their ethical responsibilities seriously. One fundamental ethical question each speaker must consider is the relationship between public speaking and the right to freedom of expression. The **First Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution provides protection for free, uncensored speech. This means that speakers are legally protected if they choose to use bigoted, intolerant, or offensive language. Most American adults believe this protection is necessary to maintain an open, free, and democratic society.

But not *all* types of speech are covered under the First Amendment. In fact, some speech is illegal, including:

- **Slander**, false statements that defame another’s character and potentially harm that person’s standing in the community or at work.
- Speech that incites people to lawless behavior or imminent violence.
- **Fighting words**, best described as intimidating speech directed at a specific individual in a face-to-face confrontation, especially if that speech inflicts injury or incites an immediate breach of the peace.⁴
- Speech that invades another’s privacy.

In an effort to maintain an environment conducive to learning, many colleges and universities have adopted codes against **hate speech**, words that harass or promote discrimination or

Did You Know?

Government Press Officials' Occupational Code of Conduct

Both in the United States and in countries where the U.S. Department of State operates, government spokespeople often face sticky questions such as “What do you do if your boss tells you to withhold unclassified information from the press?” and “What do you do if your boss lies to the media and you know it?”

The codes of conduct from the National Association of Government Communicators help government spokespeople operate ethically. These general and detailed codes outline behavior meant to satisfy the public interest, employers, personal values, and professional standards. Because these four spheres have goals that at times can be in conflict, ethical codes become a necessary guide to correct behavior and professional choices. Some of the codes of conduct say that members should

- conduct themselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, responsibility, accountability to the public, and adherence to generally accepted standards of good taste.
- identify publicly the names and titles of individuals making policy decisions, the details of decision-making processes, and ways that interested citizens can participate.
- avoid the possibility of any improper use of information by an insider or third party, and never use inside information for personal gain.
- accept no fees, commissions, gifts, promises of future consideration, or any other material or intangible valuable that is, or could be perceived to be, connected with public service employment or activities.

Governmental spokespeople work hard to achieve their reputation as ethical communicators. Their livelihoods depend on it.

Source: “A Responsible Press Office,” U.S. Department of State, <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/pressoffice/ethics.htm> (accessed August 30, 2007).

violence against social or ethnic groups of people or against a member of such a group. You’ll want to check the policies of your campus.

You must take seriously your rights under the First Amendment. At the same time, you must also consider your communication goals and your relationship with your audience. What is legal and protected is not always ethical. You must therefore make choices and live by the results.

Though most speakers choose ethical speech over speech intended to offend or otherwise result in a negative consequence, some speakers commit errors because they don’t think it

Essentials

Ethical Challenges and Consequences

- Choosing to act ethically can at times be a challenge.
 - Some of our cultural messages and habits do little to foster ethical behavior.
 - It often appears that people are rewarded for unethical behavior.
- Unethical speaking has consequences
 - for the speech outcome.
 - for the speaker.
 - for the audience.
- Poor ethical choices often stem from a lack of awareness or a lack of training. Your public speaking course provides you with remedies for both.

through or just do not realize that their words and actions are problematic. Read the “Speaker’s Story” box (🔗 p. 52) to discover what one student said about mistakes he made.

Commit to learning about ethical speaking standards, and strive to make conscious choices that afford dignity to others and build or maintain your own integrity. The following section outlines several general and specific guidelines for ethical public presentation.

4D

Follow These Guidelines for Ethical Speaking

1. *Be ethical in your speech preparation*

Always be ethical Ethics must be a consistent, fundamental part of your thinking and actions as a public speaker. It’s not just something to attend to when convenient. Understand the **power of the podium**. Realize that it’s a symbol of truth and authority and that you have a responsibility to use its power ethically throughout the speechmaking process.

Speak up and speak out Don’t hesitate to address topics you believe to be morally right. Ethical presenters speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. They may take unpopular positions. They may speak out against policies they consider harmful. They support their positions responsibly with appropriate rational and emotional appeals to justify their stance.

Choose topics that promote positive cultural values Human values differ across cultures, but honesty and causing others no harm are universals. Speeches informing listeners “How to skip out on a restaurant tab” and “How to get drunk and still avoid a DUI” may technically meet the criteria for a “how-to” speech, but they are obviously unethical. Speeches encouraging listeners to falsify résumé data or to join a hate group, while within the legal protection

A Speaker's Story **Mistakes I've Made**

“

This student wished he had another chance to remedy his questionable ethical choice.

Daniel

I wanted to show photos of the demonstration march I participated in, but I didn't have any because I had forgotten my camera that day. Figuring one photo of a march was as good as the next, I used one I found in a magazine. That was a bad decision. My credibility suffered when I was asked why there were leaves on the trees in the background of the photo when my march supposedly occurred in February! I should have been honest and contextualized the photograph differently.

”

of the First Amendment, embody negative values. Speaking skills are not inherently good or bad, but speeches can promote either good or bad purposes. Choose your speech topics carefully, and make sure your speaking skills promote positive cultural values, including compassion, respect, fair play, cooperation, perseverance, and tolerance.

Be informed and prepared Once you have committed to a presentation, you're ethically obliged to manage your time to allow for necessary thought, research, organization, preparation, and practice. Spend the energy necessary to fulfill audience expectations of listening to truthful, accurate, and well-supported content. Ethical speakers don't plan to get away with just the bare minimum of preparation. Show respect for your audience's time and intelligence by being as informed and prepared as possible.

Acknowledge shades of gray Few topics can be argued in black-and-white terms. Ethical speakers acknowledge the complexity of human thought and actions and avoid speaking about the world as if their answers were the only clear and obvious solutions. This doesn't mean that you can't argue that certain things are true, take a certain position, or share feelings and opinions. To say and do such things is the very reason people speak in public. But when speaking, you have an ethical obligation to acknowledge that others may know different things or believe or feel differently than you do. None of us has a lock on the truth.

2. Be ethical while speaking

Be up front about your intentions Clearly communicate what you would like your listeners to know, do, or believe. Ethical speakers don't lure an audience with one topic ("A Breakthrough Discovery in Arthritis Research") and then switch to another topic ("A Fantastic New Arthritis Cream!") the listeners may not have voluntarily shown up for. Ethical speakers don't lead an audience to believe they're being informative when their hidden agenda is to manipulate the information and lead the audience to only one subjective conclusion. Most

Did You Know?

A Four-Question Test for Ethics

Here are four questions to test the ethical quality of your communication:

1. The test of comprehensibility: Am I using grammar and word choices so that my audience can understand my statement?
2. The test of truth: Is my statement a true representation of an existing, agreed-on, factual state of affairs?
3. The test of sincerity: Is my statement a sincere and accurate reflection of my actual intention?
4. The test of appropriateness: Is my statement appropriately in line with relevant shared social values and rules?

Source: (Jurgen Habermas) Adapted from Richard L. Johannesen, *Ethics in Human Communication*, 5th ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2002), 45.

audiences are quick to realize when they've been duped, and they're not quick to forget or forgive it. Be honest about your intentions. That honesty affects your relationship with your listeners and your ability to meet your communication goals.

Use truthful, accurate supporting materials, and give credit to sources For presentations requiring research, you are under an ethical obligation to provide truthful, accurate, and sufficient supporting material to back up statements and claims. Ethical speakers work hard at finding a wide variety of information, critically analyzing the sources of that information, and giving credit to those sources while speaking. The section in this chapter on plagiarism further discusses the use of research sources.

Use concrete language Ethical speakers fully communicate their ideas with concrete and specific language. Language that is vague, ambiguous, or abstract can give the impression that you're trying to hide something or are not being fully truthful. One type of vague language, known as **doublespeak**, serves to intentionally hide, distort, or manipulate true ideas. People using doublespeak are only pretending to say something. Examples include:

- “revenue enhancement” for *tax increase*
- “fourth-generation warfare” for *government-managed terrorism*
- “externality” for a cost that is not figured into the price and is borne by the public⁵

Ethical speakers realize that concrete language encourages, not hampers, a listener's ability to make rational decisions about the ideas addressed in a presentation.

Be inclusive Take all potential listeners into account. A thorough analysis of the audience assists you in your goal of being inclusive in actions and words. It is ethical to choose a topic of interest to as many people as possible—not only to you—and to use language that *includes* rather than *excludes*.

Essentials

Ethical Speaking Guidelines

During Speech Preparation	While Speaking
Always be ethical.	Be up front about your intentions.
Speak up and speak out.	Use truthful, accurate supporting materials.
Choose topics that promote positive cultural values.	Use concrete language.
Be informed and prepared.	Be inclusive in your content and language.
Acknowledge shades of gray.	Avoid verbal attacks.
Prepare both logical and emotional appeals.	Avoid the overuse of emotional appeals.
Practice to abide by your time limit.	Respect other people's time.
Research issues thoroughly in multiple sources.	Accept responsibility.

Avoid verbal attacks It's an abuse of the podium to wage verbal combat against others who may not have the opportunity or means to defend themselves. Such *ad hominem* attacks are not fair and can threaten any goodwill the audience has toward you. An unethical speaker may use verbal attacks purposely to redirect attention away from important issues; it can be easier to focus an audience's emotional energy on a person rather than focusing listeners' rational thoughts on an idea that may be complex, abstract, or in opposition to the points the speaker is trying to make. For example, if you support the proposed local tax increase, argue for it on its merits, but don't encourage listeners to support it because the county supervisor you dislike opposes it. Substantiate statements and claims in their own right; don't accept or reject them because of the person who made them. Ethical speakers focus on issues; they separate people from the problems they choose to address.

Avoid the overuse of emotional appeals Appealing to listeners' emotions is a powerful way of gaining their attention and encouraging them to interact with your ideas. Recognize, however, that while people feel, they can also think; avoid overusing such appeals. Respect the power of the heart *and* mind, and increase your persuasiveness by combining emotional proof with logical proof.

Respect other people's time Time is among the most precious of resources. Ethical speakers spend their own time so as not to waste the time of their listeners. Choose topics worthy of audience members' listening time and attention. Do your preparation and homework in order to give the audience something substantial to listen to. Connect with

your audience during the presentation to maintain and refresh their interest. Practice to meet your time limit.

Accept responsibility Take full responsibility for the content and delivery of your presentations. Should things not go as planned during the speech, ethical speakers don't blame others for giving them bad information; they accept responsibility for not having double-checked the accuracy of their content. Nor do ethical speakers blame their audiences for not following their messages; they accept responsibility for not having explained things as well as they should have.

The "Did You Know?" box (◀ p. 53) gives you a chance to test your own messages for their ethical quality.

4E

Avoid Plagiarism: An Essential Ethical Practice

1. *Plagiarism is a serious matter*

Plagiarism, from the Latin word for "kidnap," is a familiar topic from your years studying writing and composition. It's an attempt to pass off another person's idea, or a close imitation of it, as your own.

There are three forms of plagiarism, *all* of which are unethical:

- **Incremental plagiarism:** swiping parts of another person's work and incorporating those elements at various points into your work without citing the original source.
- **Patchwork plagiarism:** taking pieces from several sources, patching them together as a new whole, and passing it off as your own.
- **Global plagiarism:** stealing another person's work in its entirety and passing it off as your own.

Plagiarism is a form of stealing, and those caught plagiarizing suffer consequences to their grades, reputations, and careers. See the "Speaker's Story" box (◀ p. 57) for a recent example of speech plagiarism.

Plagiarism is also a form of cheating. The Kenan Institute for Ethics, housed at Duke University, found that 37 percent of college and university students admit to Internet plagiarism.⁶ Students should know that while the wealth of online material makes pirating another person's work easier than ever, resources allowing teachers to detect plagiarism, such as www.turnitin.com, have become more numerous and easier to use as well. Your college or university undoubtedly has a clearly written policy on cheating and plagiarism. Know it! Every school term, students are caught and prosecuted for cheating and plagiarism. If your campus is typical, plagiarists face consequences ranging from a zero on the assignment to expulsion from school.

2. *Avoid plagiarism while speaking*

Speakers must avoid plagiarizing researched ideas. Plagiarism violates an audience's trust and damages the relationship between speaker and listeners. This ethical failure ultimately affects the speaker's ability to achieve his or her communication goals. Knowing how to sift

Did You Know?

Why It's Smart to Pay Our Intellectual Debts

This excerpt of an article written by scholars at Northwestern University beautifully sums up the need to pay our “intellectual debts.”

Everyone . . . needs to pay attention to the issue of proper attribution. All of us—faculty and students together—draw from a vast pool of texts, ideas, and findings that humans have accumulated over thousands of years; we could not think to any productive end without it. Even the sudden insights that appear at first glance to arrive out of nowhere come enmeshed in other people's thinking. What we call originality is actually the innovative combining, amending, or extending of material from that pool.

Hence each of us must learn how to declare intellectual debts. Proper attribution acknowledges those debts responsibly, usefully, and respectfully. An attribution is responsible when it comes at a location and in a fashion that leaves [listeners] in no doubt about whom you are thanking for what. It is useful when it enables [listeners] to find your source readily for themselves. You help them along the way, just as that same source helped you along yours. To make sure that our attributions are useful, we double-check them whenever we can. Quite literally, it is a habit that pays. Colleagues in every field appreciate the extra care. Nothing stalls a career faster than sloppy, unreliable work.

Finally, an attribution is respectful when it expresses our appreciation for something done well enough to warrant our borrowing it. We should take pride in the intellectual company we keep. It speaks well of us that we have chosen to use the work of intelligent, interesting people, and we can take genuine pleasure in joining our name with theirs.

Source: Jean Smith, lead author, “Guidelines for Proper Attribution,” from *How to Avoid Plagiarism*, Northwestern University, <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html> (accessed August 28, 2007).

through and choose relevant ideas and synthesize material while creating something new is not only ethical, but also a sign of intellectual muscle. Here are ways to avoid plagiarism.

- **Begin preparation early and manage your time.** The temptation to lift material is greater when you're in a panic because you're pressed for time. Choose your topic and start your research as soon as possible after you've volunteered or been asked or assigned to speak.
- **Create a system for taking notes.** Before beginning your research, create a system for tracking the bibliographic data of your sources. It's difficult otherwise, especially if you're

A Speaker's Story

"I'm Sure She's Very Embarrassed"



Joanne Calabro, Superintendent of the Fort Lee School District in New Jersey, faced accusations of plagiarism during a recent speech to students who were being inducted into the National Honor Society. According to the Associated Press, many of the words spoken by Calabro “were almost exactly the same as those in a sample speech on a Web page on how to speak in public.” Along with a Ralph Waldo Emerson quote, Calabro used phrases like:

- “I believe that what should make you and your parents most proud is not the actual honor itself, but what you had to do to get it.”
- “Are you one to stand up for what you believe in and ‘face the music’ even when that music happens to be unpleasant?”

Each was exactly like the examples used by author Melissa Kelly in her About.com postings.

Calabro was criticized for her actions in the regional media and the blogosphere. While she wasn't fired, she did not request a renewal of her contract when it came up for review soon after the incident. The school board accepted her decision.

Meanwhile, a spokeswoman for the National Honor Society noted that, “Even though it's an unfortunate thing that this happened, I'm sure [Calabro is] very embarrassed.” The spokeswoman added that Fort Lee students would probably be getting some lessons in avoiding plagiarism!

Sources: Quoted material comes from “Superintendent's Speech Stirs Talk of Plagiarism,” *New York Times*, June 2, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com> (accessed September 3, 2007); and Merry Firschein, “Teachers Worried about Boss's Last Year,” *The Record*, June 13, 2007, <http://www.northjersey.com> (accessed September 3, 2007).



using digital sources, to remember later which idea came from which source, much less where those sources can be found. Some speakers use a notecard system, putting the citation details of each source (title, author, publisher, year, page, URL, etc.) on a card and noting which idea in the speech it connects to. Others keep a running list on a piece of paper. Still others create a digital file that they update and back up regularly. No matter what system you use, be sure to chart which citation connects with which speech idea.

- **Create something new by combining your research with your own knowledge and beliefs.** Some speakers may feel that the enormous amount of information already available makes it difficult, if not impossible, to say anything new. But you already know and believe many things. You can create your own angle and make a unique contribution by letting the newly researched information interact with those facts and opinions you already own. Such creative thought, however, takes time. An incubation period, during

Essentials

Avoiding Plagiarism

- Begin your speech preparation early, and manage your time.
- Create a system for taking notes.
- Create something new by combining your research with your own knowledge and beliefs.
- Use multiple resources, especially for more subjective ideas.
- Give verbal credit to the source.
- Abide by fair use.

which “new” and “old” ideas have time to mingle in your brain, is necessary—and is yet another reason to begin your preparation early.

- **Use multiple resources.** Some objective data require only one reliable source. For example, if you want to tell your listeners the depth of Lake Tahoe, the United States Geological Survey, operated by the Department of the Interior, can quickly give you the accurate figure of 1,645 feet.⁷ You don’t need a second source. For subjective ideas, however, you’re more likely to develop a fresh viewpoint if you look at more than one research source. For example, health care workers and scientists disagree about how likely it is that a given flu virus can create a global pandemic. Using only one source on such a topic limits your scope. Multiple sources allow you to research multiple angles, increasing your chances of creating something unique.
- **Give verbal credit to the source.** Avoid plagiarism by citing, in your presentation, the source of an idea, a quote, statistics, a conclusion, or an opinion. Err on the side of caution: when in doubt, cite! See the “Did You Know?” box (◀ p. 56) for a well-written explanation of how proper attribution is not only ethical, but can also make you look good.
- **Abide by fair use.** Copyright laws protect original creative work, including music, art, graphics, and pictures. **Fair use** regulations help people figure out how to maneuver in the complex and debatable world of copyright law. Your school most likely provides guidance to your educational community; find it, know it, and use it. For example, the University of Texas system interprets the United States Copyright Office’s four factors for determining fair use⁸ and says that individuals have the responsibility to examine each of the four factors and weigh the result of the combined answers. If the ultimate decision tips toward fair use, you are most likely protected. If it doesn’t, you must secure copyright permission.
- **What is the character of the use?** If you are speaking for nonprofit or educational purposes, the work you are using is probably considered subject to fair use. If you

are speaking for pay or commercial purposes, you will need to obtain copyright permission for works used.

- **What is the nature of the work you are using?** Published works of fact are more likely subject to fair use. Works that are imaginative tend to require permission.
- **How much of the work will you use?** Using only a small amount of a work tips the scales toward fair use. Using large portions or the full work tips the scale toward requiring permission.
- **If this kind of use were widespread, what effect would it have on the market for the original or on permissions?** If your analysis of the first three questions is leaning toward fair use *and* the original work is out of print, if there is no ready market for permission, or if the copyright owner is unidentifiable, your use is probably fair. No permission is needed. But if your analysis is leaning toward needing permission *and* you determine that your use would take sales away from the creator, or if you are avoiding paying royalties in an established permissions market, your use is probably not fair and you must seek permission and, if required, pay royalties.

The National Communication Association has developed a credo for ethical communication. Read it in the “Did You Know?” box (◀ p. 60).

4F

Use Civility as a Companion to Ethical Speaking

Throughout the discussion of ethics, you’ve probably noticed many connections between being ethical and maintaining a positive relationship with your audience. You want to be an ethical speaker not only because it’s the right thing to do but also because it’s a civil thing to do. In public speaking, **civility** goes beyond, but certainly includes, the use of courtesy and good manners. It more broadly refers to abiding by a code of decency and showing respect, honesty, fairness, and tolerance to others.⁹

When you display civility—familiar territory for many of you—it tells your audience that you consciously consider your words and actions. Some of the words and actions describing civility are similar to the ones you read about earlier in the section on ethics. They include:

- Being aware of and acknowledging others
- Being inclusive
- Separating people from problems
- Respecting others’ opinions
- Respecting other people’s time
- Restraining ourselves
- Speaking kindly of others
- Not shifting responsibility and blame

A civil speaker is aware that words and actions have consequences and that the consequences either enhance or damage the relationship with the audience. And you want to create a good relationship with your audience. When you do so, you tell your audience that you

Did You Know?

NCA Credo for Ethical Communication

Approved in 1999 by the National Communication Association's Legislative Council, the Credo for Ethical Communication is available to any and all communicators.

N C A C R E D O F O R E T H I C A L C O M M U N I C A T I O N

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

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

Source: National Communication Association, <http://www.natcom.org> (accessed December 11, 2007).

are other-oriented. Using codes of civility while speaking in public is more likely to produce the following outcomes:

- **You're more likely to practice the many guidelines for ethical speaking behavior.** When you care about the consequences of your words and actions, you're more likely to work harder at being ethical. You don't want to put your relationship with your listeners at risk with unethical behavior.
- **Your audience is more likely to keep listening.** Some speaker-listener relationships last only as long as the presentation. Others have a life beyond the presentation, as you have further interaction with listeners in the workplace, in the community, or in the classroom. No matter how great the degree of the connection, when your listeners sense that you care about the relationship you establish with them, they are more likely to stay engaged and listen to you. You are thus more likely to achieve your communication goals.
- **Society as a whole benefits.** When you model civility, you enrich your own life by doing your part to create a more positive experience for your fellow citizens. Most of us want to reap the rewards of living in a civil society.

Is civility always required in our public communication? No. History shows a need in our democracy for protests and uncivil discourse. But in the majority of your interactions in your classrooms, at work, and in your communities, civility leads to more effective communication.

At the same time, civility doesn't mean you choose only "nice" topics that make people comfortable; you can present the most complex or controversial topics in a civil fashion. Guy and Heidi Burgess, codirectors of the Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado, teach people how to use "constructive confrontation," a type of interaction utilizing civil behaviors, during public discourse.¹⁰ "A civil society cannot avoid tough but important issues, simply because they are unpleasant to address," they say. "[We] must recognize that the many differing interests which divide our increasingly diverse society will produce an endless series of confrontations over difficult moral and distributional issues." They add, "While continuing confrontation is inevitable, the enormous destructiveness which commonly accompanies these confrontations is not." Each of us, according to the Burgesses, "can work individually and collectively [through civility] to increase the constructiveness of public debate."

P. M. Forni, author of *Choosing Civility: The 25 Rules of Considerate Conduct*, sums up the need for civility: "Through civility we develop thoughtfulness, [and] foster effective self-expression and communication. . . . Civility allows us to connect successfully with others."¹¹

Finally, in this digital age, when anyone with a camera or blog can capture and post anything about you they choose, conducting yourself civilly while speaking may be essential for your reputation and to help you get ahead.¹² Uncivil behavior can become part of your permanent digital history and can be accessed by anyone, including future employers. "Out-behaving others" through civility can be your ticket to success.

Summary

- Ethics define the standards we use to determine right action from wrong or good action from bad.
- Unethical speaking behavior has consequences on the speaker, the outcome, and the listeners.
- Every public speaker must consciously consider the role ethics play in his or her presentation and take steps before and during the presentation to abide by ethical guidelines.
- Because of the damage plagiarized content can wreak on your credibility and relationship with the audience, avoiding plagiarism is an important ethical practice.
- Civility joins ethical speaking in helping you establish a healthy relationship with your listeners. Treating listeners well results in better communication.



L I S T E N A B I L I T Y : R E M E M B E R T H I S S T R A T E G Y K E Y

Practicing ethical and civil speaking is not only the right thing but also the smart thing to do. Don't give your audience a reason to check out. Keep them listening by maintaining their trust in you and your ideas and their respect for you as a fellow citizen.

EXERCISES

1. Look over the guidelines for ethical speaking in Section 4D. Are these realistic for you to follow? Why or why not? If you were to rewrite the guidelines, what would you leave in, add, or delete?
2. Visit the Doublespeak website hosted by the nonprofit Center for Media and Democracy (<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Doublespeak>). Choose five to ten items from the list of words and phrases, and ask friends if they understand their meanings. Report back to your public speaking class, and use your findings as fodder for a class discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of doublespeak.
3. One of the suggestions for avoiding plagiarism is to use multiple sources (p. 58). National news magazines such as Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News & World Report often cover some of the same topics in a given week. Choose one of these topics, and read how each magazine has covered it. Prepare to summarize the topic to a classmate, blending what you have learned from each source while adding in your own ideas, thereby creating something new.
4. Find a speech by a speaker you respect. This person can be someone you know from the media or in real life. Chart any civility behaviors you notice displayed in the speech. In other words, what does the speaker do to enhance the relationship with his or her audience?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 5

Listening to the Speeches of Others

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Although I signed up for and successfully completed a course called public speaking, I probably learned just as much about public listening, a concept I had never given much thought to. I’m assuming I’ll give public speeches in the future, but it’s guaranteed I’m going to be a public listener.”

“I will admit that I have become a critical listener. I have been spoiled in this class with mostly logical and interesting speeches, and it’s easy to forget that not everyone who gives a public speech knows how to do it well. I find myself critiquing people when I listen to them. I search for their structure, their main ideas, their audience connection. I don’t think this is necessarily a bad thing. Having the desire to hear good speeches inspires me to give them.”

5A

Know What Good Listening Is

- 1. *Appreciate the role of the listener in the public speaking transaction*
- 2. *Understand the difference between hearing and listening*
- 3. *Understand the difference between active and passive listening*

5B

Understand the Listening Process

- 1. *Know the steps in the listening process*
- 2. *Know how the listening process can break down and what you can do about it*

5C

Differentiate Listening Levels

- 1. *Pseudo-listening*
- 2. *Appreciative listening*
- 3. *Empathic listening*
- 4. *Comprehensive listening*
- 5. *Critical listening*

5D

Be an Excellent Public Listener

- 1. *Practice civil listening*
- 2. *Practice ethical listening*

Key Terms

active listening	▶ 67	empathic listening	▶ 71
appreciative listening	▶ 70	hearing	▶ 67
comprehensive listening	▶ 72	listening	▶ 67
critical listening	▶ 73	meta-listener	▶ 71
		passive listening	▶ 67
		pseudo-listening	▶ 69

Your public speaking course delivers a bonus—the life-enriching skill of public listening. Many students are surprised to learn that listening plays a central role in a course that emphasizes public *speaking*. It may be hard to predict how, when, and where you'll give public presentations in the future, but it's guaranteed you'll listen to them throughout your life—in your classes, at work, in your community, and in society. Listening is an underrated skill. Because we've been doing it all our lives, many of us take listening for granted and believe that we do it well. In reality, listening takes work, but it is work that is absolutely worth the effort. This chapter focuses on your role as a listening member of the audience. You'll learn the listening process, various types of listening, and how to practice civil and ethical public listening.

5A

Know What Good Listening Is

The act of listening is often taken for granted. While you most likely remember receiving formal and informal instruction in reading, writing, and speaking, listening is just something we're expected to know how to do. Yet few people listen as well as they could, and fewer still have been taught how to listen effectively. Things are changing, though. Fortunately, many schools, businesses, and health-related fields see the value in listening training. There is even a professional organization, the International Listening Association, whose members share research, exchange ideas, and promote the practice and teaching of effective listening.

The rewards of good listening include:¹

- Gathering ideas and information
- Broadening your view of the world
- Finding opportunities that you may not have known existed
- Sharpening your analytic skills
- Asking intelligent questions
- Increasing your chances for job success by learning more about how your organization operates and how you can best function within it
- Improving your social connections
- Improving your public speaking skills

1. Appreciate the role of the listener in the public speaking transaction

As a public listener, you are one-half of an essential partnership. You might be tempted to think that the speaker is more important than the listeners, but listeners and speakers are actually equal players. They have no purpose without each other. Though speakers and listeners need one another, each faces different obligations for creating a successful communication interaction. This book is filled with the responsibilities required of the public speaker, but as a public listener you assume some obligations as well, including:

- Understanding that listening is an active skill requiring intention and energy
- Being willing to listen

- Showing the speaker that you are listening
- Interacting with the message and providing feedback
- Not creating distractions
- Ignoring distractions and focusing on the speaker
- Being a civil and ethical listener

You'll find more details about listener responsibilities as you continue reading the chapter.

2. Understand the difference between hearing and listening

Do you remember the last time you suddenly realized that someone was saying something to you? You were hearing the person's voice, but for whatever reason—perhaps you were distracted by something else—you weren't processing the words and assigning meaning to them. You were hearing but not listening.

Hearing is the foundation of listening. It is an involuntary, biological process that occurs when your ears pick up a sound within range; if your ears are working, you cannot help but hear. **Listening**, on the other hand, requires you to take what you hear, choose to attend to it, assign it meaning, and somehow respond to it. Listening is a voluntary, mental process that, when done well, takes energy. You engage in the complex and fascinating listening process hundreds, if not thousands, of times a day.

We also "hear" and "listen," in some sense, with our eyes. While our ears pick up words and vocal intonation, our eyes catch the nonverbal messages in the speaker's facial expression, body movement, gestures, and so on, enriching the overall message we receive. The brain processes these visual stimuli in the same manner as aural stimuli. Check the "Did You Know?" box (🔗 p. 68) for a description of how deaf people listen.

3. Understand the difference between active and passive listening

We don't listen to everything in the same way. **Passive listening** takes relatively little energy, as you know when you pay halfhearted attention to incoming stimuli (someone's voice outside a room, the car radio) either by choice or by habit. Passive listening can be appropriate at the end of a long day when you just need to relax in front of the TV or when your favorite uncle tells you—for the umpteenth time!—how he won that weight-lifting tournament back in 1977. But passive listening is *not* appropriate when you're assuming the role of public listener.

Active listening, listening with the intention of understanding what another person is saying, is what you strive for during a public presentation. It begins with a willingness and desire to listen and requires you to expend high levels of energy. Active listening includes behaviors such as making eye contact, taking notes, and identifying main ideas.

Note that the goal of active listening is to fully comprehend what the other person is saying; you don't necessarily need to agree or obey. People often say "I hear you" when they actually mean "I agree with you." We use "I should have listened" to mean "I should have done what I was told." But these phrases are just figures of speech. As an active public listener, you aim to fully comprehend what the speaker is attempting to say. Only then do you decide whether to agree or comply.

Active listening is a skill, like piano playing or juggling, that requires practice. The more active listening you do, the better at it you become. Not only do you become a stronger

Did You Know?

Deafness and Listening

Deaf and hard of hearing people listen just as hearing people do. Tom Riggs, vice president of the American Sign Language Teachers Association, describes listening this way:

For hearing people, listening is phonological. Sound waves are carried through the air and meaning is ascribed. For deaf people, listening is visual. When we're signing, we're of course looking for actual signs, but we're also looking for things like facial expressions, positions of the eyebrows, and shifts of the body because that's where a lot of meaning resides.

Just like hearing people, we also listen for intonation. Of course, when people are signing, their intonation is visual. In storytelling, for example, hearing people listen for things like vocal characterization. We look for the pace of signing, word choice, and whether the sender signs in a big space or a small space. For us, those clues give a picture of the story and convey a feeling and characterization that enrich the story.

Source: Tom Riggs, personal interview with the author, November 9, 2005.

listener, able to follow more complex ideas and patterns of organization, but you are also able to listen for longer stretches of time. You'll have many opportunities to practice your active public listening throughout your academic and working career. Commit to participating mentally and physically as a public listener to the best of your abilities.

5B

Understand the Listening Process

1. Know the steps in the listening process

Listening follows a four-step process—hearing, attending, interpreting, and responding. You must successfully achieve each step before moving on to the next. Table 5.1 shows the process in action.

Table 5.1 The Listening Process

HEARING

Picking up aural or visual stimuli within your range



ATTENDING

Choosing to focus in on one of the many stimuli you are hearing

**INTERPRETING**

Assigning meaning to the stimulus you attend to

**RESPONDING**

Internally or externally reacting to the interpretation you have assigned

2. Know how the listening process can break down and what you can do about it

Though the process of listening *should* be simple, breakdowns and distractions lurk at each step. The average listener, however unintentionally, often creates obstacles to successful public communication. Here are some ways to help you improve your active public listening.

Hearing problems and solutions Some listening difficulties occur with hearing. If you are not picking up aural or visual stimuli clearly, it's difficult, if not impossible, to process the message further. Table 5.2 (🔍 p. 70) lists some common hearing problems and solutions.

Attending problems and solutions Though you may hear what the speaker is saying, if your attention is otherwise diverted, you cannot assign meaning or respond to it. Attention is about choice. No one forces you to be distracted; you control whether you let something or someone draw your attention away from the speaker and his or her message. Table 5.3 (🔍 p. 71) lists some ways to better attend to the speaker.

Interpreting problems and solutions The goal of interpreting is to understand the message the same way the speaker intended it. We don't always find common ground, however, despite our best intentions. Some ways to improve your chances of getting the message are shown in Table 5.4 (🔍 p. 72).

Responding problems and solutions Most of your responding occurs while listening to the message, though you may make further responses after the presentation, when you have more time to think. But problems can arise when your responses create barriers to or shut down your listening. Table 5.5 (🔍 p. 75) offers some suggestions for improvement.

5C

Differentiate Listening Levels

Scholars have identified several major types of listening.² As you read about them here, note that you can employ more than one type during any presentation.

1. Pseudo-listening

Also known as fake listening, **pseudo-listening** is an imitation of the real thing. It's a passive activity that takes very little energy. Whether due to laziness, an inability to ignore

Table 5.2 Hearing Problems and Solutions

HEARING PROBLEMS	HEARING SOLUTIONS
Impairment, damage, illness, or age-related hearing loss	• Sit as close to the speaker as possible. • Wear a hearing- or vision-correcting device, if required.
Distracting sounds from outside or from other people sitting next to you	• Close doors or windows. • Move to another seat, or ask others to keep their voices down.
Inadequate amplification of the speaker's voice	• Cup your hand over your ear in a nonverbal request for more volume. Make sure the speaker sees it. • Say (or shout if necessary) "Speak up please" or "Can't hear you!" These are acceptable things to say, and more often than not, the speaker is grateful for the comment.

distractions, or just bad habit, pseudo-listeners give every indication that they are present in mind and body, yet they are not. They are elsewhere, reflecting on the events of last weekend or looking at someone's dress or hair, or dreaming about how nice life is going to be when spring break finally arrives.

Pseudo-listeners are so wrapped up in their thoughts that they waste their own valuable time and fail to get anything out of the presentation. They may think they're helping the speaker by pretending (*At least the speaker thinks someone is listening!*), but in reality they're wasting the speaker's time as well as their own. Speakers want people to listen, and most are doing their best to meet their listeners at least halfway. Pseudo-listeners are definitely not giving their half.

If you're sometimes a pseudo-listener, try to figure out why. Perhaps it's just become a bad habit. If you're quick to label something as "boring," work harder at finding personal relevance in the speaker's topic. Make the commitment to yourself and to your public speakers to improve your listening. (Later sections of this chapter offer tips and suggestions for improved active listening.)

2. Appreciative listening

Appreciative listening takes place when people listen for personal pleasure. Of all the listening levels, it is the most highly individual. While the tweeting of birds, the shrieks of playing children, and the sounds of improvisational jazz may bring you great listening pleasure, they may grate on another person's ears.

Appreciative listening is often passive. In public settings, passive appreciative listening may occur during an entertaining after-dinner presentation, a lighthearted anecdote, or an opening joke. You know you don't need the content for later and can sit back and enjoy the present moment. Some appreciative listeners may love hearing a particular speaker's voice or may regard the speaker so fondly that they get pleasure from anything the speaker says or does.

Other instances of appreciative listening are more active. It may give you pleasure to listen intently to any presentation about your favorite topic or to realize that you are able to follow a complicated argument. You may enjoy listening to another speaker argue the same ideas that you confidently plan to refute when it's your turn at the podium.

Table 5.3 Attention Problems and Solutions

ATTENTION PROBLEMS	ATTENTION SOLUTIONS
Daydreaming, worrying, spacing out	- If you catch yourself thinking of other things, come out of it and listen closely for key words or phrases that might help you get back on track. - Be a meta-listener: be consciously aware of yourself engaging in the listening process.
Being fearful of not being a good listener	Adopt the attitude that listening is a skill to be exercised. Believe that you are becoming a better listener with every speech you listen to.
Imagining the topic is too difficult to follow	Determine that you will get all you can out of any presentation.
Perceiving that the speaker's ideas are not relevant to your life	- Stay with the speaker. Look for even small areas of personal relevance. - Recognize that every idea has a place. Not every idea can change your life, but a new thought may help you better understand others or make even a small improvement in the world around you.
Not having enough mental or physical energy to give to the speaker	- Take some mind-clearing breaths. Acknowledge the other issues on your mind, but leave them for later. Focus on the present. - Take care of any relevant physical needs before the presentation begins—eat, drink, visit the restroom, and so on.
Focusing your attention on other audience members, room decorations, your text messages	Recognize that you are being distracted, and make the choice to come back to the communication interaction.
Fixating on the speaker's outward appearance and not paying attention to his or her words	Focus on the content rather than on the appearance of the speaker. Stay idea-centered.

Still, there are few public speaking contexts where it is appropriate to listen purely for appreciation. Most of your public listening takes place at the more active listening levels described below. However, because people can easily switch between the different types of listening, appreciative listening can play a role in parts of even the most serious or controversial of topics.

3. Empathic listening

Identifying another person's feelings is the goal of **empathic listening**. This is a type of listening done to help the speaker work through some type of personal problem. Empathic listening is difficult and takes a significant amount of energy.

Most empathic listening takes place in interpersonal settings: a college student helps a friend deal with a relational issue, or a counselor helps a client work through a personal problem. To be effective, this kind of interpersonal listening should be selfless. Empathic listeners must stay fully engaged yet resist the temptation to grab a topic and start relating it to themselves. These listeners instead act as sounding boards, providing listening assistance as the speaker works through his or her problems.

Table 5.4 Interpreting Problems and Solutions

INTERPRETING PROBLEMS	INTERPRETING SOLUTIONS
Not having enough background knowledge to follow what the speaker is saying	• If you know the topic in advance, prepare by doing some general research before the presentation. • Try to determine what the speaker means by filtering the words through the context of the ideas you do understand. • Take notes on ideas and themes to research or questions to ask later.
Not knowing the definition of an essential word, phrase, or concept	• Take notes on words or ideas to look up later, but use the context to try to derive the approximate meaning for now. • Write down questions to ask at the end of the presentation. • If appropriate, politely interrupt the speaker to request clarification.
Getting lost due to the poor organization of the speaker's ideas	• Write down the ideas you can detect, and attempt to figure out later what the main idea was. Sometimes a speaker's organization becomes evident midway through or near the end of a presentation. • Listen for transition words and phrases that connect ideas, such as <i>therefore</i> and <i>because</i>. • Listen for internal previews and summaries that help indicate how the presentation is organized.

Pure empathic listening is not typically done in public settings, though it is fitting during group therapy. It may be appropriate, however, to listen empathically to *sections* of some public presentations, such as when a speaker demonstrates vulnerability to gain the audience's trust or when there is a strong emotional element in the message.

4. Comprehensive listening

Comprehensive listening occurs when you listen to learn or to understand. It is highly active and requires a significant amount of concentration and energy. You should be using comprehensive listening during your classes, at work, or whenever it is necessary to accurately receive, understand, and retain information. Comprehensive listening is successful when the message you understand is the same as the message intended.

Two requirements must be met to listen comprehensively:

- First, the listener must ignore distractions and focus on the speaker and his or her message.
- Second, the listener must make a commitment to interact with the message. This may mean distinguishing between main and supporting ideas, detecting pieces of evidence, following narratives, and making sense of visual data.

Good comprehensive listening takes effort. Commit to continued improvement of your comprehensive-listening abilities; they'll serve you well as a public listener. Read, travel, expand your vocabulary, interact, put yourself in new situations, and experience life. Aim for a broad and deep knowledge of the greater world around you. If you do find yourself struggling to understand a given speaker, don't give up and tune out. Follow what you can. Everything you learn today makes you a better comprehensive listener tomorrow.

Table 5.5 Responding Problems and Solutions

RESPONDING PROBLEMS	RESPONDING SOLUTIONS
Sensing interference from your personal bias or prejudice about the speaker or the speaker's ideas or language choices	Acknowledge your bias or prejudice, and concentrate on understanding the speaker's message for now. There is plenty of time for evaluation after the speech.
Sensing interference because you disagree with the speaker about the content	Take note of the speaker's biases, use of evidence, and construction of arguments to prepare yourself for post-speech discussion, but keep listening for now.
Going off on an internal tangent in response to something the speaker said	Take notes about what you want to think over. Get back to the speaker's message so that you are not left behind.
Thinking about what you want to say to the speaker as soon as you get a chance	Take notes about what you want to say or ask, and return to listening.

5. Critical listening

Critical listening takes place when you listen to analyze and to evaluate the speaker's ideas. It's an exceptionally active form of listening, requiring a high degree of engagement and energy. In order to listen critically, you must first listen comprehensively—or listen to understand. Once you have understood what the speaker is saying, you then make judgments, draw conclusions, form opinions, or take action.

Critical listening requires you to actively engage your thinking and reasoning skills. It means not only listening intently to what the speaker is saying but also listening “between the lines,” to figure out what is being said by not being said. Critical listening is also needed to protect yourself from the hidden agendas and camouflaged intentions of less ethical speakers. The First Amendment allows all voices to be heard; it's up to you to decide which ones are worth listening to. Marketers, celebrities, and the media all have enormous resources for persuasive communication, and many attempt to change your thinking and behavior. Be sure you know what they are really saying. Analyze their methods and tools; recognize the use of personal, logical, and emotional appeals; question their substance and validity; and actively decide how to respond.

Critical listening, in turn, makes speakers stronger and more accountable. Your teacher listens critically to your speeches, giving you constructive criticism to help you become a better speaker. Employees and management listen critically to each other, helping the organization meet its objectives in an ethical way. Citizens listen critically to each other and to our government, ensuring the health of our democracy and the strength of our nation.

Practice listening. Challenge yourself to grow as a critical listener. Place yourself in increasingly complex thinking and listening situations. Recognize how your own biases and prejudices affect your listening. Try not to rush to judgment; be willing to suspend a question until you can analyze it from multiple angles. Ask questions. Establish your own personal

criteria that others must meet in order to persuade you. Maintain an open mind. Demand logical thinking. Believe in the power of critical listening.

Table 5.6 summarizes the listening levels and shows that the concepts of passive and active listening are relevant to each.

5D

Be an Excellent Public Listener

You read in Chapter 4 about the many reasons why a public speaker wants to be civil and ethical. But for the communication *event* to be fully civil and ethical, listeners, too, have obligations.

1. Practice civil listening

Come to the speech with an open mind Civil listeners show respect, honesty, fairness, and tolerance to speakers. Few of us are free of biases or prejudices, and such predispositions can get in the way of our understanding each other. So can our culture. See the “Speaking of Culture” box (p. 77) to read about the challenges listeners from other cultures sometimes face when listening to people speak in the United States.

Civil listeners strive to actively listen to others with an open mind. Put aside judgments about the speaker’s topic, dress, or speech patterns, and listen instead for the speaker’s content. Recognize that you are under no obligation to agree with the speaker’s message but that you are obliged to remain actively engaged during the presentation.

Show courtesy and good manners by providing nonverbal feedback Speakers don’t expect you to agree with everything they say (though they may like you to), but they do want to know that their ideas are getting through. They are reassured when they can see their ideas connecting and are energized to continue speaking when they can see listener feedback.

Though you may listen well when you’re slouched back in your chair with your eyes closed, imagine how your posture looks to a speaker. It’s demoralizing for a speaker to see audience members checking cell phones, doing math homework, putting their heads down on their desks, or chatting with friends. It’s discomforting, if not intimidating, for a speaker to look out on a wall of blank faces. As a listener, you have a civil responsibility to provide visible feedback that tells the speaker you are actively listening. Here’s a list of ideas and suggestions to help you create a friendly and constructive environment for your speaker. While listening, give a gift—the gift of your feedback.

- Be on time so you don’t create distractions for the speaker



Table 5.6 Listening Levels

TYPE	DEFINITION	ACTIVE OR PASSIVE: ENERGY REQUIRED BY THE LISTENER	RELATION TO PUBLIC SPEAKING
Pseudo	Fake listening	Highly passive	Should be avoided
Appreciative	Listening for personal pleasure	Passive or active; dependent on speaker's content and listener's choice	Sometimes used in parts of a speech or in speeches meant to entertain
Empathic	Listening to help the speaker	Active listening that must be done well	Sometimes used in parts of a speech or in therapy groups
Comprehensive	Listening to learn or understand	Highly active	Definitely used in most speeches in school, at work, or in the community
Critical	Listening to analyze or evaluate	Highly active	Definitely used in most speeches in school, at work, or in the community

or other audience members by coming in late. Better yet, be early so you can get a good seat.

- Make eye contact with the speaker. Nap, do your catalog shopping, or text your friends on your own time.
- Create no distractions once seated—turn off your cell phone, bring a cough drop, take your crying baby outside, sit near the door if you must leave early, avoid talking to fellow audience members, and get your pen out ahead of time so you don't have to rustle around in your backpack looking for one.
- Smile and show that you're interested in being in the audience.
- Sit up straight and lean forward in your chair.
- Nod your head to show that you're following what the speaker is saying.
- Provide comments or ask questions at the end. Such feedback makes most speakers feel honored. It shows that you were listening.

2. Practice ethical listening

Seek out opposing viewpoints It's a natural tendency to seek out only those sources of information that agree with our own point of view and to avoid those that contradict or refute it. (Psychologists call this the confirmation bias.) We join groups and organizations whose viewpoints are comforting to us, cheering on the reinforcement of messages we

Essentials

Excellent Public Listening

Practice civil listening

- Come to the speech with an open mind; put aside judgments and biases.
- Provide feedback that shows you're listening; it's courteous and shows good manners.

Practice ethical listening

- Seek out opposing viewpoints; you grow as a thinker when you do.
- Hold speakers accountable to ethical standards; to remain silent is to condone unethical behavior.

already know and believe. We often consider those who believe otherwise to be ill informed, misled, and out of step. Ethical listeners realize that there are usually two or more sides to every story and they take the time to seek out multiple perspectives. Believe that democracy thrives on the exchange of ideas, no matter how radical they may appear. Know that genuinely listening to opposing views can raise valid questions about your own. Critically reconsidering your own perspectives can give you the opportunity to change, refine, reshape, or strengthen the things in which you believe or think you believe, leading to personal growth.

Hold speakers accountable to ethical standards Ethical listeners recognize the potential influence speakers have and therefore hold them to ethical standards. Question whether the speaker appears informed and prepared, promotes positive cultural values, and is up front about his or her intentions. Evaluate the reliability of the speaker's research sources; question whether the speaker's language is clear or tries to needlessly complicate the issue; and assess how inclusive the speaker is in topic selection, examples, and language. If you find yourself questioning or doubting the speaker's adherence to ethical standards, show it through nonverbal feedback, challenge it aloud (respectfully) during the question-and-answer period, or discuss it with the speaker in private at a later time.

Remaining silent in the face of perceived ethical breaches is to condone the speaker's actions. There is no need to attack, boo, or call the speaker names. Instead, begin by checking your perception and asking the speaker whether what you heard was what was intended. If the speaker is unable to provide an acceptable clarification or defense, politely but forcefully voice your concerns. When you do so, other listeners will probably start speaking up, too. Ethical speakers will in turn respond appropriately, making the communication a richer experience for all.



Speaking of Culture

Cultural Influences on My Listening

Ayumi (Japan)

"Americans can be blunt. In Japan, we cannot say things that hurt people. We can think them, but we cannot say them! It's a little hard to get used to hearing things like that."

Chii (Zimbabwe)

"The freedom that Americans have to criticize or make fun of their president or their government still shocks me. We just can't do that."

Our speakers are also much more formal. Here, the informality of some topics and the language used, like slang and contractions, are still a struggle for me. On top of that, many Americans mumble. Listening can be a real challenge sometimes."

Alex (Russia):

"Cultural references are obviously difficult for international students. I remember hearing a reference to The Addams Family and having no idea why all the American students were laughing. Of course, the longer I'm here, the more I'm learning. I even used a reference to Friends in a speech, and it felt good that I was able to do that. I was assimilating!"

Summary

- **Good listening is a skill that comes naturally to few people. It takes understanding, hard work, and effort. Training can enhance your effective listening.**
- **Know the listening process, and recognize the potential for listening problems to occur at any of the steps. Acknowledge that you may be prone to listening problems, and learn some solutions. Only then can you improve your active public listening.**
- **Understand the varying amounts of energy required for various listening situations. Be willing to expend the energy needed for effective public listening in whatever context.**
- **Public listeners play a vital role in the success of the communication transaction. Learn to be an excellent audience member by practicing civil and ethical listening.**

EXERCISES

1. *On a typical day, keep a log of your listening. How much of your day was spent listening? What kind of listening (see Section 5C) did you engage in the most? Does this surprise you? Would you like to spend more or less time listening at any of the levels?*
2. *Everyone has at least some personal barriers to good listening. What are yours? What steps could you realistically take now to remove these barriers and become a better listener? Which others can you work toward in the future?*
3. *Attend a speech on campus or in your community, and pay special attention to your public listening. Is it easy or difficult to listen to this person? What makes it so? Is it the speaker? Is it you? Is it a combination? Explain in detail, and share your insights with your teacher or classmates.*
4. *If a hidden camera took a picture of you listening in class, what would you look like? As a speaker, what does your ideal listener look like?*
5. *Choose a topic about which you feel passionate. Go on the web and find a video in which someone argues the opposite of that belief. Were you able to listen to the whole thing with an open mind? Why or why not?*



The Online Learning Center for A Speaker's Resource includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 6

Knowing and Evaluating Yourself as a Public Speaker

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“This class pushed me out of my comfort zone and challenged me to grow. People say the only way you can grow is when you stretch your limits, and I believe that. I have grown not only as a public speaker but also as an effective communicator.”

“My self-evaluations were critical to my success. It was tempting to finish the speaking assignment and just never think about it again. But the evaluations forced me to reflect. At first I thought they’d be busywork, but I quickly saw the role they played. They really helped me to put all the concepts of listenability together.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

Know and evaluate yourself as a communicator.

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

6A

Take an Honest Self-Inventory: Where Are You Now?

6B

Set a Concrete Personal Goal for Each Presentation

1. *Make your speaking goal specific and measurable*
2. *Acknowledge the goal*

6C

Start Your Self-Evaluation

1. *Evaluate yourself soon—but not too soon—after the presentation*
2. *Use multiple sources for evaluation*
3. *Use multiple criteria for the evaluation*
4. *Keep increasing the sophistication of your self-evaluation*

6D

Follow These Guidelines When Evaluating Another Speaker

Key Terms

personal speaking goal

▶ 83

SWOT analysis

▶ 81

There is value in being mindful of yourself as a public communicator. It's not always obvious to know what to look for or how to assess your skills. But once you commit to self-improvement and are open to constructive criticism, you should see each speaking opportunity as a rich mine of data, usable for future presentations. An honest self-evaluation gives you insight into your strengths and weaknesses, helping you choose the best ways to reach your audience, keep their attention, and ultimately succeed in achieving your speech's purpose. This chapter shows you how to take an inventory of your speaking skills, set a specific and measurable personal goal for each presentation, and commit to continual self-evaluation throughout the academic term and beyond. You'll also find some guidance for evaluating another person's speech.

6A

Take an Honest Self-Inventory: Where Are You Now?

It's easier to identify where you are going if you already have a sense of where you are. As Nobel laureate Thomas Mann once said, "No one remains quite what he was when he recognizes himself." Thus, anyone undertaking a productive endeavor benefits from identifying his or her current knowledge, attitude, and level of skills. Now that you've given at least one speech in class, you're in a good position to adopt the habit of self-evaluation.

An adapted form of **SWOT analysis** is a useful place to start. Standing for "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats," a SWOT analysis¹ is a tool that businesses and organizations use to distinguish themselves from their competitors and successfully compete in their markets. Because you are not trying to compete against other speakers—you are attempting to communicate ideas to a specific group of people—a full SWOT analysis is not appropriate. But you can use a version of it to help identify your talents and opportunities in public speaking. The "Speaker's Story" box (p. 83) shows one student's self-inventory. The self-inventory form in Table 6.1 (p. 84) will help you create one for yourself. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- **What are your strengths as a public communicator?** Many people are quick to point out what they feel are their speaking faults, saying, "Where would you like me to begin?!" In all likelihood much more goes right for you than not in your presentations. Use your communication orientation, and think about the things you do that help your listeners attend to, understand, and interact with your ideas. Perhaps you organize your thoughts well, use humor appropriately, or know how to be brief. Perhaps you're good at making eye contact and establishing credibility with solid documentation or a personal story. Knowing your speaking strengths gives you confidence to keep moving forward. Ask for an honest assessment from a trusted friend, supervisor, mentor, or teacher, too; all are usually happy to discuss your strengths with you.
- **What are your weaknesses or challenges as a public communicator?** Perhaps your weaknesses have to do with structuring your speech or with using insufficient support

or flimsy argumentation. Perhaps your clothing choices detract from your credibility, or your eyes are stuck to your notes more than you'd like. Your own and your instructor's evaluations should help you identify your weak spots. In addition, listen and watch for the communication challenges other speakers are facing. There's a good chance they're struggling with some of the same things you are, and you can learn from their solutions.

- **What are your speaking opportunities?** Speaking opportunities of all kinds provide you with chances for potential growth and advantage. This course obviously offers multiple occasions to try new skills. But what opportunities exist outside this course to improve your speaking skills? Do you have an oral-presentation assignment in another course? Can you practice some of your new skills at work, on campus, or in your community? Perhaps this is the time to research a topic you have wanted to know more about or to finally learn how to use a particular piece of technology or software. Public speaking can open a variety of doors, even some you never knew existed.
- **Are there any potential threats?** Sometimes, obstacles block the way to speaking growth. For example, do you need to better understand current research methods and appropriate technology? Are you pressed for time? Do you have to search for the internal motivation to think, organize, and prepare ideas? Acknowledge these potential threats, and ask yourself whether you can open up any opportunities by eliminating them. Tackling your research skills now, for instance, provides you with a skill set you can continue using throughout your academic career and beyond.

In addition to the SWOT analysis, here are other questions you may want to ask yourself and answer in Table 6.1 (◀ p. 84):

- **What kind of thinker are you?** In order to have something to say, you need to have ideas to share. Assess what kind of thinker you are; it correlates to what kind of speaker you are. For example, are you intellectually curious and willing to work at satisfying your curiosity, or do you mainly look to be entertained or to have information served up to you in easy-to-access-and-digest packages? Do you tend to think about topics on a local, national, or global level?
- **What are your attitudes toward speaking?** How do you feel about speaking? A quick inventory of your attitudes can help you understand your motivations and your reasons for doing what you do.

6B

Set a Concrete Personal Goal for Each Presentation

Without goals, and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination. —Fitzhugh Dodson

Students often announce that they want to be better speakers. But being a “better speaker” is an abstract and relative goal. Better than what? Better than you were last time? Better

A Speaker's Story **Kat's SWOT**



Kat, a college sophomore, had done a small amount of speaking as part of her summer job as a volleyball coach for the local parks and recreation department, but she was lacking confidence in her abilities. Kat enrolled in her public speaking course not only to fulfill graduation requirements but also because she knew that sound speaking skills would be essential for her larger career plans in product design. Kat kept an informal running diary on the inside cover of the folder she used for speech class. She added to it every so often. Halfway through the school term, her SWOT list looked something like this:

My Strengths

- Strong, inclusive eye contact
- Enthusiasm. I tend to choose topics I'm excited about
- Ability to structure ideas
- Well-chosen visuals

My Weaknesses

- Excessive verbal junk. Um, um, um!
- Conclusions not well planned. Weak
- I do *NOT* practice enough
- Need to create more credibility

Opportunities

- Gain skills to apply to current and future jobs
- Get promoted at work if I can speak better
- Build confidence—personal benefits here
- Maybe join campus speakers' club??

Threats

- Working while going to school!!
- I know only the bare bones of PowerPoint
- Prep time! Not enough of it

By the end of the term, Kat was pleased to see that she had deleted many of her weaknesses from the list and that two—credibility and practicing—had even moved to the “strengths” category.



than your classmate sitting next to you? Better than Barack Obama? And how will you know when you *are* a “better speaker”?

A **personal speaking goal**, one specific, measurable skill on which to focus for a particular presentation, is a helpful tool. Though you strive for listenability on every speech, you should also have a personal goal that focuses on one of the listenability keys or on a specific part of speechmaking. Here's a two-step process for identifying one.

Table 6.1 Self-Inventory Form

Strengths	What goes right for you in your presentations?
Weaknesses	What speaking skills are not yet working as well as you would like?
Opportunities	Are there any circumstances that could help your growth as a speaker?
Threats	Are there any obstacles blocking your way to growth, and can you turn them into opportunities?
What kind of thinker are you?	Where do you get your ideas? What do you read? What meaningful topics do you discuss with others? How do you challenge your thinking?
What are your attitudes toward speaking?	Are you speaking to impress your audience with your knowledge, skills, and talents, or are you attempting to communicate with them? Are you just trying to get the speaking project over with, or are you trying to learn something, improve your skills, and learn for future benefit? Do you have a true interest in your topic? If not, what can you do to generate it? Are you positive in your overall attitude toward public speaking? If not, what can you do to improve it?

1. Make your speaking goal specific and measurable

Make your speaking goal personal and specific rather than general and abstract. Make it clearly defined and measurable too, so you can better determine whether and when you have reached it. Table 6.2 offers some examples of the differences between a general abstract goal and a specific, measurable goal.

2. Acknowledge the goal

Acknowledge your goal in some explicit way. Some speakers write their goal down, keeping it visible during preparation and practice. Others share their goal with a teacher, fellow student, supervisor, mentor, or colleague. You don't have to make your goal public, but once you say it aloud to others, you're more likely to take it seriously. And if you earnestly acknowledge and work on your speaking goal, your improvement will be more apparent.

6C

Start Your Self-Evaluation

Many public speaking instructors require students to do post-speech self-evaluations. These exercises may be formal or informal, spoken or written, simple or more in-depth. Whatever form they take, self-evaluations are beneficial because they provide some sort of structure and direction for self-improvement. More importantly, they help you create a habit you can rely on once you finish the course and continue speaking. There is an art to public speaking,

Table 6.2 General versus Specific Personal Goals

GENERAL PERSONAL GOAL	SPECIFIC PERSONAL GOAL
I want to make a stronger audience connection.	I will increase my use of personal pronouns, especially <i>you</i> , <i>we</i> , and <i>us</i> .
I want to make my visuals more effective.	My visuals will be large and clear enough to be easily seen by the people in the back row.
I want to use better language.	I will refrain from obscenities and slang, such as <i>it sucks</i> , by expanding my vocabulary.
I want to be more prepared.	I'll plan and practice my closing statement ahead of time.
I want to make my speech more inclusive.	I will use <i>he and she</i> or <i>they</i> rather than just <i>he</i> .
I want to be more credible.	I'll adopt a confident posture and clearly cite my research sources. Also, no apologies!

and like any artist, you must learn to critique your work so that you can continue to grow and evolve. Vince, a first-year college student, noted:

One of the most important parts of this class was the self-evaluation. Our instructor said, “you are your own best teacher,” and I believe that. When something happens to you firsthand, you’re going to learn and remember it a lot better than hearing about it. It also works the same way while you watch the recording of your own presentation. When a teacher tells you about your speech, you can pick up only so much. But a picture is worth a thousand words. A video, then, must be worth at least ten thousand, because that is what you get when you watch it. You are showing yourself everything you have done. And then you can focus on things and improve.

1. Evaluate yourself soon—but not too soon—after the presentation

Give yourself some time after your presentation before engaging in a detailed evaluation. First, enjoy the natural high created by the release of endorphins. These biochemical compounds, produced in the pituitary glands at the base of your brain, make you feel light and energized, creating a sense of well-being. Students often report a pleasant floating sensation after a presentation. Enjoy your well-earned endorphin buzz!

Get to your self-evaluation in the next day or so, while the presentation is still relatively fresh in your mind. Though a bit of emotional distance is helpful for honest self-evaluation, too much distance allows the tides of life to rush back in. You might get distracted or lose interest in the important evaluation process.

2. Use multiple sources for evaluation

There’s no “best” source for self-evaluation. Ideally, you have access to several sources for a given presentation. The more angles you can use to see and hear yourself, the richer your overall picture is. Here are some of the methods you can use.

Use video Video captures your exact content and delivery, providing a look at your presentation from your listeners' point of view. After watching his video, one student said,

I could not believe how confused I sounded on my first two speeches. We were still working on organizing our ideas, and it's obvious my understanding was not there. In my head, the things I was saying made sense, but watching my speeches confused me even more. I can now see how confused my listeners must have been. I know the reason the speeches sounded that way is because I was planning them not for my audience but simply to get them done.

Video offers many benefits. First, it's often difficult (especially if you are a newer speaker) to remember what you did or said while presenting. Video provides a reminder, allowing you to see and hear your communication strengths and weaknesses, and set personal goals for the next time. Some students like to evaluate their video several times:

- The first time with sound and image to get the full effect
- Once with eyes turned away from the screen in order to concentrate on the words only
- A third time with the sound off to watch for body movements

Video also produces a valuable tangible record; at the end of the school term, students often enjoy watching their entire speaking progress from start to finish. Many speakers also like being able to share what they do as students—such as their in-class public speeches—with important people in their lives.

Watching yourself on video can be awkward at first, because video captures a non-mirror image, a reflection you are probably not used to seeing. If you were to draw a line down the middle of your face, you would likely find the two halves asymmetrical. For example, one eye might be slightly higher than the other or the left side of your nose a bit more rounded than the right side. This is the way others see you, but the image is unfamiliar to you. If you are like most speakers, however, you soon get used to your likeness on video. Other students report having to get used to the ten extra pounds the camera tends to add to their physique!

Use audio If video is not available, an audio recording of your speech is the next best thing. An audio recording at least captures your verbal and vocal content, letting you hear the flow of your ideas, the words you used, and your vocal qualities such as intonation and pace.

Read or listen to your instructor's evaluations carefully All instructors give feedback to their students. Some instructors give written feedback, while others provide it aloud after the speech. Sometimes you get a combination. Whichever form the feedback takes, it is a rich source of material for your own self-improvement. Take your instructor's comments to heart.

Ask a trusted source for feedback Some instructors form evaluation groups, in which students take turns sharing their perceptions of each other's speeches. These can be valuable sources of feedback, because the others in the group are aware of the evaluation criteria you're working toward.

For presentations outside the classroom, look to a coworker, mentor, or supervisor. Find someone you can trust to give you honest and detailed feedback on both your strengths and

weaknesses. You may have to prompt your source for specifics. If he or she provides abstract feedback such as “Your speech was good” or “I thought it was interesting,” ask for concrete examples supporting the ways it was “good” or “interesting.” You may also want feedback on your specific speaking goals. If you were working on the clarity of your thesis, for example, ask your source to paraphrase it back to you to see whether it was indeed clear. If a more meaningful conclusion was your goal, request an honest evaluation on that structural component specifically.

Complete a self-evaluation exercise or assignment Many instructors have students engage in some type of formalized self-evaluation. These exercises may be oral or assigned in the form of a worksheet, some short questions, or an essay. Their purpose is to concentrate your focus on certain presentation criteria and to train your analytic skills for use beyond the course. Self-evaluation questions cover a variety of the Keys to Listenability. See Table 6.3 (📌 p. 89) for some examples.

3. Use multiple criteria for the evaluation

Your own emotional reactions to your presentation, such as *It was great, I felt proud of myself*, or *It was a disaster!* are natural but insufficient for helping you become a better speaker. Instead, be as specific and objective about your work as possible. Learn to approach your presentation from a detached, objective perspective as you ask these questions: Did this speech work? Was it listener-centered? Did I communicate the right ideas to the right audience on the right occasion? And how do I know? Listed below are several criteria for objective self-evaluation.

- **Instructor’s objectives.** Chances are, your instructor emphasized some specific learning objectives for this particular speaking assignment. If “effective visual support” was one of the main objectives or highlighted skills, then evaluate your visuals according to the criteria you discussed in class. If “introductions” or “reasoning” or “incorporation of narrative” was an area of concentration, then examine that.
- **Your own personal goal.** Look at the concrete personal goal you set for yourself (see Table 6.2 again). Did you meet it? If so, how? If not, why?
- **The Keys to Listenability.** The criteria described in the Keys to Listenability (📌 p. 29) provide an excellent format for self-evaluation. Use the keys to find specific examples of your listenability on your video- or audiotape or in your instructor’s evaluation. The four key categories also allow you to focus on your general strengths and weaknesses quickly: *Structure is clearly my strong suit, yet I can also objectively recognize that I need to spend more time on strategic issues like audience analysis.* Table 6.3 (📌 p. 89) lists questions for analyzing your listenability.

4. Keep increasing the sophistication of your self-evaluation

Speakers soon learn to evaluate their presentation skills on an increasingly sophisticated level. At first you may be concerned only with having a clear thesis, maintaining good conversational tone, having strong eye contact, and meeting the minimum time limit. As these skills become second nature, you can begin to focus on advanced listenability qualities such

Essentials

Sources Available for Self-Evaluation

- Video—the best tool, if available. You are your own best teacher.
- Audio—a good tool. Captures structure, language, and voice.
- Your instructor's evaluation—rich with feedback from a trained ear and eye.
- A trusted source—someone who can provide honest and constructive criticism.
- Self-evaluation exercises or assignments. Complete them with intention. They teach invaluable skills for post-course speaking.

as using a more complicated (but still clearly communicated) thesis, incorporating more intricately designed visuals, avoiding errors in persuasive reasoning, and managing a difficult question-and-answer session. As your understanding of public speaking grows, so you grow as a public speaker and self-evaluator.

6D

Follow These Guidelines When Evaluating Another Speaker

You may be asked to evaluate fellow classmates or an out-of-class presentation. These are great opportunities to exercise your critical-listening skills and to provide a speaker with some additional angles of critique. If you have not yet read Chapter 5, now may be a good time.

Before you begin your analysis, it is helpful to have a set of criteria with which to make the most of your role as a critic.

- **Set specific evaluating criteria.** It can be overwhelming to provide feedback on the *whole* speech. Limiting what you are looking for ahead of time may make the evaluation fairer for the speaker and easier on you. You can use any or all of the questions shown in Table 6.3. They're easily modified for the task.
- **Watch with both your eyes and ears.** Good listening begins with both of these senses activated.
- **Be specific in your feedback.** Concrete examples are more helpful than abstract language. Table 6.4 (◀ p. 90) shows some comparisons.
- **Be ethical in your evaluation.** Provide constructive criticism rather than just pointing out "mistakes." Also, apply the same standards to all speakers. It is unfair to call one speaker on something you let slide with another speaker.
- **Understand that providing meaningful evaluations is an art and a skill.** Keep at it. You improve the more you do it.

Table 6.3 Using the Keys to Listenability to Evaluate a Speech

Use these questions, or any modified version of them you or your instructor choose, to complete a self-evaluation.

Strategy Did you make good listener-centered choices in advance of the presentation regarding topic, audience, and occasion?	Keys • Was the purpose of this speech (to inform, persuade, etc.) apparent? How did you communicate that purpose? • Did you appropriately analyze this audience and context? • Did you appropriately adapt your message to this audience in topic choice and language? • Was your chosen topic appropriate for this audience and occasion? • Was your overall intention ethical? Were there any ethical problems or lapses?
Structure Were your ideas well ordered and communicated in a way that your audience could follow and understand?	Keys • Was your thesis clearly communicated? What did you do to make the thesis obvious? • Was your message well organized? • Was there a clear sense of introduction, body, and conclusion? • Was there a clear pattern of organization to the message? • Were you easy to follow? • Did you use transitions? • Did you avoid tangents that could lose your audience?
Support Were your ideas appropriately substantiated, enhanced, and reinforced in ways that engaged your listeners and helped them understand your message?	Keys • Did you cite your research sources? • Did your research add to or detract from your overall credibility? • Did you appropriately and fully support your ideas with narrative, facts, statistics, or other forms of support? • Did you define any technical terms or take the time to explain difficult concepts? • If you used any visual support, was it well designed? Did it enhance the idea or merely repeat the idea? If you did not use visual support, would it have helped? • Did you engage your audience with the use of personal pronouns? • Did you attempt to connect the ideas to this specific audience? • Did you show the relevance or usefulness of the topic to your audience? • How did you establish and maintain your credibility?
Style Were your language, voice, and body movements suitable for the audience and occasion?	Keys • Was your method of delivery (conversational, manuscript, etc.) appropriate for this audience and occasion? • Did your notes effectively support you while speaking? • Did you appear to have practiced? • Were your language choices inclusive or exclusive? What were the impacts of those choices? • Did you properly pronounce the words you used? • Did your body placement and movement complement your content? • Did your vocal qualities complement your words? • Did you speak at an appropriate tempo? • Could you be heard? • Did your emotional tone complement or contradict your words? • Did you avoid fillers like <i>um</i>, <i>y'know</i>, and <i>like</i>?

Table 6.4 Abstract versus Concrete Feedback for Evaluating Another Person’s Speech

UNHELPFUL	HELPFUL
<i>Your eye contact was poor.</i>	<i>Your eye contact favored the left side of the room. I felt left out.</i>
<i>You had good visuals.</i>	<i>The graph you used to show the correlation between diet and classroom performance was not only well designed but also really helped me to buy into your argument.</i>
<i>I liked your speech.</i>	<i>Your thesis was well chosen and clearly communicated. Your topic was made relevant to me, and your enthusiastic delivery helped me stay connected to your ideas.</i>

Summary

- An honest self-inventory is an important place to begin. It’s hard to identify where you are going if you do not know where you are.
- An analysis of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats provides one framework for self-inventory.
- To improve as a public speaker, set a measurable and acknowledged personal speaking goal that calls for a precise focus on a specific area of concern.
- There are many tools, including video, audio, and instructor feedback, to assist in self-evaluation. The more angles you can use to see yourself, the fuller your overall picture is.
- Many of the concepts in this chapter can be modified for evaluating another person’s speech.

 **LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY KEY**

Most of us believe in the spirit of continual self-improvement. Tracking your speaking strengths and weaknesses not only helps you understand your past but also encourages new standards, ideas, and practices for your future, all in the name of better communication with your listeners.

EXERCISES

1. Complete the self-inventory in Table 6.1 (p. 84). Revisit it near the end of the term to see whether anything has changed.
2. With a partner in class, take turns sharing the sources of your information. Where do you get your ideas? Local, national, or international news sources? Books, magazines, newspapers, or blogs? Radio, TV, the Internet, or your roommate? What potential impact does this have on your speechmaking?

3. *Write down your personal goal for your next speech. Make it as concrete as possible. Why is this your goal? How will achieving it increase your listenability as a speaker? How will you know when you have reached the goal?*
4. *If applicable, talk with a group of fellow students about the self-evaluation process your instructor is having you follow for the next speech. For example, does the camera add to your speaker's energy or not? Can you watch the video objectively? Are the written self-evaluation questions valuable? Do you spend productive time with the self-evaluation or just try to get the assignment done?*
5. *If you video- or audiotaped your last presentation, share the recording with a family member, a coworker or supervisor, a trusted friend, or another teacher who can give you honest feedback. What did this person say afterward? Did you learn anything new about yourself as a speaker? Jot down your findings, and turn them in to your instructor.*



The Online Learning Center for A Speaker's Resource includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 7

Approaching Public Speaking as a Listener-Centered Practice

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“The public speaker—public listener concept really made sense to me. I liked how the two roles worked in combination to create a public dialogue. I had always thought that public speakers focused on themselves—on how they could make themselves the best speakers they could be. I thought it was just a given that the audience would show up and listen to these amazing people. I can see now that a public speaker is nothing without public listeners. To get your message across, you’ve got to consciously communicate it to that group of people sitting out there and get them actively involved in what you’re saying.”

“Because of this class, I have a greater understanding of how a successful speech is put together and why. I am so much more aware of the audience’s role in the public speech and how I need to engage them and make it easy for them to listen. I have added a new term to my vocabulary this year: listenability.”

KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER			
 STRATEGY Adopt the framework of listenability as a guiding principle.	STRUCTURE	SUPPORT	STYLE

7A

Understand the Nature of Your Public Listeners

1. *Advantages of presenting to public listeners*
2. *Challenges of presenting to public listeners*

7B

Adopt the Framework of Listenability as a Guiding Principle

7C

Listenability Goal #1: Satisfy Your Listeners' Preference for Conversational Patterns

1. *Understand the difference between readers and listeners*
2. *Use the conversational skills you already have*
3. *Recognize the similarities and differences between conversation and a public speech*
4. *Strive for an important conversation style*

7D

Listenability Goal #2: Be Considerate by Minimizing the Demands on Your Listeners

Key Terms

considerateness	▶ 107
important conversation	▶ 103
listenability	▶ 100
literate, or written, style	▶ 101
oral, or conversational, style	▶ 101

Before getting started on the nuts and bolts of preparing and delivering your public presentation, get in the proper frame of mind. It helps to begin with the perspective that successful public speaking consists of a communication-oriented speaker having a public conversation with an audience of listeners. This chapter is all about your listeners. It first explores the nature of the public listener and then introduces listenability, a framework to help you make your public speaking a listener-centered practice—from topic selection to organizing your ideas to the actual presentation.

7A

Understand the Nature of Your Public Listeners

Listening is such a routine part of life that we seldom think about our own listening, much less the listening other people do. When we do consider another person's listening, it's often to make judgments about how well that person listens to us. We are quick to bestow praise for good listening (*I like talking to him. He's a great listener.*) or to criticize poor listening (*It's like talking to a brick wall!*), but rarely do we take the time to consider the effect our own actions may have on someone else's listening.

Your public speaking training asks you to consciously think about other people as listeners and to consider the consequences your own speaking behaviors have on their listening. You present to a group of people who use their minds to interact with you in real time as you speak. The choices you make as a public speaker either help or hinder them in that effort. Speakers who make their presentations as easy to listen to as possible are more likely to succeed in their attempts at communication.

1. Advantages of presenting to public listeners

The typical public listener contributes in several positive ways to the public speaking transaction.

Listeners have a built-in disposition to listen The human brain is wired for listening. Processing the messages of others is one of the most basic communication skills. When you present your ideas in public, you face a lively, sensing group of people who are ready to take in what you say and do. See this as a great opportunity.

Listeners have a strong desire to interact As social beings, most people seek out and thrive on interaction with others. The public speaking transaction provides an immediate and tangible opportunity for listeners to interact with the ideas and opinions of other people, whether or not they know the speaker and the other listeners. Most audience members like to participate in interaction and enjoy being part of something greater than themselves.

Speakers, then, enter the public speaking transaction with an advantage. Whatever the purpose of your speech, you attract other people who want to be part of an unrepeatable, in-person moment of human interaction.

Listeners help create new meaning No one individual (speaker or listener) can control the meaning of a message. Instead, the meaning lies within each individual communicator. As a speaker, you work with listeners in the public communication transaction to achieve mutual understanding and to create a meaning none of you had before. Consider this example: An advertising firm representative presents her ideas for a slogan that she considers clever and edgy. During the interaction, she begins to understand that the clients interpret the slogan as puzzling, if not offensive. Which party gets to be right? Neither, because no one can force his or her perceptions on the other as “the truth.” Both parties can, however, come to understand the need for a new slogan.

None of us has a monopoly on the truth. As the public speaker, appreciate your listeners for the way in which they can help you understand your world differently. Watch their reactions, and honestly consider their questions and comments. Learn from them, and grow as a thinker and a speaker.

2. Challenges of presenting to public listeners

Though we want to believe that our audiences come to our speeches with a sufficient quantity of background information, a lot of time on their hands, open minds, and open hearts, a little honest reflection leads us to another conclusion. You know that when *you* listen to other people present in public, you sometimes show up with baggage (you’re tired, you have a test to take later that day, problems with your relationships weigh heavily on your mind), so it’s easy to assume that the people in your audience face similar challenges.

Be mindful of the following potential listening problems your listeners may face, and realize that many of them can be overcome. In the rest of the chapter, you’ll learn about some management strategies to handle them.

A lack of listening training or skills Many people think that because they’ve been listening all their lives, they do it as well as the next person. But strong listening skills tend to be the exception rather than the rule. The good listeners are there with you, picking up key words, following your structure, and interacting with your ideas. The average-to-poor listeners may look as if they are listening (most people can fake it pretty well) but are usually struggling with external and internal distractions.

A bias or prejudice toward you, your topic, or the occasion Some audience members might not approach your presentation with an open mind and heart. Some may think they know everything about your topic and cannot possibly learn something new from you. Others may have a strong opinion about your topic and will not listen with an open mind to what you say. Some people may perceive too much of a difference between your and their values, ideas, background, or appearance and therefore choose to tune out. Others may be there only because they have to be.

Apprehension or fear of listening “Tough” topics or stressful circumstances can create apprehension or fear of listening for some audience members. If listeners know they may be tested on the information presented in your talk, the stress of the upcoming test can prevent good listening. Some listeners may perceive your topic as complex, obscure, or

Essentials

Strengths and Weaknesses That Your Listeners Bring to Your Speech

Take advantage of what your listeners do well

- They are naturally predisposed to listen to you.
- They enjoy interaction with your new ideas.
- They create new meaning after listening to your ideas, thereby helping you see things in a new way.

Be aware of their shortcomings

- They may lack listening training or skills.
- They may have a bias or prejudice when listening to you.
- They may be apprehensive about their listening in some situations.
- They may not have an inherent interest in your topic.
- They may have trouble retaining your ideas.

difficult and convince themselves that they do not have the background to stay with you; their self-fulfilling prophecy can cause them to tune out before giving you a chance.

A lack of interest in your topic No matter what your own interest level in your topic is, you cannot expect all audience members to share your enthusiasm. People's age, culture, socioeconomic status, education, and previous experience combine to create their differing perceptions of the world. For example, you may be eager to talk about how growing up on the coast made you a deep-sea fishing fanatic, yet another person's near-drowning experience may make any ocean-related topic unappealing. Your talk about the joys of Third World travel may not get through to the person with a fear of flying or xenophobia.

Retention problems You may like to believe that audience members remember every last tidbit and intriguing detail you present, but in reality, they don't. Studies show that the average listener remembers 50 percent of what you say in your talk. By the next day, an additional 50 percent evaporates, leaving the average listener with about 25 percent of your message.¹ As time passes, further erosion occurs.

Your listeners may or may not exhibit the potential listening problems just discussed. All the same, there are things you can do to increase the chances that most, if not all, listeners will stay engaged while you attempt to meet your communication goals. Read on.

7B

Adopt the Framework of Listenability as a Guiding Principle

Listenability, the degree to which a speech is easy to access, understand, and interact with—in other words, to listen to—encourages you to keep your public listeners in mind during every step of preparing and presenting any public presentation. Listenability promotes mindfulness, and it's something you can readily master and use. In essence, when you commit to being listenable, you say, *I've decided that when you are in my audience, I'm going to do my best to take advantage of what you do well as a public listener and do what I can to meet your public listening limitations at least halfway.*

Good listening requires energy and engagement on the part of an audience. But asking your audience to work too hard, to “listen uphill,” is just not smart speaking. You need to make presentation choices that help you meet your communication goals, not fight against them. If effective listening is the audience's responsibility, *creating and achieving listenability is yours.* Learn to see public speaking as a listener-centered practice.

7C

Listenability Goal #1: Satisfy Your Listeners' Preference for Conversational Patterns

Listenability starts with using language that's meant to be heard, not read.² Let's look at the listener's preference for conversational patterns.

1. Understand the difference between readers and listeners

It's common to hear people say, “I've got to go home and write my speech” or “That was a well-written speech.” These comments reflect the belief that a good speech is based on a *well-written* text. In some specialized speaking contexts, this is true. Presidents, for example, have staffs of speechwriters honing their every word. Good writing, however, doesn't necessarily enhance the everyday presentations most people give. Instead of *writing* a speech, you want to *prepare* a presentation for listeners. Read the “Speaker's Story” box (🔍 p. 102) to see how one student ultimately came to understand this. His experience is instructive.

People who write for readers need to communicate differently than do people who speak to listeners. Two students, Angie and Ricky, are both enrolled in courses focusing on communication: Angie is taking English composition, and Ricky is enrolled in public speaking. Angie and Ricky both spend the school term studying how to communicate their ideas to their respective audiences—Angie to readers and Ricky to listeners—but they learn to do so in different ways.

Despite the different language patterns used, Angie and Ricky share mutual goals. Both are concerned with

- organizing their thoughts and narrowing their scope.
- communicating their major and supporting ideas.
- establishing and maintaining their credibility.

- evaluating research sources.
- developing an intriguing and consistent style.
- being ethical.

Each, however, reaches these goals along a different path. As a writer, Angie aims for a **literate, or written style**; she uses patterns of formal English that are appropriate when expressing ideas through the written word. Angie focuses on

- adherence to grammar conventions such as correct sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, and absence of sentence fragments.
- correct spelling and punctuation.
- an elevated vocabulary and absence of slang and colloquialisms.
- clarity achieved through succinct sentences, sentence variety, and properly placed modifiers.
- minimal to no use of first- and second-person pronouns (*I* and *you*).

Ricky, on the other hand, is more successful in reaching his audience if he focuses on an **oral, or conversational, style**. His listeners respond positively when he speaks naturally, using patterns people rely on when talking with one another. Ricky does not need to consciously work at adhering to this style; he has been using it his whole life. It will come with limited self-consciousness during his presentations—if he lets it. The conversational style is characterized by

- short sentences.
- simple sentence structure.
- the presence of sentence fragments.
- the use of personal pronouns.
- the speaker's individual style.
- adaptations to the listeners' language style (if known).
- the use of contractions (*isn't*, *we'll*, *you've*).
- the use of repetition for emphasis and effect.
- occasional slang, jargon, and colloquialisms.

While readers and listeners are both receivers, they are different kinds of receivers. Let's look first at the reader. Whether the writing style is popular, scholarly, or somewhere in between, a reader has a great deal of control in processing another person's writing. See Table 7.1 (📖 p. 103) for a list of these reader advantages. Note that public listeners lack these advantages.

Listeners are a different type of receiver. If they must, they can process written-styled language, but it is much easier to access, comprehend, and interact with oral-styled discourse. Listenable speakers understand listeners' preference for conversational language—and use it in their presentations. Compare the results of the speeches profiled in the two “Speaker's Story” boxes (📖 pp. 104 and 105).

2. Use the conversational skills you already have

Some students react with raised eyebrows when introduced to the concept of public speaking as public conversation. They think, *Sure, I know how to talk to people, but real public speakers are doing more than just talking to people*. These students soon learn that listenable public speakers are using a formalized version of their own natural conversation skills.

A Speaker's Story

Changing My Strategy . . . for the Better



One student, Nathan, an intelligent writer, initially struggled with the need to communicate his speech “to someone’s ear.” Time and experience helped him reach his audience more effectively.

Nathan

I’ve always been good at composing complex ideas on paper. I thought speech class would be a snap—all I would have to do is write out my ideas and then read them aloud to the audience. As the term progressed, I realized that despite the quality of my ideas, the effects of my speeches compared poorly to those of many of my classmates. Not only was I trying to communicate too many ideas, but those ideas were often masked by my choice of language patterns. It wasn’t hard to change my ways once I finally convinced myself that the new strategy of less writing was valid.



If you weren’t already relatively capable at conversation, it’s unlikely you’d be sitting in a college classroom. Consider the following:

- You know how to speak your own language and perhaps even a second or third one.
- You know how to successfully construct a sentence.
- You have a wealth of knowledge about the topics you discuss and are always learning more about them and other topics either directly or indirectly.
- You know how to express emotion with your voice.
- You know how to regulate your voice depending on whether you’re conversing in a quiet restaurant or a noisy club.
- You know how to look at your conversational partners.
- You know how to use your face and hands in an expressive manner.
- You know how to pay attention to the cues sent by your conversational partners to determine whether they’re following you or enjoying you or thinking you’re way off track.

To present effectively, you don’t need to learn an entirely new set of speaking skills. Instead, you need to adopt a new *viewpoint*: public speaking is like the conversations at which you are already relatively competent. At the same time, you need to respect that some differences exist.

3. Recognize the similarities and differences between conversation and a public speech

Both the conversationalist and the speaker

Table 7.1 Readers versus Listeners

READERS	LISTENERS
Readers control the pace of their reading. They can read more quickly or slowly than another person reading the same thing and can start and stop according to their own desire.	Audience members must listen at the pace of the speaker's choosing. The pace may be too slow, too fast, or just right. Regardless, listeners have no control.
Readers can stop for any reason and pick up where they left off five minutes, five days, or five years later. The writing is permanent and will be there in the exact form when the reader returns.	A presentation is delivered once. Listeners must be present in mind and body throughout the presentation if they want to interact with the whole message.
Readers can go back and reread any section of their choosing. They can reread for comprehension or linger over a beautiful passage simply for pleasure.	Listeners hear a speaker's words only once. On occasion, a listener asks a speaker to rephrase or repeat an idea, but this typically happens at the end of the presentation only.
Readers have the ability to stop and look up a word. They can do some further research on a topic that is mentioned or talk to someone else about what they have read. They can then go back to their reading with a whole new frame of mind.	Listeners can do these things only after the presentation.
Readers have the advantage of visual clues like indented paragraphs, capital letters (<i>Apple</i> versus <i>apple</i>), bold or italic type, and subtitles and other organizing devices.	Listeners rely solely on the speaker for such organizational clues.

- address ideas appropriate to the receiver(s) and the circumstances.
- know about and believe in their ideas.
- organize their ideas in some sort of logical pattern so as to make sense to the receiver(s).
- support their ideas with examples, stories, facts, and reasoning.
- communicate in a listener-centered way and monitor the audience for feedback.
- speak loudly enough to be heard in the specific speaking space.
- use their voices, facial expressions, and bodily gestures to convey emotion.

We must distinguish, however, between everyday and public conversations. Table 7.2 (p. 106) does so.

Because of the many and significant differences between conversation and public speaking, you do not want to transfer all daily conversational qualities into your public communication transactions. Unlike most conversations that occur spontaneously and for which there is little to no preparation, the public presentation is a listener-specific, prepared conversation. But to the extent that you can consider the public speech a type of conversation, what style of conversation works best?

4. Strive for an important conversation style

Treat your public presentation as an **important conversation**. Rely on the style of conversation you use when interacting with someone you respect. Reflect on how you would speak if you were interviewed or talking to your physician, your employer, parents of a friend you

A Speaker's Story The Classics Professor: A Written-Styled "Speech"

“

The afternoon's speaker was a visiting classics expert who enjoyed a fine reputation as a professor and a scholar. The host introduced the speaker, and the audience settled in for what they were expecting to be an engaging hour. The professor walked confidently to the front of the room, pulled some papers from his coat pocket, and put on his eyeglasses. He then began to read his manuscript word for word. Audience members quickly realized the listening challenge that lay before them but gave the speaker their best attention and sat back to work extra hard at active listening.

The professor never put away his notes. His complicated ideas, better targeted for fellow classics experts, were beyond the understanding of a general college and community audience. His reading voice was monotonous. He made only minimal eye contact. The biggest problem, however, was his language—it was highly formal and purely written. He never defined discipline-specific terms, his sentences were long and complicated, and his main and supporting points were indistinguishable.

The people in the audience gave the speech their best “college try.” But the professor's speaking choices were so anti-audience that even the smartest thinkers and best listeners in the room struggled to learn anything that day. After fifteen or twenty minutes of genuinely hard listening work, people began to give up. Some continued to “listen” politely, but heads began to droop, eyes closed, and a few students brought out notebooks to silently study for exams they had the next day. Some people even got up and left.

The next day, some of the listeners gathered to discuss the event. A few thought the professor was simply lazy; they assumed he had just brought an essay he already had on hand. Others were angry that he had taken the all-expenses-paid trip without creating a presentation tailored for the occasion. Some decided that his main goal was to impress with his intelligence; others thought that he was unsure of himself, so he wrote it all down. One student even guessed that the professor had never taken a public speaking course and insisted that he sign up for one right away! Whatever the reason, the result was the same: the professor was unsuccessful in transmitting his ideas to his audience. His highly formal and purely written language patterns were his communication downfall.

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are meeting for the first time, a professor you admire, your coach, or a valued customer. This style of speaking most likely differs from the familiar and informal style you use with family or friends. In important conversation, you attempt to convey meaningful messages and are more careful with word choices, more precise with pronunciation, more attentive to grammatical conventions, somewhat slower in pace and generally more aware of how you are be-

A Speaker's Story

Ed Koch: A Genuine Conversation

“

Former New York City mayor Ed Koch came to town one day. The 370-seat speaking venue was packed with students, faculty, and members from the community. The event was called “A Conversation with Ed Koch,” so the audience had little idea what to expect as the subject matter. The country was involved in presidential politics that year, however, and many people guessed that Koch might chime in with some political opinions.

Given his reputation as an animated and impassioned speaker, anticipation for Koch's message was high. He approached the lectern, no notes in hand, and immediately reached out and grabbed the audience with his expressive voice, his storytelling, his name-dropping, his extensive use of personal pronouns, and his confident gestures. Koch's eyes swept the audience, he leaned in and then out, his volume shifted when necessary, he pointed in the air and once even pounded on the lectern. He soon delivered his unmistakable thesis: though a social and political liberal his whole life, Koch would be backing the conservative ticket in the upcoming presidential election for one very specific reason. The Republicans, in Koch's view, were the only ones with “the stomach” to combat global terrorism. Koch spent the remainder of the speech justifying his position.

The question-and-answer session following Koch's remarks showed that many in the audience considered his message controversial. But everyone stayed with him throughout the whole hour—arguably because of his engaging oral style. His beliefs were so strong and his message so simple that his communication was genuine and appeared spontaneous. Koch needed no notes. His message was in his heart, and people responded to it. Koch was indeed having a “conversation.” Whether people agreed or disagreed with his message that day, everyone enjoyed being part of the electricity he created.



Ed Koch's engaging conversational style of speaking attracts people and keeps them listening.

”

ing perceived by the other person. In important conversation, you hold yourself straighter, look the other person in the eye, and are aware of the placement and movements of your body. In other words, in important conversation, you are trying to be your best.

Table 7.2 Differences between Everyday and Public Conversations

AS A CONVERSATIONALIST, YOU . . .	AS A SPEAKER, YOU . . .
typically come up with topics spontaneously.	typically have time to plan.
rarely practice ahead of time, though sometimes there is a sense of familiarity because you have shared the ideas on other occasions.	have time to practice to become familiar with what you will say.
are often interrupted with questions and side comments.	usually remain uninterrupted until completing your thoughts.
usually speak without the pressure of time.	must show respect for the audience by presenting within the time allotment.
cover meaningful topics often but not always.	must choose a meaningful and relevant topic.
often speak in abstractions.	need to use more concrete language and examples.
may or may not toss in information picked up through research or hearsay.	must competently and ethically consider and cite the source if using research.
may converse just to strengthen relationships, to pass the time, or to be polite.	must make a point.
may use linguistic distractions such as verbal junk (<i>um, uh, y'know, and like</i>) or obscenities without significant consequence.	want to minimize, if not eliminate, such linguistic distractions, as they can create a barrier to listening and damage your credibility.
are sometimes too informal.	want to communicate respect and civility if you expect those qualities from listeners in return.

This is the conversational and communicative quality you want for the majority of the speeches in your classrooms, at work, and in your communities. Different public speaking situations call for assorted topics, varying levels of formality, and a range of strategies. Content is sometimes more serious, and audiences are sometimes tougher to convince. But the important conversation style works for nearly all of them. Your elevated conversational quality reflects the importance of your ideas, your self-respect, and the respect you have for your listeners. Read about one well-known important conversationalist in the “Speaker’s Story” box (🔍 p. 107).

7D

Listenability Goal #2: Be Considerate by Minimizing the Demands on Your Listeners

Your choice of conversational patterns contributes significantly to your public speaking success, but it’s not the only guide to follow. The most conversational-styled speaker can still give a speech that’s taxing to listen to: no apparent point is being made, the structure is disorganized, the speaker assumes that the listeners have prior knowledge, or the information

A Speaker's Story John Roberts: Important Conversationalist in Action

“

Before becoming chief justice of the Supreme Court, John Roberts argued thirty-nine cases before the high court, winning a majority of them. Ted Olson, a Bush administration court advocate, claims that the justices do not like to be “read to, preached to, [or] orated at” and noted that Roberts, with his “soft spoken tone and demeanor,” spoke “as if he [were] having a conversation with the justices. And they like that.” Walter Dellinger, a Clinton administration court advocate, verified those observations. “Roberts,” he said, was “very conversational without being too informal. His arguments [were] always directly engaging the justices.”

Source: Nina Totenberg, “Looking at Roberts’ Record Before the Court,” *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, July 22, 2005.

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is dense. A second general way to achieve listenability, then, is through **considerateness**, or minimizing the information-processing demands on your listeners.

Minimizing demands on your listeners does *not* mean dumbing down your message; you can communicate the most complex ideas in highly listenable ways. Former vice president Al Gore provides one example. The Academy Award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) is more or less a filmed version of a presentation Gore has given to audiences across the globe. Reviewers agree that Gore succeeds in making the complex issue of global warming accessible in an engaging way. Kevin Crust of the *Los Angeles Times* is typical when he says,

Gore does an excellent job of explaining the basic science behind climate change and the accelerated rise in temperatures since the 1970s. What could be very dry material is enlivened by Gore’s geniality and desire to share the information. The potential for dreaded heaviosity is leavened at times by his dry wit and humorous moments.”³

So, as a speaker, what can you do to minimize your audience’s listening demands? Your speech meets the standards of considerateness when:

- **Your message is well organized.** You use relevant introductory and concluding material and arrange the ideas logically. There is an obvious relationship between greater and lesser ideas. Internal previews and summaries are present.
- **Your message is cohesive.** You use a given word consistently throughout the speech. A topic referred to later in the speech has been introduced earlier on. A pronoun has an obvious subject.
- **Your listeners need to make few inferences.** You define words, provide background information when necessary, and do not assume a high degree of shared context. There is a predictable flow from “familiar” to “new” information.

- **Your speech has a consistent style.** Your major ideas receive roughly the same amount of attention. You use one style of delivery and cite research in roughly the same way throughout.
- **You elaborate information.** You avoid undue conceptual density and appropriately use support such as example, explanation, narrative, definition, and analogy.
- **You communicate about your communication.** You directly address listeners and provide overt cues about the purpose and organization of your message.⁴

In other words, considerate speakers understand listeners' unique needs and attempt to address them during the preparation and delivery of the message. As you make your way through the chapters in this book—from topic selection to organization to language use to visual support—you'll see how considerate speaking helps you achieve your communication goals.

Summary

- Understanding the characteristics of your public listeners puts you in a listener-centered frame of mind.
- Listenability encourages you to keep your public listeners in mind during every step of preparing, presenting, and evaluating any public presentation. Listener-centered speaking behaviors, which you'll study throughout this book, help you reach your communication goals.
- Speakers broadly achieve listenability by using conversational language patterns and by being considerate—that is, minimizing information-processing demands on listeners. The remaining chapters of the book provide more specific ways of achieving listenability.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY KEY

See public speaking as important conversation, a formalized version of your daily interactions. Speak to your listeners in the conversational patterns they're used to hearing, and do all that you can to help them process your message. Embrace your listeners, and remember that they're central to everything you do as a public speaker.

EXERCISES

1. With a partner, generate a list of at least fifteen things you think all speakers should do to make it easier for audiences to listen to their speeches. Feel free to be as idealistic as you want. Once the list is completed, evaluate which ones are realistic for you to adopt or work on for your next speech.

2. *Bring a short article (two to four paragraphs) to class. In pairs, go up to the front of the room. Have one person read the article verbatim. Then have the second person summarize the content of the article in his or her own words. Discuss the differences from the perspective of the speakers and the listeners. What implications does this exercise have for public speaking?*
3. *Think of a brief story that happened to you in the last few weeks. Deliver the story in a style you would use if you were telling it while hanging out with a small group of friends. Deliver it again in an important conversation style that is appropriate, say, for a group of your parents' friends you don't know that well. Did the content and/or delivery of the story change? If so, how? Why did this happen?*
4. *As a class, discuss how speakers on various media outlets (C-SPAN, MTV, shock radio, NPR, network news) converse with their respective audiences. What, if anything, do these various conversation styles say?*
5. *With a partner or small group, find a video on the web or in the library in which the speaker is discussing a serious, meaningful topic. While you watch, pause the video and take note when the speaker does anything to minimize the demands on your listening. Keep a list of the speaker's considerateness skills to share with your class.*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 8

Analyzing Your Audience

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I see public speaking in a completely different way now that I know how important it is to deliberately think about my audience.”

“I’m intrigued with websites like Facebook, and last term I made ‘social networking’ the topic of several assignments in various classes. My public speaking class was invaluable in making me aware that I needed to reshape the topic depending on the audience and the assignment. For example, the presentation in my computer-systems class was more technical—I talked a lot about the technology behind social-networking sites. Then, in my business-studies class, I focused more on the impact that social networking is having on the concept of leadership. Know your audience, and mold your topic so they’ll be interested.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

Analyze your audience and the speaking situation.

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

8A**Understand the Role of Audience Analysis**

1. *You speak for the audience*
2. *Your audience is different from you*
3. *Audiences differ from one another*

8B**Adapt Your Presentation Based on Audience Analysis**

1. *Audience analysis helps you choose and shape the topic for maximum interest and relevance*
2. *Audience analysis helps you speak at the listeners' knowledge level—not above or below it*
3. *Audience analysis determines the language best suited to communicate your message*
4. *Audience analysis decreases the chance of alienating or offending the listeners*

8C**Know How to Analyze Your Audience**

1. *Know the types of data to collect*
2. *Collect audience data*
3. *Make sense of the data and apply them to your presentation*

8D**Know When to Analyze Your Audience**

1. *If you haven't yet selected a topic*
2. *If your topic is predetermined*
3. *Last-minute analysis*
4. *Analyzing during the presentation*

8E**Understand the Speaking Situation**

1. *Know why context analysis is important*
2. *Context is physical, temporal, and psychological*

Key Terms

attitudinal data	▶ 117
audience analysis	▶ 112
context	▶ 123
demographic data	▶ 117
demographics	▶ 113
ethnocentrism	▶ 113
homogeneous audience	▶ 120
physical context	▶ 124
polled data	▶ 118
psychological context	▶ 126
temporal context	▶ 125

Successful public speakers adapt their messages to their audiences. Before you can aim your communication at your specific listeners, however, you must know who they are. Analyzing your audience must be a deliberate step. As you learn details about your audience and then target the message specifically for them, you make your presentation more listenable. In other words, a listenable speaker is one who knows who's listening! This chapter talks about how to analyze the audience and the context of each speech. Knowing and evaluating the context helps you understand the audience's expectations of the occasion and best fit your communication choices to that occasion. Learn to plan your speech through the eyes and ears of your audience.

8A

Understand the Role of Audience Analysis

1. *You speak for the audience*

Public speaking is not about putting an arbitrarily selected speaker in front of a randomly selected group of people. On the contrary, effective public speaking occurs when a particular speaker creates a comprehensive plan to gain a desired response from a specific audience.

Audience analysis, the act of gaining an understanding of your audience members and then acting on that information, is a key element for success. It increases your presentation's listenability because it helps you choose relevant ideas and communicate them for maximum attention, comprehension, and interaction. In essence, audience analysis *personalizes* the public communication transaction.

You want to capitalize on the limited and valuable time you have with your listeners. You want to know, to the best of your ability, who they are, what their attitudes might be, why they are gathered, and how they might perceive you and the occasion of your presentation.

The more information you can gather, the better you can tailor your message to meet their needs and wants and to achieve your own communication goals.

2. Your audience is different from you

Before you begin your audience analysis, be aware of the human tendency toward **ethnocentrism**, which occurs when one person views his or her culture or viewpoints as the standard and judges others accordingly. Ethnocentrism creates misunderstandings because it involves viewing other people through one's own cultural lens rather than understanding them through the lens of their own cultural context. Here's an example of an ethnocentric view: "It's weird that some people have their mate chosen for them by their parents. I don't think any of us would want that. Obviously, people should be able to make this important life decision for themselves." It's also ethnocentric to think that all members of your audience value the principles of capitalism, have patriotic tendencies, or operate on the basis of Western legal codes and moral values. They may not, especially if they were raised in a different part of the world. Public speakers must take extra precautions to engage in a thorough audience analysis. You can't assume that your audience is like you.

3. Audiences differ from one another

Just as individual listeners differ from one another—and from you—so, too, do audiences differ from each other. They may differ in **demographics**, or characteristics such as age, socioeconomic status, education levels, and gender. They may differ in their purpose for gathering or in their attitudes toward you or the occasion. However they differ, you need to know. If you're an expert on hawks, for example, you need to be one type of speaker when talking before an excitable second-grade class, another when presenting in front of colleagues at a conference, and yet another when leading a tour group around a wildlife sanctuary.

Be sure to analyze the audience even if you present to the same group on a consistent basis. Managers who speak to their employees twice a month, for instance, must be aware of the current politics of the organization, current relationships between employees and management, and relevant issues of employee concern. Because these contexts are ever-shifting, audience analysis is a constant necessity.

8B

Adapt Your Presentation Based on Audience Analysis

Because one audience differs from another, listener-centered public speaking requires the ability to adapt. Your assessment creates a picture of the people in your audience, along with their needs and attitudes, and it gives you direction and confidence as you prepare your ideas. Your ability to properly adapt your message also affects your credibility. Listeners expect a speaker to have properly analyzed the audience, chosen a relevant topic, and done the necessary planning to communicate the topic in an audience-specific way. Listeners rarely comment on an excellent audience analysis. However, they quickly notice a poor or nonexistent one. It weakens your credibility and affects your ability to achieve your communication goals.

Here are the ways an audience analysis helps improve your presentation.

1. Audience analysis helps you choose and shape the topic for maximum interest and relevance

Some of the questions audience analysis can help you answer are:

- What should I talk about?
- How do I make the topic relevant?
- How can I hold my listeners' continued interest?
- How long should I talk?

Knowing the needs and desires of your audience enables you to select a meaningful topic, organize it appropriately, and support it for maximum audience benefit. General and specialized audiences need different treatments of a topic; recall the earlier hawk example. Older and younger audiences have different attention spans. Gatherings of men may be interested in different topics than audiences composed of women.

Check out the “Speaking of Culture” box (🔗 p. 115) for a few examples of how speakers who grew up elsewhere have learned to adapt to their U.S. audiences.

2. Audience analysis helps you speak at the listeners' knowledge level—not above or below it

- How much does my audience already know?
- Do I need to provide any background information?
- What kind of examples should I give?
- How deeply should I discuss the topic?

Understanding your audience's education level or previous experience with your topic allows you to decide, among other things, the complexity of your thesis, the sophistication of your visual information, and the depth of your presentation. For example, children younger than 8 or so have trouble understanding wordplay; attention spans begin increasing around age 8; the ability to think abstractly begins around age 12.¹

Knowledge levels among adult audiences vary in many more ways. Groups gathered together because of shared interests enjoy and require higher-level ideas and concepts. Freudian analysts, for example, crave complex psychoanalytic theory; sudoku fanatics want to learn about X-Wing and Swordfish solutions. The knowledge level of your audience also affects the types of proof, references, and examples you use. General audiences would probably require a review of the basics and simpler examples during your presentation on global warming, whereas with a group of meteorologists you could go straight to more intricate scientific discussions.

3. Audience analysis determines the language best suited to communicate your message

- Does this group expect certain terms to be used?
- Do I need to define some terms and concepts?
- Should my language be formal or informal?
- How much of my “language personality” should I share?

The results of your audience analysis dictate, among other things, which words you need to define and the sophistication and formality of your language. To interact with your ideas,



Speaking of Culture

Adapting to My U.S. Audience

Hasan (Turkey)

"I thought American students would be more globally aware, but their knowledge came mostly from TV. I wanted to give speeches that were more political in nature, about what I saw happening in the United States, but I pulled back. I saw that some of my ideas were unfamiliar to American ears, so I made my ideas much more simple when I was discussing topics outside American popular culture. I wanted to start my conversations from a more complicated space, but here in America, people often start from zero. It seems like you have to explain everything."

Chii (Zimbabwe)

"My accent is strong, so it's obvious I'm not from here. It was sometimes frustrating that people would prefer to ask me questions about where I was from rather than asking me questions about what I just discussed."

Yet I love teaching people

about my culture, so I learned to include words, expressions, and facts in my speeches that would satisfy their 'where I'm from' questions while simultaneously teaching them something."

Arelí (Mexico)

"I have found most Americans to be very welcoming. I would toss in a few words of Spanish into my speeches when I knew they would understand—words like hola or como está? It was a way for us to bond and for them to feel good that they can understand me."

your listeners must understand the words you use. A marine biologist, for instance, should use professional terminology when talking to a general audience but also explain terms like *photic zone*, *epilithics*, and *commensals*. On the other hand, these terms require no definition for an audience of marine biology graduate students.

Your audience also determines the tone of your language. Most speakers use a formal tone and elegant style of language when presenting to people gathered for a special occasion such as a memorial service; a professional tone and the language of the field when presenting to colleagues and coworkers; and a lighter tone and less formal language—perhaps even some slang—when presenting to a familiar audience at a gathering of a campus club.

4. Audience analysis decreases the chance of alienating or offending the listeners

- How can I be inclusive with my language?
- Are my examples too violent, too sexual, or unsuitable in any way?
- Are my ideas patronizing?
- Are any words or topics taboo with this group?

Speakers want to invite their audience members into their presentations, not exclude or alienate them through offensive language or behavior. Certain topics, examples, and language choices fit some audiences better than others. Some audiences gather to hear political commentary, whereas others find politics inappropriate. Some audiences like to hear people speak openly and forthrightly about religious values or sexual practices, whereas others think these topics are better discussed privately.

Racist and sexist remarks are offensive to most audiences. Avoid them. See the “Speaker’s Story” box (🗨️ p. 117) for one unfortunate incident.

Though risk of offense and alienation exists in many contexts, you need not stick to safe topics. The most provocative and controversial ideas can—and should—be discussed publicly; the health of our democracy requires it. Speakers should acknowledge the controversial nature of their ideas and do their best to discuss them in an honest, ethical, and civil way. One speaker, Anurahda Mittal, the director of a policy think tank, knew that some of her ideas on economic human rights had the potential to stir up heated opposition among some members of her mainstream audience at a large community lecture. In her introduction, Mittal admitted to the controversial nature of her ideas yet asked listeners to at least hear her out. Most seemed willing to do so. And it made for quite a rousing question-and-answer session!

If you think your speech idea has the potential to offend your audience, talk it over with a respected friend, colleague, or teacher. You may choose to switch topics, revise certain sections, or go ahead with your original plan. Just remember, despite your best audience analysis and best-laid plans, some people may still be offended. Individual values and experiences can cause some to take offense even when most others do not.

8C

Know How to Analyze Your Audience

To effectively analyze your audience, you need to know the kind of data to collect, how to collect them, and what to do with them once you have them.

A Speaker's Story **Regretted Birthday Wishes**



In 2002 Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi was widely criticized for his comments at a hundredth birthday celebration for Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina. In his speech, Lott referenced Thurmond's 1948 presidential campaign platform, which had been based on racial segregation and a call for racial purity—a platform from which Thurmond had later distanced himself. Many in the audience at the centennial celebration and across the country were therefore offended when Lott said, "I want to say this about my state: When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either." Lott later issued an apology stating, "A poor choice of words conveyed to some the impression that I embraced the discarded policies of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth, and I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement. My comments were not an endorsement of [Thurmond's] positions of over 50 years ago, but of the man and his life."

Source: John Mercurio, "Lott Apologizes for Thurmond Comment," *CNN.com/Inside Politics*, December 10, 2002, <http://www.cnn.com> (accessed October 2, 2007).



1. Know the types of data to collect

You'll want audience data in two general categories, demographic data and attitudinal data.

Demographic data look at the statistical traits of the audience, including:

- Abilities/disabilities
- Age
- Education level
- Ethnicity or cultural background
- Gender
- Geographic location
- Group membership
- Occupation
- Political affiliation
- Religious affiliation
- Sexual orientation or identity
- Socioeconomic status
- Suburban, urban, or rural residence

Attitudinal data look at audience attitudes, values, and beliefs, including:

- Societal or local attitudes toward issues like immigration, abortion, same-sex marriage, or particular politicians
- Group values and beliefs
- Feelings about the topic

Essentials

Helping You Adapt to Your Audience

Audience analysis

- helps you choose and shape a topic for maximum interest.
- helps you speak at the listeners' knowledge level.
- determines the language best suited to communicate.
- decreases your chances of alienating or offending listeners.

- Level of agreement with the speech's thesis
- Feelings and attitudes toward the speaker
- Attitude toward attendance (Is the audience present voluntarily or out of obligation?)

2. Collect audience data

You can gather data about your specific audience in several ways.

Use existing research Data are often available to speakers needing to conduct research on a potential audience. First, many organizations collect data on themselves and provide it in brochures, reports, and websites. If you were asked, for example, to speak to the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, their website would tell you that they represent growers in five southwest Florida counties, produce one-fifth of Florida's citrus, work 169,000 acres, and produce the first grapefruit of the growing season.² Information like this helps you tailor your talk, accurately meet your listeners' needs, and increase your credibility by showing listeners that you "did your homework."

Polled data are another source of information about audiences. Polls collect current opinions on issues ranging from politics to current events to pop culture. Polls also collect information about habits ranging from shopping practices to travel preferences to leisure behavior. Though they may not give you the exact opinions and habits of your particular audience, polls do provide a random sampling of society at large, and in many instances you can assume that your specific audience is a random sampling of society. If you are using polled data, be sure to evaluate the organization conducting the poll. Polls sponsored by ideological organizations or companies with something to sell are usually skewed in order to produce favorable results. Nonpartisan, independent polling organizations such as Roper, Ipsos, and Zogby design their surveys to ensure random sampling and low statistical margins of error.

Ask the speaking host Your speaking host, the person representing the group who has invited you to speak, can provide unique insights about the demographics and attitudes of your upcoming audience. This person can also, if necessary, update you on the politics of the group and pinpoint people in the room who need to be hearing your message. Some speaking hosts automatically provide audience information when inviting you to speak. If yours does not, be sure to ask questions until your needs are satisfied.

Use an expert to help you understand an unfamiliar audience An expert can be of great assistance in some speaking situations. You may be asked to speak to a group from a country, culture, or subculture different from your own. Be aware that customs, humor, gestures, and references do not always translate well. For example, your reference to a yardstick may mean little to audience members from countries that use the metric system. Not all cultures consider it appropriate to address people by first names; your addressing someone informally could insult that person and the audience. Each culture has its own taboo topics you'll want to avoid.

An expert can help you navigate cultural or organizational intricacies that can make or break your presentation. Here are some types of experts you may want to consult:

- **Academic consultant.** A graduate of the Hawaiian studies program at the University of Hawaii–Hilo would be of great assistance for your presentation to a local Hawaiian audience. A professor of Islamic studies could provide essential guidance for your speech before a Muslim organization.
- **Professional.** A representative of a profession or trade can provide valuable insights into the lives of those working in a particular occupation. Consult a tourism specialist for your speech to time-share owners. A master pipe fitter could be helpful for your presentation to students interested in the trades.
- **Books and websites.** Many experts write books and host websites. A book on Argentine culture can help as you prepare your presentation for a group about to visit Buenos Aires. A website hosted by an expert on the Millennium Generation can help you prepare your talk before a group of people born in the early to mid-1980s.

Conduct surveys and questionnaires Some speakers like to conduct a survey or create a questionnaire to gain additional information about their specific audience. Give yourself enough time to develop and administer a questionnaire and interpret the data. (Web-based software like SurveyMonkey or Vovici can facilitate your task.) Also, be sensitive to people's busy schedules. Make sure your survey is easy to understand, takes no more than a few minutes to complete, and gives you the information you were seeking without the need for additional questions.

Listen and observe On occasion, speakers present their ideas before groups to which they belong. These are familiar audiences composed of classmates, coworkers, fellow organization or club members, family, and friends. Your membership in this group should provide you with a solid understanding of your listeners' characteristics and attitudes. When you know a speaking date is approaching, pay extra attention to those around you to gauge their attitudes and to learn about their topics of conversation. The information you pick up could help you shape your speech.

3. Make sense of the data, and apply them to your presentation

Once you've gathered audience demographic and attitudinal data, you have the additional challenge of making sense of the information and applying it to your presentation. One way to start is to examine the data and decide whether your audience is homogeneous or mixed.

Homogeneous audiences **Homogeneous audiences** are groups having at least one important demographic or attitudinal characteristic in common. Examples of homogeneous audiences include:

- A group of soon-to-be retirees gathered to hear about post-employment medical insurance coverage
- Supporters of a particular candidate at a political rally
- Soldiers in an army platoon
- A class of pharmacy majors
- Members of a religious organization
- Members of a women's soccer team
- Fans of a well-known inspirational speaker
- The Asian American Hotel Owners Association

These listeners gather to hear topics relevant to their shared interests. When you are presenting to a homogeneous group, there is no need to tell them only what they want to hear, but you should play up audience commonalities. Show the audience that you are aware of their issues, and stress the relevance of your ideas. Focusing on the listeners' commonalities reinforces their bonds with one another and increases the chance the audience will act as one, thereby easing your job of reaching them.

Despite any significant commonalities, homogeneous audiences are still made up of individual listeners. It's not safe to assume that you can venture off onto other topics and still have an agreeable audience. People in a gun-rights organization share a common ideology about guns, but they do not necessarily share views about certain politicians, environmental issues, or cultural issues such as immigration. Monitor your language, too. Though a men's football team as a group displays traditional masculinity in many ways, it's never appropriate or ethical to make off-color remarks, particularly those that are sexist or homophobic.

General audiences A nonhomogeneous, or mixed, audience—often referred to as a general audience—can be a challenge. Your job of finding a topic of interest and creating relevance becomes more demanding when presenting ideas before a group that is widely mixed in terms of age, ethnicity, occupation, beliefs, values, and socioeconomic level.

When choosing a topic for a general audience, consider its range of appeal. Few—though surely some—people are interested in obscure topics like “The Winter Appetite of Northeastern Slugs.” Search instead for topics with more universal appeal. All people eat, need clean water, and are interested in health issues. Most people value family and friends, are concerned about safety, technology, and self-improvement, and like to be entertained.

A general audience also requires you to use content and language appropriate for listeners at all knowledge levels. Take extra care to define specialized words and jargon, explain allusions, and provide background to concepts so that you don't lose certain audience members. For example, when journalist Ray Suarez presented to a large community audience a few years ago, he twice alluded to a show called *The Goldbergs*. Listeners older than 50 who had grown up in the United States immediately got the reference to the popular radio and television situation comedy featuring the home life and assimilation struggles of a Jewish family in New York City. But listeners outside these demographics were left in the dark. A quick explanation of *The Goldbergs* reference would have allowed all listeners to participate in that particular section of the speech.

Values, attitudes, and beliefs of general audiences most likely run the gamut. Be sensitive to these variations, and beware of the trap of ethnocentrism. Pay attention to relevant

Essentials

Ways to Collect Audience Data

- Use existing research gathered by a polling firm or by the organization to whom you are speaking.
- Ask the speaking host to share his or her unique insights on your upcoming audience.
- Use an expert to help you understand an unfamiliar audience.
- Conduct surveys and questionnaires to gather additional information on your specific audience.
- Listen to and observe what is going on within the organization.

polls to see how the majority of listeners are thinking, feeling, and behaving. You have a right to communicate your message, but at the same time, acknowledge varying points of view to encompass as many listeners as possible.

8D

Know When to Analyze Your Audience

Here are several possibilities for timing your analysis.

1. If you haven't yet selected a topic

Many speakers choose a topic only after they know their expected audience. Classroom speaking frequently works this way. Your instructor gives you an assignment with several parameters, and you then select a topic that fits both the assignment and your audience. Take your task seriously; your classroom speaking is not just an exercise. Know this group of people, and use the opportunity to choose topics relevant to their lives. There are countless examples of students being informed, persuaded, and inspired by “just a classroom speech.”

An increasingly popular speaking assignment is to have students make presentations elsewhere on campus, such as the Zen Club, Rock Climbers Club, Aggie Club, or Film Society. Some instructors have students speak to community groups such as the American Lung Association or Big Brothers Big Sisters International as part of service learning projects. Opportunities such as these require an in-depth understanding of your listeners before you can pick an appropriate topic. They are excellent training for future real-world speaking situations.

2. If your topic is predetermined

Many people are asked to speak because of their expertise on a particular topic. Job-related and community speaking typically work this way. Kristin Rosati, an attorney specializing in health care privacy laws, is one such speaker. The mandatory compliance of HIPAA (Health

Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) regulations, effective 2003, has changed the way health care and patient privacy is managed in the United States. Hospitals, attorneys, care givers, insurance companies, and other health care related groups continue to need training and legal guidance to ensure compliance with the law. Rosati, an HIPAA expert, has spent years touring the country and speaking to audiences of all sizes. She shapes each presentation to the specific needs of her gathered listeners. Here are some examples of Rosati's audiences and the speeches she prepares for them:

- To hospital employees, she gives presentations on developing hospital policies to protect patient privacy.
- To physician groups, she discusses the many ways HIPAA affects daily patient care and interaction.
- To employers who provide health benefits, she gives specific guidance in creating firewalls between information available to the health-benefits office and information available to the regular employer side of the business.
- To health care faculties, she provides instruction in preparing students for work in an HIPAA landscape.
- To researchers, she gives training on protecting individual patient information during clinical research.

Rosati's ability to modify the many complicated HIPAA compliance issues and meet the needs of her specific audiences has earned her prestige in her field. Other speakers are not as successful in their audience analysis. A prominent nutritionist once spoke to a large general community audience on the importance of health and diet. The speaker was doing well; she was organized, showed a lot of relevant visual support, and was charismatic. About forty-five minutes into the hour-long presentation, however, things took a bizarre turn—she began providing guidelines on how to spread her message when out working with clients. *Out working with clients?* This presenter was suddenly speaking as if all 500 listeners from the general community were fellow professional nutritionists! The speaker's failure to properly analyze her audience weakened her whole presentation. Audience members felt confused and unimportant. Had they just sat there for an hour listening to a speech prepared for a different audience?

3. Last-minute analysis

Speakers must be prepared for change. New people come into organizations, new policies are enacted, roles are shifted, and outside influences affect internal politics and thinking. As your speaking date approaches, double-check your audience analysis. Call your speaking host, stay current with the news, and check the organization's website to see whether you need to revise your speech plan. Arrive early on your speaking day. Ask the speaking host what the audience has been doing before the presentation and what they will be doing afterward. Listen, observe, and be hyperaware. You may realize that a planned idea needs to be deleted or expanded. You may pick up a great idea for an example or a story. Bring a pencil and a flexible mindset. You just never know.

4. Analyzing during the presentation

By the time your presentation begins, you should be confident about your knowledge of your audience. Nonetheless, there may still be opportunities to keep learning more.

- Ask for a quick show of hands during the speech as you ask a question. (*How many of you watched the final episode of The Sopranos?*) It's a great way to quickly assess audience demographics, behaviors, or attitudes.
- Watch for their body language. It can help you make some quick decisions.
 - Are they enjoying themselves? (Keep doing what you're doing.)
 - Are they looking perplexed? (Clarify the point of confusion—it's OK to ask—and then provide a definition or example or explain the idea in a different way.)
 - Are they looking bored? (Can you shorten this section and move on?)

8E

Understand the Speaking Situation

Part of your pre-speech analysis goes beyond the people in attendance and looks at the speaking environment or situation, also known as the **context**.

1. Know why context analysis is important

The speaking situation leads audiences to expect certain types of messages and behaviors. They consider a speech more listenable when it meets these expectations. For example, here are some assumptions about certain speech-giving contexts:

- Presenters at a work meeting are expected to discuss topics furthering the mission of the organization and to meet the dress standards of the occupation.
- Speakers in a classroom are expected to discuss relevant topics and to use language learned in the course.
- Graduation speakers are expected to look optimistically toward the future.
- Slang may be appropriate in an informal speech in front of a high school group, whereas it would not be suitable for a formal presentation to clients at work.
- Leaning comfortably against a desk may work for a speaker long familiar with a group of listeners, whereas an interview candidate making a presentation before a group would want to present himself or herself more formally.

A newspaper columnist evidently misread the context when he was invited to speak as part of a well-established lecture series. The presentation's title looked promising; the audience had high expectations that this speech would be yet another in a long line of interesting, intellectually compelling, and well-developed talks on the year's chosen theme. Though the speaker provided a few amusing details throughout the hour, he never developed a major idea in any interesting way. The presentation might have satisfied an audience expecting a lighter, more entertaining speech, but it did not fulfill the expectations of the lecture-series audience. The evening was a disappointment, and the speaker was viewed as an intellectual lightweight.

2. Context is physical, temporal, and psychological

Each presentation has its own unique context, made up of three narrower contexts: the physical, the temporal, and the psychological. Increase your chances of giving the right message in the right place at the right time to the right audience by understanding these contexts.

Did You Know?

Adapting to Listeners with Disabilities

If you get advanced notice that listeners with visual or hearing disabilities will be in your audience, there are some specific things you can do to facilitate the public communication. First, don't assume that all listeners with disabilities want or require accommodation. Generally, people needing accommodation request it ahead of time. If you need extra assistance in providing accommodation for your listeners, seek out experts in adaptive technology. These professionals are often found in campus student-services offices. Keep the following tips in mind to assist *all* listeners in your audience, those with and without disabilities.

For listeners who are blind or have other visual impairments

- Reserve a few front-row seats.
- Accompany visual aids with an oral narrative. Describe in detail what is shown, be it a multicolored graph, contrasting pie charts, or a photograph depicting an aerial view.
- Consider permitting your presentation to be video- or audio-recorded for future viewing.
- Provide large-print copies of any handouts. Sharp black ink on white paper makes for the best contrast.
- Avoid darkening the room or turning lights too low.
- Vary your vocal expression, and alternate the pace of your delivery.

For listeners who are deaf or hard of hearing

- If an interpreter is present, situate yourself and the interpreter so that deaf and hard of hearing audience members can easily see you both. The interpreter can provide guidance about how best to do this.

The “Speaker’s Story” box (📖 p. 127) highlights how context played a role in one of the most famous speeches in United States history.

Physical space considerations The characteristics of the speaking space make up the **physical context**. The physical space determines many of the logistics and practicalities of the presentation. It also influences the feel of the event. For example, you may be bound to the microphone when speaking in a large room. The language and clothing appropriate for the presentation in your history classroom may not be acceptable when talking to coworkers in the conference room. A bright auditorium lends a different atmosphere than a dimly-lit banquet hall.

Here are some questions to consider when analyzing the physical context:

- How big is the room you are speaking in?
- How close will your audience be sitting to you and to each other?
- How is the room’s lighting?

Did You Know? (continued)

- Speak at a normal rate, maintaining eye contact with the audience, not the interpreter.
- Reduce any background noise: shut doors, turn off humming projectors when you're done using them, and ask people to remain seated until the presentation is over so as not to block the view of the interpreter.
- Repeat or paraphrase questions or statements from other audience members before you answer or address them.
- When referring to a visual or a handout, provide extra time for deaf and hard of hearing audience members to look at it, and then return their attention to you and the interpreter.



An American Sign Language interpreter works a speech by Connecticut Governor Jodi Bell.

Source: Adapted from "Presentation Tips and Information: Presenting to People with Disabilities," American Educational Research Association, http://www.aera.net/meetings/Default.aspx?menu_id=22&id=490 (accessed August 12, 2007).

- What technology is available?
- Are you expected to use a microphone?
- How many people will you be speaking to?

Temporal considerations The point at which a speech is given—relative to the time of day, to the time in history, or to other presentations on the same topic—is the **temporal context**. A speech presented mid-morning after most people have had a coffee break is heard differently than a speech given at the end of a long afternoon when most people's metabolisms are slower. Some speeches make sense only in relation to another message; for example, the final speaker on a panel can allude to concepts addressed earlier in the day without having to fully discuss them again.

Here are some questions to consider when analyzing the temporal context:

- How does your presentation relate to what has been said before?
- How does it relate to what may be said afterward?
- At what time of day are you speaking?
- What has your audience been doing prior to your speech?
- What are they doing afterward?

Essentials

The Three Specific Contexts

Each presentation has its own unique context, composed of three more-specific contexts:

- Physical context—characteristics of the speaking space
- Temporal context—the point in time at which a speech is given
- Psychological context—the moods and frames of mind of those present

Psychological considerations The **psychological context** encompasses the moods and frames of mind of audience members and how they react to your message. For example, many special-occasion speeches are expected to be lighthearted; audiences are quick to laugh and enjoy themselves. Business environments, where time is money, are usually more task-oriented.

The social roles of the speaker and people in attendance also create a psychological context. For example, a CEO sharing a recent company success story in front of a friendly and familiar audience faces a different psychological context than does a manager attempting to persuade a hostile employee group to adopt a new contract.

When analyzing the psychological context, keep the following in mind:

Organizational and Cultural Considerations

- Do your listeners share an organizational or societal culture of which you should be aware?
- What is the internal political climate in this organization?
- Is money or someone's reputation on the line today?
- Is there a certain protocol, or expected customs or rules, you need to follow?

Speaking-Occasion Considerations

- What is your audience's attitude toward this speaking occasion?
- What is your audience's attitude toward you?
- Is this a formal or an informal occasion?
- Are your listeners attending voluntarily or out of obligation?
- Are there certain people in the audience of whom you should take special note?

A Speaker's Story

Reading the Context on a Day in 1963



The story of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have A Dream" speech provides a classic example about a speaker reading the context and taking advantage of the moment. King actually had a different speech prepared for the March on Washington that famous day of August 28, 1963. He had prepared the text earlier in New York City and put the final touches on it upon his arrival in Washington the night before the march.

Nearly a quarter of a million people were gathered on the Mall in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Despite predictions of violence and mass rioting, the crowd was peaceful, and the mood was bright. King was among a slate of speakers, all of whom were enthusiastically supported by the crowd.

King started his intended speech but never finished it. Instead, he took advantage of the crowd and its energy and switched midstream to words he had delivered in a smaller context a few months before in Detroit. Those words included the famous "I Have a Dream" section, which became part of one of the most moving speeches of the civil rights movement, if not the twentieth century.

Read the full story for yourself in King's autobiography or on the Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute website (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/King>).

Source: Clayborne Carson, ed, "The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr." (New York: IPM/Warner Books, 2001), as cited on The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute website, www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/autobiography/chp_20.htm (accessed October 4, 2007).



Summary

- **An effective audience analysis influences a presentation's listenability because it increases the speaker's chances of choosing relevant ideas and communicating them for maximum attention, comprehension, and interaction.**
- **Audience analysis shows how the audience differs from the speaker and from other audiences.**
- **Audiences vary in demographic characteristics, attitudes, and type.**
- **Sources for gathering information about an audience include research, surveys, books, websites, and experts.**
- **Audience analysis should be a deliberate part of the entire speech-preparation process.**
- **Speakers must also understand the speaking situation because of its power to create audience expectations and govern the appropriateness of behaviors.**

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY KEY**

Get to know your listeners as thoroughly as possible early in the speechmaking process. Identifying who they are and why they're gathered ensures that you'll give the right message to the right group of people.

EXERCISES

1. With a partner, take turns sharing a recent experience where ethnocentrism created a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of an event or another person. Discuss how you (or the speaker, if it was someone other than you) realized that ethnocentrism was at play.
2. Choose a topic in which you have a keen personal interest. A general audience may or may not share your passion about the topic. Brainstorm a list of at least five different ways you could make your ideas relevant to general listeners during a presentation on the topic.
3. Explore alienating, taboo, and offensive topics and speech behaviors. Research how attitudes toward such topics and behaviors have changed in the United States over the last ten years; twenty years; forty years. Why do you think things have changed? What topics and behaviors are currently acceptable when discussed by certain speakers in certain contexts yet are unacceptable when discussed by others? What costs are paid by speakers who alienate and offend? Real-life examples will enrich your discussion.
4. Look at the list of polling organizations on the Yale University Library website (<http://www.library.yale.edu/socsci/opinion/pollingorganizations.html>). In groups of three to five, assign each person to research a different polling organization to see how they are reporting public opinion on topics such as:
 - The president's approval rating
 - Attitudes toward abortion, gun control, or the death penalty
 - The state of the economy
 - Issues affecting older people such as Social Security or prescription drugs
 - Attitudes toward same-sex marriage
 - Privacy issues
 - Immigration issues

Did the polling organizations report different findings? If so, discuss or research why. What implications do these different findings have for a public speaker?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 9

Determining Your Speech Purpose, Topic, and Thesis

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Topic selection was tough for me. I am an admitted procrastinator, and as long as I didn’t have a topic, I didn’t have to begin work on my speech. Finally, it got to the point where I just had to choose something, and because I didn’t care about that topic, neither did my audience. The best thing for me—and therefore for my listeners—happened when the instructor required us to publicly announce our topic for the informative speech well before the due date. I found that when I had time to actually dive into my topic, I became so much more interested in it. Once I was hooked on the information, I could genuinely communicate my passion to my audience during my presentation.”

“I always thought a speaker talked ‘about’ a topic and that a thesis was the sentence that told what that topic would be, such as ‘My speech will be about global warming.’ I now understand that the thesis is so much more. The thesis statement actually tells the audience how the topic will be discussed in a narrower way. A well-developed thesis is a thing of beauty!”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

Determine your speech purpose.

Choose and narrow your topic.

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

- 9A** **Consider the General Reason for the Speaking Event**
 1. *Being asked to speak, being required to speak, or offering to speak*
 2. *Speaking to inform, to persuade, or to mark a special occasion*
- 9B** **Know Where to Find Your Topic**
 1. *Look inside yourself: you already know a lot*
 2. *Consider topics you want to know more about*
 3. *Talk to others*
 4. *Browse*
 5. *Brainstorm*
- 9C** **Choose Your Topic Early**
- 9D** **Choose Topics of General Audience Interest**
- 9E** **Choose Topics of Specific Audience Interest**
- 9F** **Choose a Meaningful Topic**
- 9G** **Move from Topic to Thesis Statement**
 1. *Know the difference between a true thesis and a false thesis*
 2. *Other thesis considerations*

Key Terms

brainstorming	▶ 137
false thesis	▶ 142
mind map	▶ 137
speeches to inform	▶ 132
speeches to mark special occasions	▶ 133
speeches to persuade	▶ 132
thesis	▶ 141
topic	▶ 131

Topic selection is an essential key of your speech strategy. Your choice of topic, or the subject matter you choose to discuss, can literally make or break your speech. A well-chosen topic increases a speech's listenability, because your level of interest in it and your knowledge of and passion for it ultimately determine how you communicate it and, in turn, how your listeners attend to, respond to, and interact with your ideas. This chapter introduces the three major speech purposes—to inform, to persuade, and to mark a special occasion. It then examines the importance of choosing a relevant topic that is mutually beneficial to you and your audience. Finally, it introduces the thesis statement—the *way* you talk about your topic.

9A

Consider the General Reason for the Speaking Event

Why are you speaking? Answering that question helps you narrow your focus and begin your speech preparation in the right frame of mind.

1. Being asked to speak, being required to speak, or offering to speak

Your choice of **topic**, the subject matter you discuss, often depends on whether you're being asked to speak, being required to speak, or offering to speak. You may be asked to speak by a boss, a group leader, or a host of an outside organization. The person making the request typically tells you the general purpose of the gathering and provides specific or general parameters for your topic. If your boss asks you to prepare a presentation on how your team met last year's sales goals, that's a specific request. In a general request, your boss might ask you to choose a topic for the bimonthly training session. If you agree to the speaking request, it's your job to abide by the parameters and choose an appropriate topic that helps the other person—in this case, your boss—meet his or her needs or goals.

On occasion, you may be required to speak, whether at work, at school, or in your community.

Some classroom assignments may specify the topic:

- Introduce a classmate.
- Report on the findings of the anatomy lab assignment.
- Teach the rest of the class the major highlights of a chapter from your text.

Other assignments allow you more leeway in topic selection:

- Give an informative speech about a historical event.
- Teach the class about a math concept not covered in class.
- Prepare a five-minute persuasive speech on any topic of your choice.

On the job, employees are often required to speak.

- Project managers need to introduce their team's product at the annual meeting.
- Public-safety officers need to inform the public about advances in Homeland Security.

- To meet the terms of a grant, an artist must report to the granting agency how the money was spent.
- Salespeople need to make presentations to clients.
- Tradespeople must often show new coworkers how to do such things as dismantle an automobile engine or assemble a refrigerator.
- Teachers must speak before parents at the school open houses.

Community members are also often required to speak.

- School board members must present the annual budget to parents and other residents.
- Volunteers might describe a fund-raising campaign to a gathering of local business owners.

When you're assigned a topic, keep your attitude positive. The assignment is designed to help you meet your academic goals or the goals of your work or community organization, and in most instances you should find the topic intriguing. If you don't, just remember that there are some compulsory aspects to adult life. And giving a presentation at school, work, or in your community can be one of them. Challenge yourself to believe in your ideas, to own them, and to communicate them to your listeners with confidence and enthusiasm.

Finally, some people *choose* to speak. People who offer to speak often relish the opportunity to choose topics and themes about which they are passionate and then present those ideas in a public venue. The "Speaker's Story" box (🔗 p. 133) profiles one such person.

2. Speaking to inform, to persuade, or to mark a special occasion

Your topic selection and subsequent speech preparation are also made easier when you know the reason for your presentation. There are three major reasons for public communication—to inform, to persuade, and to mark a special occasion. Chapters 27 through 30 look at each of these general purposes in greater detail. Here is a quick overview.

Speeches to inform help your audience understand new or useful ideas from the world around them. Informative topics examine objects, events, processes, concepts, and issues that broaden listeners' intellectual horizons. Here are some examples:

- Criteria required for successful admission into the police academy
- Legislative reactions to the call for same-sex marriages
- The function of each major part of the chicken egg
- How to read an ultrasound
- What it means to be a Right-to-Work state
- Reasons for an increase in worldwide tuberculosis rates
- The career of tennis star Anna Kournikova

Speeches to persuade aim to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. Persuasive topics run the gamut from the accepted to the controversial and are based on questions of fact, value, or policy. Here are some examples:

- Owners of U.S. meat-processing plants have an ethical obligation to enforce U.S.D.A. regulations.
- Parents should limit children's time with violent video games.
- Genetic engineering of potatoes should continue to be funded by our tax dollars.
- Breastfeeding is better for infants than is formula.

A Speaker's Story

Tapping Human Memory

“

A citizen of many talents and interests who travels a great deal, Albert Celoza likes to speak with community audiences of all kinds. He chooses topics that bring his listeners to a time and place of memory, in hopes of stimulating them to think more deeply about their own experiences. His topics have included:

- Kundiman, a type of love song from the Philippines that speaks to romantic love, love of country, love of a child for its mother, and other kinds of love. The songs create something beautiful in the hearts of listeners and linger in their memories.
- Pilgrimages to sacred places, where adherents come to participate in religious actions that are centuries old. His descriptions and stories create images that evoke memories or desires in his listeners.
- The Paris cemetery Père-Lachaise, the resting place of Chopin, Jim Morrison, and Édith Piaf, among many others. Celoza has taken listeners on a historical and visual tour of this famous cemetery, evoking feelings and memories of the universal experience of life and death.

Celoza's ability to touch our common human spirit continues to draw audiences. His unique topics and warm, personal delivery style are community speaking at its best.

”

- NASCAR has earned its place as America's new pastime.
- Homeowners should xeriscape their yards to conserve water.

Speeches to mark special occasions celebrate important people or places, honor memorable events, or share humorous ideas. People at ceremonies or rituals often speak to evoke feelings, strengthen bonds, or create memories. Examples include:

- Paying tribute to your coach upon her retirement
- Commemorating Memorial Day
- Introducing the keynote speaker at the choir tournament
- Accepting a scholarship award
- Inspiring kids with physical disabilities to overcome challenges

Sometimes it's difficult to determine a single purpose for a speech. For example:

- A speech that ultimately attempts to persuade often has informative sections.
- A special-occasion speech, such as a eulogy, may persuade listeners to think of someone in a new way.
- In order to get and keep your audience's attention on an informative topic, you may need to first persuade them that the information is relevant and important.

Nonetheless, to achieve listenability, you should make a decision about your major speech purpose. Imagining some sort of outcome for your speech helps you make listener-friendly choices about how to get there.

9B

Know Where to Find Your Topic

We live in a unique time. Technology allows us to do more—and know more—than any other human generation. We can fly to the other side of the planet within twenty-four hours. We can turn on the TV, the radio, our cell phone, or computer, or open a book or magazine and find the world literally at our fingertips.

Despite this incredible access to ideas, some speakers still complain that they have nothing to talk about. But the truth is, topics surround you.

1. Look inside yourself: you already know a lot

If writers are encouraged to write about what they know, speakers should speak about what they know. And you know things. You have not made it this far in life without picking up a thing or two. You have had experiences, interactions with others, education, and training. You think about things. You have talents. You've been to places. This is not to say that you know all there is to know about any given topic, but you at least know something—and additional research is easy to do. For now, however, what you're interested in is topic selection. You can find a topic by reflecting on the following:

- Books, magazines, blogs, and newspaper articles you've read
- Interesting courses you've taken or are taking
- Technology you know how to use
- Experiences you've never forgotten
- People you know and admire
- Traditions and customs in your family
- Museums you've been to
- Games you've played
- A childhood interest or hobby you'd like to rekindle
- Medical conditions you or family or friends have experienced
- Shows you've seen on TV
- Websites you've visited
- Places you've been
- Plays, concerts, or dances you've attended
- Hobbies and personal interests
- Jobs you've held

You are an excellent resource for speech topics. Don't underestimate yourself!

2. Consider topics you want to know more about

Many people find an upcoming speech the perfect opportunity to delve into a topic that has long interested them. Perhaps you've been meaning to learn more about type 2 diabetes, the

history of nuclear energy, or the differences between the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam. Students often appreciate an assignment that forces them to finally look into topics of interest. Many speakers also report a newfound interest in and enthusiasm about their topic once their research is underway.

3. Talk to others

Other people in your life are likely resources for topics. Things they know, do, and have experienced become available to you through your interactions with them. One student had exceptional luck in finding stimulating topics by going back to talk with her high school biology teacher, a valued instructor who had played a significant role in her intellectual development. Other students have gone to grandparents, mentors, coaches, community leaders, neighbors, and friends. Not only are these people helpful in choosing a topic, but speakers find their enthusiasm increased when a topic is “attached” to someone they love, admire, or respect. Learning more about that topic is a way to strengthen your bonds with that person.

Professional contacts are also helpful with topic selection. It’s astounding what reference librarians know and have access to. Talk to a photographer, a firefighter, a poet, an electrician, a physical therapist, a journalist, a helicopter mechanic, a judge, or an international aid worker. These people have access to worlds beyond your boundaries and are usually happy to share what they know with you.

4. Browse

Those who take the time to browse find thousands of topics waiting to be discovered. Even if you’re not a car buff, pick up a car magazine the next time you see one lying around. You might be amazed at the things going on in the world of cars while you weren’t paying attention. Engines are more efficient and powerful, new designs are on the horizon, cool products are available, and new technologies like GPS and alternative fuels are being incorporated.

Here are some ideas for browsing media sources:

- Pick up your remote control, and channel surf. Stop at a channel you usually pass by.
- Use an Internet service such as Yahoo! News, Reuter’s.com, or Firefox’s Latest Headlines to scan breaking stories.
- Open up a National Geographic magazine and check out the article on polar bears, Mayan culture, or our sense of smell.
- Read a section of the newspaper you usually skip.
- Type a search word into Google or Yahoo! and see what comes up.
- Look through your photos. They are often good reminders of experiences you’ve had, places you’ve been, and people you’ve met.
- Keep a list of everything you touch in a given day.
- Look around your house, in your backpack, in your purse, or around your job site, and ask yourself what these things are and what their history or function or purpose is. Fascinating speeches have been given on the golf ball, deer antlers, and platform shoes.

Open your eyes and see the many topics surrounding you. The “Did You Know?” box (p. 136) provides yet more resources for finding a topic.

Did You Know?

Online Resources for Topic Selection

The web offers several sites for topic browsing and selection. Here are just a few helpful places to visit:

- The United States Government Printing Office and Oklahoma State University Edmon Law Library have teamed up to provide a list of topics based on the current *Guide to U.S. Government Information*, also known as *The Subject Bibliographies Index*. See <http://www.library.okstate.edu/govdocs/browsetopics>
- The U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health sponsor a list of health-related topics at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthtopics.html>
- The Library of Congress American Memory project chronicles historical events, people, places, and ideas that have and continue to shape the United States. Browse the collection at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse>
- Meetup.com is a website dedicated to bringing people of like interests together. Browse the site to see as many as 450 specific topics in each general category, including “books,” “financial,” “sports,” “education,” “cultures & community,” and “work and career.” Check them out at <http://www.meetup.com/topics>
- For topics relating to science (from agriculture to physics to science technology), health (from addictions to dentistry to men’s health), and computers (from algorithms to hacking to virtual reality), go to ScienceDaily at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/topics>
- The Alternative Press Center hosts a website that indexes topics not commonly found in the mainstream media. Browse for topics such as “atheism,” “environmental justice,” “Marxism,” and “Third World women” at <http://www.altpress.org/direct2.html>
- Newseum offers the front pages of newspapers from all over the world. Click on a selection to access the foreign press source. Check out *The Age* from Melbourne, the *South China Morning Post* from Hong Kong, or the English Edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* from Tokyo at <http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages>
- News of the Weird compiles media stories of strange and wacky events. You could use these for humorous examples or ways to liven up a speech. Learn about the man who plans to challenge the world record for speed-kissing a venomous snake; read how one New York City artist covered her head in honey, cradled a dead rabbit, and whispered to it about pictures on the wall; and find out why a judge in Maryland ruled that mooning one’s neighbors, while in poor taste, is not illegal. Check it out at <http://www.news-of-the-weird.com/archive/index.html>

Did You Know?

Mind-Mapping to Generate Ideas

One particularly effective brainstorming method is called a web or mind map. **Mind maps** are visual representations of how ideas connect to each other. It's easy to do one yourself. Begin by choosing a word, writing it in the middle of a piece of paper, and circling it. Draw lines radiating from the circle, and for each line, make an association with your central word. Take one of these new ideas and draw lines out from it. Begin brainstorming through association again. Experiment with using different colors for different categories of ideas on the same mind map. Keep repeating this process until you've filled the paper, and you should have a significant number of ideas. If you prefer to mind-map on your computer, download the free software program FreeMind. Find it by typing *FreeMind* into your favorite search engine.

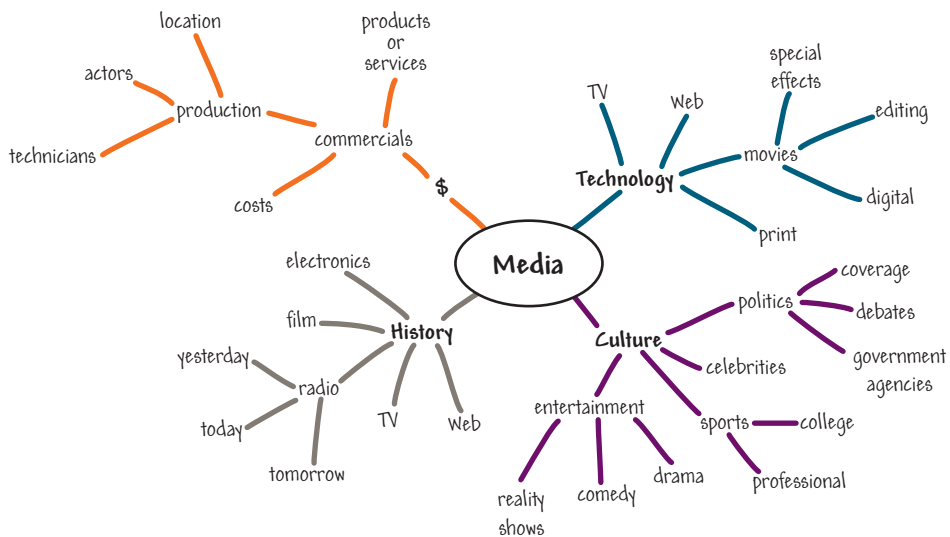


Figure 9.1 Use a mind map when brainstorming your topic. This example generates ideas about media.

5. Brainstorm

Brainstorming is a technique for generating ideas. A *quantity* of ideas is your goal; you evaluate their *quality* only after you've generated as many as you can. Here are some tips for a successful brainstorming session.

- Brainstorm with at least one other person. Because each of us is limited by our perceptions, getting together with other people increases the chances of coming at topic selection from as many angles as possible. Grab a friend, a teacher, a

representative from the upcoming audience, a family member, or a coworker, and put your heads together and see how many ideas you can generate. Some speech classes like to generate a list of topics of interest and noninterest to their particular group.

- Write everything down. Many people think they can remember all the ideas they generate, but few can. Keep a list. And find someone who can write or type quickly! The “Did You Know?” box (🔍 p. 137) offers another formatting idea.
- Be as freewheeling as possible. There’s no such thing as a crazy idea in brainstorming. You never know when that seemingly stupid idea will spark another idea that ends up being perfect for your speech topic.
- Once you’ve generated as many ideas as possible, go back and begin the evaluation process. Keep your specific audience and occasion in mind as you do.

9C

Choose Your Topic Early

There are two major reasons why speakers fail to choose a topic early. First, many people—especially college students—are skilled in the arts of procrastination and avoidance behavior. Innumerable rooms have been cleaned, heads of hair washed, video games played, and ring tones downloaded—all in the name of postponing the inevitable. Second, some speakers have trouble choosing from the multitude of available topics. So many things interest these people that they feel paralyzed when faced with choosing just one. They wait and wait, hoping for yet a better topic to surface, for their professor to tell them what to do, or, perhaps, to find a topic between the cushions on the sofa!

The sooner you choose your topic, the better. Students report that a fixed topic frees up energy; you’re no longer psychologically stuck for what to do. By removing the focus from yourself and your inability to choose a topic, you can begin to focus on your audience instead. Early topic choice means more time for research and organization, greater understanding of your material, and more time for practice. These strengthen your passion for communicating your ideas, and that passion, in turn, appeals to your listeners.

Early topic selection also allows time for creativity. Speaking is partly a creative process, and as any creative person can tell you, time is creativity’s best friend. All speakers need time to think, to nurture ideas, to let other thoughts filter in and out, and to let ideas incubate, bounce around, and latch onto other ideas. These are creative processes. Read about Erick’s experience in the “Speaker’s Story” box (🔍 p. 140).

Consider the “seed planted” as soon as you get your speaking assignment. Your speech date is going to arrive whether you want it to or not. Manage your time. Choose your topic early!

9D

Choose Topics of General Audience Interest

Though you want to select a topic in which *you* have an interest (to ensure motivation and enthusiasm), you must also choose one that’s appropriate and of interest to other people. What do audiences in general like to hear?

- **Audiences like topics that are about themselves.** Feed your audience's ego by giving them topics relevant to themselves. All people eat and rely on a clean, functioning environment. Most people are concerned about having enough resources such as money and time; are interested in their own health, shape, and appearance; are focused on safety; seek information to make themselves smarter and more efficient at work; and engage in relationships with family, coworkers, significant others, and fellow citizens. Topics relating to these personal interests tend to have wide appeal.
- **Audiences like topics that are current.** Listeners are interested in the things that shape their world today. Issues regarding the war in Iraq have brought audiences and speakers out in droves. Political seasons are wildly popular for public communication. New inventions, technologies, and theories that help people navigate the ever more complex world are of great interest to most audiences. Scientific theory and discoveries give us a sense of the physical world. Pop culture topics can generate lots of attention. The public seems to have an insatiable appetite for learning about people in the news, from Condoleezza Rice to Jon Stewart.
- **Audiences like topics that are historic or future-related.** The past holds a multitude of remarkable topics that help listeners connect with people in other cultures, times, and places. A good historical topic may explore changes in economics, politics, war, fashion, or customs. Most listeners are also curious about what life will be like tomorrow. Topics allowing your audience a peek into the homes, cars, computers, doctor's offices, trends, and travels of the future have wide appeal. Futurists, people who study trends to predict the world of tomorrow, usually draw large crowds of curious listeners.
- **Audiences like topics that satisfy their curiosity.** Most people are naturally curious about a lot of things, including the origins of certain words, customs, or ideologies; how things like cell phones, successful relationships, or time-out as a disciplinary tactic actually work; what we know about the natural world, such as that Venus is the first star visible at night; other people's belief systems, consumer habits, or life stories; and why things happen, such as why more U.S. women than men are getting college degrees or why fewer rattlesnakes are rattling before striking.

9E

Choose Topics of Specific Audience Interest

While topics of general interest are good to choose, your topic must ultimately be appropriate for your specific audience and speaking occasion. Chapter 8 thoroughly discusses audience analysis. If you have not yet read that chapter, now would be a good time. In brief review, keep the following in mind when choosing a topic:

- The purpose for the gathering
- Any potential audience expectations
- The time of day
- What the audience has heard before your presentation and what they will hear after it
- The formality of the occasion
- The common tendency for speakers to be ethnocentric

A Speaker's Story

The Seed Is Planted

“

Erick's informative speech was fast approaching. For a variety of reasons, he was having trouble with topic selection. Here's his story:

I just couldn't come up with my topic for my informative speech. Every time I had an idea, someone else in class had already come up with it, or else it was vague or lame. I talked with my teacher, and she encouraged me to not panic but instead to sleep on it over the weekend. She assured me that the seed had been planted and that the answer would come. Sure enough, I was relaxing in front of the TV on Saturday night when it hit. I had read an article earlier in the day about the continuing trend toward portability in electronics. It was interesting, but I didn't think much more about it. Then, while watching TV that night, I saw an ad for those single servings of soup in portable containers. That was it! Food was becoming more and more portable just like other things in our culture. I was intrigued. More importantly, I was motivated to learn more. I ended up discussing how trends in our culture were affecting trends in food. The audience liked it. It was a successful project for me.

”

- The age, gender, and other relevant demographics of the audience
- Any organizational or cultural facts about the audience
- The knowledge level of the audience

Know your audience! You want to ensure that you're giving the right speech to the right audience on the right occasion.

9F

Choose a Meaningful Topic

Because audience members give time and listening energy during a public presentation, they deserve a meaningful experience in return. The definition of meaningful depends on the audience and the occasion, but overall, your speech should make some sort of impact on the listeners. It may teach audience members something new and useful, or it may inspire them to action. It may encourage them to consider a new viewpoint, or it may touch their feelings. It may allow them to take the world or themselves more or less seriously.

Show respect for your audience's intelligence and listening time by avoiding topics that are stale and overdone. Most of your audience members have heard and read a lot about steroids, marijuana, the death penalty, abortion, and anorexia. You don't want them to tune you

Essentials

General Categories of Preferred Topics

Audiences like topics

- about themselves.
- that shape the world today.
- that are historic or future related.
- that satisfy their curiosity.

out even before you have begun. You, too, are probably tired of these topics—often known as “high school topics”—and may have trouble generating your own interest and enthusiasm. If you must choose or are assigned a stale topic, give it a new and relevant take.

- Instead of discussing the rising use of steroids among high school athletes (stale), examine how Congress’s investigation of steroid use among Major League Baseball players has led to new policies within the league (new take).
- Instead of arguing whether or not marijuana is a gateway drug (stale), look at hemp as an alternative fuel source (new take).
- Instead of arguing the rights or wrongs of abortion (stale), examine abortion as an example of the intersection of legality and morality (new take).
- Instead of describing what AIDS is (stale), share the details of Bono’s respected role in fighting it (new take).
- Instead of making a call for or against the death penalty (stale), convince your listeners that the new composition of the Supreme Court is likely to loosen restrictions on ways states mete out capital punishment (new take).

Don’t choose a topic—any old topic—simply to satisfy the speaking assignment. This can happen if you fail to understand the assignment (go see your instructor!), perceive the assignment as an unpleasant chore (reread Chapter 1!), or procrastinate (don’t, as argued earlier!). These handicaps obviously make choosing a topic difficult, but needlessly so.

There are no rules when it comes to choosing a meaningful topic. Exercise your critical-thinking skills as you examine your audience and the occasion to know what is meaningful. Ask someone who has spoken with the group before, talk to your instructor, or bounce ideas off people you trust and respect. Show respect for your listeners by making meaningful use of their time, intelligence, and listening energy.

9G

Move from Topic to Thesis Statement

Once you’ve selected your topic, you need to decide *how* to talk about it. In other words, you need a **thesis**—one main idea to which everything else in your presentation connects.

Sometimes known as the central idea, purpose statement, or core idea, the thesis is usually offered somewhere in the beginning of the talk and lets the audience know exactly what point you are trying to make and how you intend to make it. Don't confuse the thesis statement with the topic; a speech may have a topic (subject matter) but no thesis statement. See Table 9.1 for some examples.

If you're already accustomed to developing a thesis for a written piece of work, this skill will be of great help as you learn how to construct a thesis for an oral presentation. The purpose of any public speech is to communicate an idea to a group of listeners. You develop and communicate that one idea in the form of a thesis.

1. Know the difference between a true thesis and a false thesis

Every speech *should* have a thesis, but you have probably heard one that did not. No matter how enthusiastic a speaker is or how interesting the details of the speech are, when he or she explores a topic from several random angles yet leaves listeners with no single *new* perception of their world, the speaker has employed a **false thesis**. Here are some examples.

Example 1: *My speech will be about date rape. I'll first discuss victims of date rape, then look at how date rape occurs, and, finally, talk about some prevention measures you can take.*

Example 2: *Today I'll talk about conjoined twins. You will learn what conjoined twins are, hear about some famous cases of conjoined twins, and, finally, learn about some surgeries available to separate them.*

"Date rape" and "conjoined twins" are clearly the topics in these two examples. The first sentence in each example introduces the topic, and the second sentence outlines how the topic will be discussed. But in each example, the topic goes off in several random directions that mask as main supporting points. It sounds like there's a central plan (or thesis), but there's not. The "thesis" is false.

In other words, if there were a true thesis, the main points would be inevitable and not easily substitutable. For instance, in the false date-rape example, the "main points" could just as easily be:

My speech will be about date rape. I'll first discuss the history of date rape as a college problem, then look at some common date-rape drugs, and, finally, talk about penalties paid by those convicted of date rape.

A true thesis narrows a topic down to one main idea. The main supporting points will soon be evident, but for now, you're just concerned with the thesis. Let's now look at two more examples, using the same topics of "date rape" and "conjoined twins," each containing a true thesis.

Example 1: *Today you'll learn that college campuses across the United States are using a variety of unique strategies to combat the problem of date rape.*

The topic of "date rape" has been narrowed to "strategies for combating date rape on college campuses." Date rape among nonstudent populations, drugs used in some date-rape cases, or what happens to those convicted of date rape, while important topics, are not the focus of *this* presentation; a speaker cannot address everything there is to say about a topic in one speech. Nonetheless, audience members leave this speech perceiving their world in one new

Table 9.1 Topic versus Thesis

TOPIC	THESIS
<i>Bottled water</i>	(Informative thesis) <i>There are environmental costs to making, shipping, and dumping single-serving water bottles.</i>
<i>Quentin Tarantino</i>	(Persuasive thesis) <i>Quentin Tarantino's influence is obvious when we look at the many film directors who have followed in his footsteps.</i>
<i>Optimism</i>	(Special-occasion thesis) <i>Let optimism be your guiding force.</i>

way—college campuses are addressing the issue of date rape through multiple strategies. The speaker can provide many kinds of interesting details in the body of the speech, but those details are discussed and organized within the chosen main points, which are the strategies campuses are using.

Example 2: *My talk this morning aims to show you how the process of separating conjoined twins, from preoperative procedures to postoperative care, has been greatly improved due to recent advances in medicine.*

The topic of “conjoined twins” has been narrowed to the “improved process of separating conjoined twins.” Other angles such as why conjoined twins are formed, caring for conjoined twins, or famous cases of conjoined twins, though fascinating, are not the focus of *this* speech. The one new way in which this audience should perceive the world is: *recent medical advances have led to an improved process of separating conjoined twins*. A good speech is one that does not attempt too much. Instead, it makes one point and makes it well.

2. Other thesis considerations

- **A good thesis helps you focus on your audience, not yourself.** The confidence gained by knowing what you are talking about and where you are going with it allows you to expend your energies on your audience instead of on yourself. Terese, a college junior, tells it from her point of view: “The benefits of having a great thesis are that it frees me to allow my personal style to emerge, and it enables me to connect with my audience so much more effectively. The speech is no longer about me wading desperately through a haze of details. I can now confidently stand on a firm platform and look at and really communicate with my audience.”
- **Listeners appreciate a meaningful thesis.** Audience members come to your presentation hoping to make good use of their time. They can get frustrated and resentful when they have to sit through meandering and unrelated thoughts. On the other hand, a great thesis, well developed in the body of the speech, makes them glad they have come and grateful for the time and energy you put into broadening their horizons. Here are a few more examples of meaningful thesis statements:
 - *We can see remnants of ancient Roman culture throughout contemporary Western life.* The speaker supported her thesis by showing listeners how Roman ways of life

Essentials

Understanding Thesis Statements

- A true thesis allows the audience to walk away from the presentation seeing the world in one new way.
- A good thesis helps you focus on the audience, not on yourself.
- Listeners appreciate a meaningful thesis.
- Less is more. Avoid the “data dump.”

are, in part, responsible for today’s way of life, especially in terms of our political structure, architecture, and entertainment.

- *The rise of multiple media channels has significantly altered presidential campaigns.* The speaker supported his thesis by comparing presidential campaigns in the days of the “Big 3” television networks and a few powerful newspapers to today’s landscape of endless print, digital, visual, and audio media.
- *Tenzing Norgay deserves fame equal to that of Sir Edmund Hillary in respect to the first successful complete ascent of Mt. Everest.* The speaker supported his thesis through a narrative of Norgay’s life and accomplishments prior to and including his famous 1953 climb.
- **Less is more.** A successful thesis does not try to do too much—it does not, for example, aim to solve all the United States’ domestic problems or teach everything there is to know about taxidermy. Less is more when it comes to communicating ideas to an audience. It’s fine, for example, to teach your audience just about the material composition of a baseball. You don’t need to also pay homage to Wrigley Field, inform people about the history of Chicago, or convince listeners that the legendary curse on the Cubs will come to an end someday. One idea, fully developed, is preferable to a hodgepodge of ideas of equal “importance.” Your presentation is an opportunity to make a point, not to show how much you know by engaging in a data dump.

Summary

- Identifying the general reason for speaking helps you narrow your focus and begin your speech preparation in the right frame of mind.
- Choosing a topic should not be difficult; there are endless topics available if you know where to look.
- Choosing a topic early allows time for speech preparation and creativity.

- Topics of general interest tend to have wide audience appeal.
- An analysis of the audience and context helps you choose a topic appropriate for the specific listeners and occasion.
- Choosing a meaningful topic shows respect for your listeners' intelligence and listening energy.
- Speakers must move from topic to thesis, the one or two sentences that let the audience know exactly what one point you are trying to make and how you intend to make it.

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THESE STRATEGY KEYS**

You've got to know why you're speaking and what you want your audience to know, feel, do, or believe by the end of your talk. Matching the right topic and thesis to the right audience helps create a listener-friendly speech.

EXERCISES

1. *With a partner in class, take turns sharing your individual creative processes. Where, when, and how do your best ideas come to you? Can you easily describe your creative process to someone else (to yourself)?*
2. *In a small group, brainstorm at least ten topics under each of the following categories. After brainstorming, pick the top two in each category that your group would like to hear a presentation on.*
 - Domestic and international current events
 - Societal trends
 - People in the news
 - Medicine and technology
 - Local or state issues of concern or interest
 - Business and industry
3. *As a class, generate a list of topics that you all consider stale and overdone. Break into small groups, and have each group choose one of the topics. Have each member of the group go home and research at least one new take on the topic. During the next class period, compile the individual findings, and then have all groups report.*
4. *Look over the list of suggestions in Section 9B about where to find your topic. Which of these suggestions look possible or interesting to you?*
5. *With a partner in class, turn each of the following false theses into a true thesis.*
 - I'll be talking this evening about airplanes. First you'll learn about the invention of the airplane; you'll then hear about some devastating airplane crashes; and finally, you'll learn about new safety technologies.

- This morning, we'll be focusing on the city of Washington, DC. You'll understand why it was chosen as our nation's capital, learn about its many famous monuments, and be inspired to go there on your next vacation.
- I'll be speaking today about social-networking sites. We'll focus first on popular sites like MySpace and Facebook; we'll then look at some of the dangers for young kids using these sites; and finally, we'll explore the future potential of these sites in general.



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 10

Incorporating Your Research

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I am not going to lie and say I love research. However, speechmaking, in its own strange way, actually motivated me to go out and look at the greater world around me. I wanted to be perceived as a credible speaker, and I knew I needed some additional research to enhance what I already knew. I didn’t want to run out of things to say and end up giving a relatively empty speech, because then I’d have to go back to my seat looking like some sort of idiot.”

“This class has taught me patience. You need patience to be able to think critically about a specific topic. It takes dedication. I now know that few effective speeches are given without solid research behind them. It takes time and effort to deliver information to an audience without boring them to death.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

Find and incorporate relevant research.

STYLE

10A

Follow These Tips before Starting Your Research

10B

Make Use of the Breadth of Sources Available for Research

1. *The Internet*
2. *Books and other hard-copy resources*
3. *Librarians*
4. *Interviews*
5. *Organizations*
6. *Government data*

10C

Evaluate Your Sources to Ensure Your Credibility

10D

Cite Sources for Listener Comprehension

1. *How to cite*
2. *When to cite*

Key Terms

blog	▶ 154
database	▶ 154
discussion group	▶ 154
Freedom of Information Act	▶ 160
open-source website	▶ 157
primary research	▶ 151
search engine	▶ 152
secondary research	▶ 152

Though each of us carries around an impressive storehouse of knowledge and experience, it's impossible to know everything. The majority of your informative, persuasive, and special-occasion presentations profit from your looking beyond the borders of your own known world. Good research enhances the listenability of your presentation because it increases your understanding of your topic. Once you become better informed, you can “own” the material and clearly and confidently communicate it. Research also increases the confidence that listeners have in you and your ideas. This chapter provides tips for conducting research, examines various research sources, and discusses recommended ways for you to evaluate and cite your researched material.

10A

Follow These Tips before Starting Your Research

Technology, especially the web, has made “looking things up” an almost automatic process. When you want to know what year the song *Louie, Louie* was released, or you need to review a report that your predecessor wrote last year, or you want to see who will be teaching a certain course next term, you look it up. The easy availability of almost unlimited information has turned us all into researchers; it's no surprise that *google* has become a verb. The good news is that most people have a grasp of elementary research skills. You may well have skills beyond that level.

Whatever your level of research experience, here are some general tips to follow before beginning any research:

- **Start early.** You may have a rough plan of the ideas you want to communicate, but research actually helps you shape your topic, form a thesis, and create your supporting points. The earlier you start this process, the more time you allow for the incubation of ideas. Additional insights you gain increase your confidence and give you even more valuable ideas to share. Another reason to start early is that students commonly report beginning their research with one idea in mind but changing, reconsidering, and reshaping that idea based on what they find.

Some speakers claim that they work best under the pressure of a deadline, but this is often an excuse for procrastination. Simply put, the more time you give yourself to research, the more you're able to create meaningful ideas, absorb your material, and increase your degree of ownership and confidence. Start early!

- **Keep your listeners in mind during research.** Because you speak for the sake of your audience, search for material relevant to what your listeners need to know so that they can better interact with your ideas. Put yourself in your listeners' shoes, and ask yourself what *you* would need or want to know. For example, if the purpose of your speech is to inform your audience about the rising economic influence of casinos in your state, sharing the history of early Las Vegas casinos may not be relevant (unless you live in Nevada). Instead, your audience will need to know how many casinos are operating in



your state, how money is filtered from the casinos to the state economy, and how the state economy has changed since the casinos opened. Filter out irrelevant material, no matter how readily accessible or uniquely interesting it may be.

- Narrow the scope of your research.** The enormous amount of information available today can quickly overwhelm the most disciplined and focused researcher. Many speakers quickly realize that the more they look into something, the more there is to know. Narrow the scope of your research prior to starting. One search engine brought up 253 hits for *educational techniques for autistic first-grade boys in Des Moines, Iowa*.¹ That's still too big a number, though somewhat more manageable than the 54,600,000 hits brought up by *educational techniques*.
- Gather more material than you think you need.** While you must limit your scope, remember that the greater your storehouse of knowledge, the greater your chances for effective communication. Speakers report higher levels of confidence when they know a lot more than they end up sharing. Natalie, a college sophomore, shares her experience:

As a first-generation college student, I am very interested in learning about the many ways a college degree is likely to make my adult life different from that of my non-degreed parents. I'm well aware that my earning potential is different, but are there other differences? Because I was taking sociology and public speaking during the same term, I decided to use this topic for both my ten-page sociology paper and my ten-minute informative speech. Obviously, I was able to include many more ideas in the paper, but I realized that the amount of information I gathered for it actually ended up changing the whole experience of my presentation assignment. I liked going up there with all that knowledge. Though I had a clear plan for what I wanted to say, I knew I could change things at the last moment if I sensed the audience wanted it or needed it. And the question-and-answer session went really well. I had thought about these ideas so thoroughly that I was able to expand on my answers in unexpected ways.

- Create a documentation system.** Documenting researched ideas is one of your ethical responsibilities. If you haven't already read about plagiarism on  **pages 55–59**, now is the time to do it. An increasing number of colleges and universities are using plagiarism-detection services such as www.turnitin.com, and you do not want to pay the price of slipping up—no matter how unintentional the cheating. When researching, create some sort of documentation system *at the beginning* of your project, and stick with it. You cannot rely on your memory to go back and find sources later! The “Did You Know?” box ( **p. 151**) offers a list of the source matter you want to keep track of.

Consistency in documentation is not only good discipline; it makes creating your bibliography much easier when you are required or asked to provide one. Whether you use a legal pad, note cards, a digital file, or some other system, create a plan to link an idea to its source. Know ahead of time what citation style you are using (MLA, APA,

Did You Know?

Documenting Source Matter

The citation style you use (MLA, APA, CSE) determines the formatting of the research source for a bibliography, but in general, these are the important pieces of information you want to keep track of for all research sources used:

Web Source

- Name of the website
- Name of the site host or sponsoring organization (if applicable)
- Title of the page
- URL, or Internet address
- Name of the author, editor, or compiler (if available)
- Date published (if available)
- Date you accessed the information

Book

- Title (and subtitle, if applicable) of the work
- Name(s) of author(s) or editor(s)
- Volume and edition (if applicable)
- Page(s) on which the information is found
- Date of publication
- Publisher information (name, city, state)

Article

- Title of the article and periodical
- Name(s) of the author(s) (if available)
- Volume and edition (if applicable)
- Date of publication
- Page(s) on which the information is found

Interview

- Name and title of the interviewee
- Date and location of the interview

Chicago, CSE style) and what citation elements (title, author, date, issue, URL) that style requires. Then use it consistently.

10B

Make Use of the Breadth of Sources Available for Research

Research sources fall under two broad categories. **Primary research** collects data from experiments, case studies, surveys, observation, and interviews. You may perform primary research yourself, or you may locate another person's primary research among the many

Essentials

Ensuring Smooth and Relevant Research

- Start early. Time allows for the needed incubation of ideas.
- Keep your listeners in mind during your research. Ask yourself what they want to know or believe.
- Narrow the scope of your research.
- Gather more material than you think you will need.
- Create a documentation system. Stay organized!

sources discussed in this section. **Secondary research** is gathered, collected, or organized from other sources and is found in print and electronic sources of all kinds.

Web-based research is the research method of choice for many people today, especially students. While an impressive amount of quality research can be accessed online, not everything is available on the Internet, and some of what is there is not reliable. Many other sources of research are still absolutely relevant, and your instructor may even require you to use some of them. Let's look at all your sources, starting with the Internet.

1. The Internet

The Internet offers researchers an extensive array and amount of information. Resources include:

- **Websites.** Websites are locations on the Internet containing information, visuals, sound, and video on a given topic. Millions of individuals, companies, schools, and organizations—from AAMCO to Madonna to the Zoological Society of Manitoba—own and manage their own websites. You must be sure the website you are using is giving you truthful, accurate, and current information. The “Did You Know?” box (◀ p. 153) provides several criteria for assessing the credibility of a website.
- **Search engines.** A **search engine** is a software program that allows users to access information about a given topic. Google, Yahoo! and MSN are among the most popular search engines. Realize, however, that not all information available on the web is fully searchable from these sites. See the “Did You Know?” box (◀ p. 155) for more specialized search engines that may help you find the information you need.

Many organizations provide searching within their own websites, allowing you to quickly navigate their own archive of online content. Many websites offer recommended links to other sites as well, which are good sources of additional research paths to follow. Table 10.1 (◀ p. 156) lists several examples of excellent Internet sources for a variety of useful categories.

Did You Know?

Assessing the Credibility of a Website

Here are some questions to ask yourself when analyzing a website's potential as a credible research source. Be thorough—ask them *all* before you decide to trust the site.

- **Is there a legitimate organization behind the site?** Look for a home page that provides an “about us” link, a physical address, and an easy way to contact the author or webmaster. It should also be easy to locate the credentials of the author or other people whose work is used or cited.
- **Is the site objective?** One of your first tasks is to determine the purpose of the site. Commercial sites and blogs ending in *.com* are typically not objective. Governmental (*.gov*), professional (*.org*), and academic sites (*.edu*) typically are. While these codes in the URL (*.com*, *.gov*, *.org*, *.edu*, etc.) are a first indication of a site's degree of objectivity, they are not absolute. Always verify any information you find on the web with another credible source.
- **Is it easy to verify the accuracy of the information on the site?** Look for easy-to-find third-party support (citations, references, source material), especially through links to other legitimate websites. Also, look for a recent “last updated” notation. A website designed in 2002, say, and since forgotten has little credibility.
- **Is the site well designed?** Look for professionalism and consistency in layout, typography, and images. Legitimate organizations pay the money required to hire a professional website designer.
- **Is the site easy to use and useful?** Look for ease of access to useful information. Is the web operator more interested in letting you easily find the information you want, or in showing off dazzling new web technology? Look for a writing style that's clear, direct, and sincere.
- **Is promotional content kept to a minimum?** If a website must have ads, it should be easy to distinguish between them and the site content. Pop-up ads are especially annoying, and more legitimate organizations refrain from using them.
- **Is the site error-free?** Typographical errors, grammatical errors, broken links, and inaccuracies quickly decrease a site's credibility.

Sources: “Stanford Guidelines for Web Credibility,” Stanford University Persuasive Technology Lab, <http://www.webcredibility.org/guidelines/>; and “A Guide to Critical Thinking About What You See on the Web,” Ithaca College Library, <http://www.ithaca.edu/library/training/think.html> (both accessed July 2, 2007).

Many college and university library websites provide helpful tutorials on search-engine use in general. The University of California–Berkeley Library is one such helpful site. Find it at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html>.

Additional types of Internet resources for researching information include:

- **Databases.** A **database** is a collection of data on a single topic or a variety of topics; it is organized so that the content can be easily accessed and managed. Databases exist for topics across the spectrum, including flowers, genome projects, and U.S. patents.
- **Discussion groups.** A **discussion group** allows Internet users to discuss topics of mutual interest. They're good starting points for researching users' attitudes and opinions. Many discussion groups also include topic experts. Because many postings are unverified and virtually anonymous, always go to other research material to enhance or confirm what you learn on a discussion board. Discussion groups exist for Abyssinian-cat owners, medieval-military-history buffs, panic-disorder sufferers, and all sorts of people in between.
- **Blogs.** Short for *web log*, **blogs** contain dated entries of commentary, opinion, or news on a given subject in reverse chronological order. Hosted by one person or a group of contributors, blogs typically combine text, images, videos, and links to other relevant websites. Covering topics ranging from politics to books to local issues, some blogs have become highly influential. Nonetheless, because most are based on personal opinion, you must conduct follow-up research from an unbiased or original source before relying on a blog's "facts." Credible bloggers provide links to their primary sources.
- **Online resources.** The web has become a place to find sources once available only in hard-copy form. Many credible encyclopedias, glossaries, and dictionaries are available online, including *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia that is growing in popularity, but you must use it with caution. Read more in the "Did You Know?" box (📖 p. 157).
- **Online newspapers and magazines.** Most newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals publish online as well as in print. Benefits of the online versions often include discussion opportunities with authors, additional photographs and video, information and updates unavailable at the time the periodical went to print, and links to other sources. Newspapers from the *New York Times* to the *Marion Record* (of Marion, South Dakota, population under 1,000) and magazines from *The Nation* to *Bird Times* are available online.
- **Online journal articles.** Journals contain research and opinion relevant to various professionals and specialists. While a full electronic library of journals is not yet complete, more titles are archived online each year. Some are available free to the public, while others are accessible through paid subscription only. Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>) is one database for finding relevant journal articles, including those from the *International Journal of Tantric Studies* to *RePEc* (Research Papers in Economics).
- **Online books.** Websites such as Online Books (hosted by the University of Pennsylvania, <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu>) and Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page) are bringing full texts to the web. As of now, only a small percentage of books are accessible online, but more become available each year.

2. Books and other hard-copy resources

Though the Internet is easy to access and seemingly infinite, there is still much research that you can accomplish only through books and other hard resources. Not all magazines,

Did You Know?

Beyond Google: Specialized Searching

Depending on whom you ask, Google currently hosts between 50 and 75 percent of all web searches.* Michael Lanz, vice president of search industry solutions at Nielsen/NetRatings in New York, notes that “Google’s dominance will encourage innovation from the entire search industry. Companies will aim for better search functionalities [and] more incentives programs, and smaller providers will try and fulfill targeted search needs.”**

Already, many search engines exist to help you more quickly and efficiently find the research you need and want. Webquest provides a long list of specialized search engines and directories. Find it at <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/searching/specialized.html>. Here are other places to go:

- Alta Vista is a full-text search engine for searching individual websites. It’s also home of Babel Fish, good for doing rough translations of text from one language to another and for translating foreign-language websites. Find it at <http://www.altavista.com>
- About.com hosts millions of links to Internet resources. Experts in a given field, known as Guides, gather and create web pages and steer you toward them. Check it out at <http://www.about.com>
- ChaCha hooks you up with a real person who “will ask you questions, understand exactly what you want, and send you results that are dead-on.” Find someone at <http://www.chacha.com>
- Scirus is a science-specific search engine that accesses more than 450 million pages of data, reports, journals, and peer-reviewed articles that other search engines often miss. Go to <http://www.scirus.com>
- MuseumStuff helps you find information about art, history, and science. Start your search at <http://www.museumstuff.com>
- KartOO looks to a variety of search engines and answers your search questions with a visual-display interface. Ask your research question at <http://www.kartoo.com>

*Jane Wakefield, “Trying to Break the Google Habit,” *BBC News*, April 12, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk> (accessed September 27, 2007).

**Giselle Abramovich, “Researcher: Google Snares 50% of Searches in April,” *DMNews*, May 30, 2006, <http://www.dmnews.com> (accessed September 27, 2007).

newspapers, and journals have a web presence. Reference sources, including encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, and dictionaries, are often easier to use in hard-copy form. Hard copy can yield unexpected finds such as additional photos, informative figures, boxes, and graphs that don’t make their way into the electronic record. Finally, many sources written before the information explosion of the web are not yet available online, and some may never be. If necessary, see a reference librarian for help in accessing these hard-copy resources.

Table 10.1 Search within a Website Itself

Government and politics	Democratic Party Libertarian Party Republican National Committee The White House	http://www.democrats.org http://www.lp.org http://www.gop.com http://www.whitehouse.gov/index.html
Environment	Department of the Interior Greenpeace Nature Conservancy World Wildlife Fund	http://www.doi.gov http://www.greenpeace.org/usa http://www.nature.org http://www.worldwildlife.org
Nature and science	NASA National Geographic National Science Foundation Smithsonian Institution	http://www.nasa.gov http://www.nationalgeographic.com http://www.nsf.gov http://www.si.edu
Health	American Medical Association American Cancer Society Centers for Disease Control and Prevention The Body (HIV/AIDS Resource)	http://www.ama-assn.org http://www.cancer.org http://www.cdc.gov http://www.thebody.com
Media	Entertainment Software Association Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting The Grammy Awards The Pulitzer Prizes	http://www.theesa.com http://www.fair.org/index.php http://www.grammy.com http://www.pulitzer.org
Crime and law	CIA Department of Justice FBI National Crime Prevention Council	https://www.cia.gov http://www.usdoj.gov http://www.fbi.gov http://www.ncpc.org
Industry and commerce	Department of Commerce Federal Reserve World Bank	http://www.commerce.gov http://www.federalreserve.gov http://www.worldbank.org

3. Librarians

The old stereotype of the stern librarian whose only job is to stack books and shush everyone is long gone. Today's librarians, especially at college and university libraries, are all about

Did You Know?

Wikipedia: Use It with a Critical Eye

Wikipedia, a popular online encyclopedia, is an **open-source website**, meaning that any and all are invited to create or edit most entries. Because Wikipedia's millions of pages in many languages are not peer-reviewed or fact-checked, their reliability and credibility as sources for research are open to question. While experts administer some pages, people with agendas vandalize others. Using the site can be a controversial choice.

Many people use Wikipedia as an initial place to research; it often pops up early in any given web search. It may be a good place to find a basic fact such as the birthplace of a famous person, but always cross-check with other credible sources to verify the content you use. Many Wikipedia pages also provide insufficient or incomplete information.

For example, while you can learn the history behind the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park in Greensboro, NC, on its Wikipedia page, visiting the official site sponsored by the National Park Service gives you a richer variety and greater depth of information directly from the source.

Treat any Wikipedia entry with a critical eye. The most credible Wikipedia entries provide external links and references that lead you to other resources, sometimes even primary ones. Bear in mind, however, that content on Wikipedia pages is often copied from other places on the Web, and vice versa. This complicates your task of verification, as bad information may be replicated in several places. Always keep digging to locate the least-filtered sources.

The message is: never use Wikipedia as your only source of information. Most instructors will not accept it as a reference on your bibliography, and citing it during your speech can weaken your credibility with listeners.

access—access to information the majority of us probably don't even know exists. Some students feel they are bothering a librarian who always looks busy doing something else. On the contrary, the reference librarian's job is to help library users build information-literacy skills while finding and retrieving relevant, credible information. Reference librarian Ann Roselle says this:

Everyone knows that reference librarians answer questions. However, we can also help you create dynamic class presentations. We can assist you in finding and integrating all kinds of information (text, images, audio, video) to support your ideas. We will also guide you in the use of proprietary and public information so that you are in compliance with copyright law and fair use.

Many students report talking with a librarian only as a last resort, after they have become stuck and are coming up empty-handed in their research efforts. Instead, consider contacting a reference librarian at the outset. Librarians can save you a lot of time by pointing you

in the right directions and helping make your research smart, efficient, and ethical. Find your librarian at the reference desk or online through the home page of your library's website.

4. Interviews

The world is full of people who know different things than you do. Some are experts in their fields. Most people, especially when asked by a student, are happy to talk about what they know and believe. Audience members tend to be impressed when they learn that a speaker has taken the time to conduct an interview. Mentioning your interview with a knowledgeable, credentialed person increases both your own credibility and the reliability of your information. Read the "Speaker's Story" box (🔍 p. 159) for one student's experience interviewing a famous person.

Interviews—whether conducted face-to-face, by phone, or by e-mail—take time and preparation. Be sure that you can efficiently find out what you need to know, and earn the goodwill of the interviewee by fully preparing yourself ahead of time. Here are some basic guidelines. Books and websites on proper interviewing etiquette are also widely available.

- **Be gracious.** No one is required to give you an interview. Should someone grant you the gift of his or her time, be thankful and gracious.
- **Schedule ahead.** Always schedule an interview ahead of time; don't walk in expecting to see someone on the spot. Use the phone or e-mail to identify yourself as a student, and tell the interviewee the specific purpose of the interview. For example, tell the tulip expert at the botanical garden that you are researching for a presentation to your botany class on the recent pest infestation attacking tulip crops in Turkey. These specifics let the interviewee, if necessary, brush up on the topic to prepare for the interview. Also, if the person can't help you, he or she can often steer you in the direction of someone who can.
- **Show up or call on time for the scheduled interview.** People are busy. Be prompt, and don't overstay your scheduled interval. Respect your interviewee's time.
- **Open the interview with some pleasantries.** Thank the interviewee for his or her time, and provide a reminder again of who you are and what information you're seeking. Fulfill your ethical obligations by being up front and honest about what you plan to do with the information you gather.
- **Plan questions ahead.** Plan most of your questions ahead of time, but allow room for follow-up questions that may arise during the interview itself. Do the relevant research before the interview so that you don't waste the interviewee's time with questions whose answers are easily available elsewhere.
- **Plan a recording strategy.** Will you take notes as the interviewee talks, or will you use a recording device? Always ask for permission ahead of time if you plan to audio- or videotape the interview.
- **Be accurate.** Double-check for correct grammar and spelling in your e-mails or any other printed materials the interviewee may see. Learn how to pronounce any new or difficult words. You don't want to compromise your credibility with errors.

A Speaker's Story

I Had Nothing to Lose by Asking



Terrence

As I was researching my speech on the cruise-ship industry, I decided I had nothing to lose by going straight to a source—the president of a well-known cruise line. I sent an e-mail, and he agreed to an e-mail interview. As a result, I was able to include some direct quotes from him about the future trends in the industry. My audience was impressed I had done the interview; it really caught their attention and helped them remember my speech. You never know what can happen when you ask.



- **Dress professionally for face-to-face interviews.** Don't undermine your credibility by dressing inappropriately or too casually for an interview.
- **Extend your thanks.** Send a follow-up note thanking the interviewee for his or her time and information. If appropriate, share a brief story about the results of your interview. Tell how impressed the audience was with the collected information, report on any follow-up questions you answered in the question-and-answer segment, or share the grade you got on the assignment.

5. Organizations

Most organizations compile, house, and distribute information to anyone wanting or needing it. Contact the American Lung Association when looking for the latest research on lung disease or lung health, Mothers Against Drunk Driving when looking for information about drunk driving or underage drinking, or Planned Parenthood when seeking information about sexual health. Using information from a trusted and well-known organization adds to the credibility of your material. If you incorporate data from a less well-known organization, be sure to research its mission well enough to explain it to your listeners. Also, keep in mind that many (though not all) organizations are based on a particular ideology and/or have a political agenda. Though their information is usually trustworthy, it may be skewed in ways that support their ideological mission. The test in the “Did You Know?” box (🔍 p. 160) underscores the importance of knowing who your source is.

6. Government Data

The U.S. federal government, in addition to city, county, and state governments, is required to collect, manage, and make available to its citizens various types of data. For example, the Census Bureau provides information ranging from payroll data for public employees to state government tax collections to statistics on prisoners in state and federal correctional facilities. Counties and cities provide information ranging from local ordinances to their operating

Did You Know?

Organization Names: Who Exactly Is Your Source?

Some names of organizations clearly state the organizations' mission and purpose. Examples include the American Medical Association, the Association of America's Public TV Stations, and the Organization of History Teachers. Other organizations have names that are *not* as obvious. Dig deep into an organization before using its printed or online material in your presentation. See whether you can match the following organizations with their purpose or mission.

ORGANIZATION	PURPOSE/MISSION
1. People for the American Way	a. Advocates the teaching of anti-evolution beliefs
2. Center on Capitalism and Society	b. Advocates progressive, liberal ideas and policies in the United States
3. Focus on the Family	c. Works for racial equality at the grassroots level
4. Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture	d. Wants to do away with capitalism
5. Progress for America	e. Brings together leading scholars in economics, business, and law to study capitalist institutions
6. Industrial Workers of the World	f. Promotes conservative policies for U.S. citizens
7. Morino Institute	g. Aims to preserve traditional, Christian-based values
8. Californians for Justice	h. Is dedicated to opening the doors of opportunity in economics, civics, health, and education

Answers: 1b; 2e; 3g; 4a; 5f; 6d; 7h; 8c

budgets to vendors with whom they do business. Data from some foreign governments are also available. Much of this information is available on the web. You can also request it in person or in writing through the office of the particular government.

The **Freedom of Information Act**, enacted in 1966, ensures access to federal documents outside the boundaries of nine specific exemptions, including national security and public privacy information. The Electronic Freedom of Information Act, passed in 1996, makes many federal records available online. Requests must be made in writing to access any of these hard-copy or electronic records. Know that it can take months to get your request approved, if it will be approved at all.

10C

Evaluate Your Sources to Ensure Your Credibility

Because your own credibility is directly tied to the quality of the material you present, you must ensure the credibility of your sources. First, be aware of the wide range of source material available. References run from the highly credible to the somewhat credible to the entirely incredible. You cannot trust a source just because it is easily accessed and looks good on the surface. Virtually anyone can build a website. Language is easily skewed in ways to hide an organization's true mission. Some organizations offer fancy-sounding titles to anyone willing to pay a nominal fee. Companies with something to sell sometimes sponsor opinion polls and distribute articles about their products or services that look like news but are really promotions.

Speaking of news, the politicization of some forms of the news media has made suspect even the once-revered journalist. In fact, it was recently revealed that three journalists were paid to promote White House policies.² It's not uncommon today to see critics posing as journalists on television and in newspapers, magazines, and blogs. The Society of Professional Journalists, a professional organization "dedicated to encouraging the free practice of journalism and stimulating high standards of ethical behavior," says that true journalists have four ethical obligations, including freedom from any interest other than the public's right to know and accountability to readers, listeners, viewers, and each other.³

Many credible, excellent sources of information are available, but it's incumbent on you as a researcher to thoroughly examine each and every source you use. Your listeners are expecting you to do your homework in order to give them reliable information and well-supported opinions. Make sure your research sources enhance rather than detract from your integrity and trustworthiness.

Here are some questions to ask when evaluating research sources:

- **Can I verify the information elsewhere?** Technology has given a platform to anyone who wants one. It's therefore more important than ever to double-check (if not triple-check) anything you read or hear, especially if the material is billed as "unique" or "exclusive." On occasion, researchers find conflicting information when verifying questions as large as whether Mars harbors life or as mundane as which civilization invented soap. If you find conflicting information, you need to tell the audience that your research uncovered incompatible results. It's better to be honest about what you found, even if it's untidy, rather than pick one answer and present it as absolute fact.
- **Is this information based on fact or on someone's opinion?** You need facts to support some ideas, while opinions are fine for others. If evidence or support is based on observable or verifiable evidence, it is typically fact. If not, it is typically opinion. If sharing an opinion, you have an ethical obligation to present it as such and not present it as a fact.
- **Is this research current?** What may have been true ten years ago is not necessarily so today. Typically, the more recent the material, especially in the areas of science, health, technology, and government, the more credible it is. On occasion, an older source lends

Essentials

Evaluating Your Source

- Verify the information in a minimum of two sources.
- Know whether the information is based on fact or opinion.
- Make sure the research is current.
- Understand the context of the information.
- Use respected sources.
- Check to see whether the source works to correct errors.

an idea more credibility. This is especially true if your point is to show the substance and longevity of a particular idea. For example, a firsthand account from a World War II diary provides more credible insight into that global conflict than would the recent testimony of the soldier's great-granddaughter.

- **Is this material contextualized?** People who are looking to support a point tend to take quotes, statistics, and other material out of their original context. For example, in the final debate of the 2004 presidential election, both candidates were accused of making charges against the other by using statistics lacking full context.⁴ John Kerry was correct—though he did not provide the full context—when he charged that the top 1 percent of income earners in the United States had received \$89 billion of George Bush's tax cut the previous year. What he failed to mention was that the top 1 percent pay 35 percent of all income taxes. Because that 35 percent amounts to such a large number, you would expect the top 1 percent to get a large dollar sum back from *any* tax cut.

If you come upon out-of-context research and pass it along, your own credibility may suffer. Ask yourself whether you have the full context for your researched material or whether it is only part of a larger story. Find the primary (original) source if you think the material is taken out of its larger context. Ethical standards call on you to understand the context of your researched material to the best of your ability before you present it to listeners.

- **Is this source respected?** If your source is someone titled *Dr.* Williams, find out whether she earned an MD or a PhD at an accredited institution or bought the title for \$5 from a mail-order company ad in the back of a magazine. If you're looking for information about saber-toothed tigers, rely on the Illinois State Museum rather than on "Billy's Saber-Toothed Tigers Rock!" website. Are you confident of the authority of your source?
- **Does this source work to correct errors?** Because credible sources value accuracy and their own reputation, they are quick to remedy any situation where either is put into question. Most newspapers and magazines have a "corrections" section in the first few pages of their publications. Television programs, once they are aware of having aired incorrect information, are quick to retract such inaccuracies the next time the programs

air. Webmasters quickly update legitimate sites. The presence of corrections, retractions, and clarifications is a good sign of a source's value to you as research material.

10D

Cite Sources for Listener Comprehension

Your composition classes have trained you well in properly citing research sources in your written work. The conversational style preferred by public speakers, however, allows sources to be cited differently in a presentation. Whereas a reader may benefit from knowing the complete URL or the volume, issue, date, and page of a certain source, listeners quickly become bogged down by such details. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't cite your research sources in a presentation! You should. You just cite them less formally and with more flexibility. Always check with your instructor for classroom speaking. He or she may have added guidelines and/or requirements for verbally citing sources.

1. How to cite

- **In most cases, simplify the citation.** Though you must cite some details about the research source, your listeners do not need (nor do they want) every last feature of your research source. Refer to the "Preventative Dental Health Association website" instead of mentioning the "Preventative Dental Health Association website found at <http://emporium.turnpike.net/P/PDHA/index.htm>, accessed on February 27, 2007." In your speech on Navajo rugs, mention that you got much of your information from "a classic 1997 publication called *A Guide to Navajo Weavings* by Native American art expert Kent McManis." There is no need to cite the title *and* its subtitle *and* the name of its other three authors *and* its publishing house *and* its date of publication *and* the page on which you found the information. Of course, even though you do not verbalize these details, you *must* know them and have them available. Should an audience member ask for your specific citations after your presentation—and don't assume no one will—you must be able to provide them.

Beware of oversimplifying the citation. It's not enough to say "according to the latest research" or "I read this article last week that said . . ." or "I discovered on the Internet that . . ." You must provide *some* specific source description to enhance and maintain your credibility. At the very least, give your audience the name of the website or the name, title, and credentials of the author from a printed source.

At the same time, some sources need to be cited in full. If your audience is especially difficult to convince, if you need some added credibility, or if your assignment or the context requires it, you may need to include as many of the details of the citation as possible.

- **Explain the citation.** Unlike a reader who can explore a source more in detail, listeners hear your reference only once in passing. They must understand it well enough to make sense of it as a source. *Webster's Dictionary*, *Time* magazine, and WebMD are popular enough that they need no explanation. Other sources need some or a lot of explanation. Tell your audience that the Museu Picasso, located in Barcelona, Spain, is dedicated to

Essentials

Citing a Source

- In most cases, simplify the citation.
- Explain the citation for maximum listener comprehension.
- Cite only the most relevant sources.
- Practice how to pronounce all citation details smoothly.

helping people understand the formative years of the artist Pablo Picasso. Explain that www.world-aluminum.org is the website of the International Aluminum Institute, an association representing 70 percent of the world's aluminum producers. Describe *Mother Jones* as an independent, nonprofit magazine committed to achieving social justice through investigative reporting. Never assume that audiences will understand who or what your source is. When in doubt, explain.

- **Limit the number of citations mentioned.** Even though you may have used eleven sources for your speech, your listeners do not need to hear them all. Mention that you've looked at many sources, but cite only the two or three you relied on the most. Some speakers like to display hard copies of their sources (if available) while mentioning them. Assure your audience that your complete reference list is available on request.
- **Pronounce citation details correctly.** Don't undermine your credibility by fumbling with or mispronouncing a citation. Practice to ensure a smooth mention of book titles like *Paradox and Perspicacity* ("pers-pi-KASS-ity") or *Chiaroscuro* ("kee-ar-uh-SK00R-o"). Practice so you can refer correctly to the journal titled *Archives of Gastroenterohepatology* ("gas-tro-en-TER-o-hep-a-TALL-ogy") and to names like Krosoczka ("crow-ZAHS-ka"), Hirut ("HERE-oot"), or Groening ("GRAIN-ing"). If you plan to cite a name that tends to have multiple pronunciations, such as *Koch*, find out ahead of time whether it's "kahtch" or "cook."

2. When to cite

Though writers follow a prescribed formatting style for their references, the conversational style used by speakers allows for more flexibility. Check with your instructor to see which of the following three options he or she prefers for your presentation.

- **Internal citations.** The most popular option is like what you do when writing a paper—mention the research source as you use it during the presentation. Here's an example, in conversational form, from a speech on global efforts to combat malaria:⁵

Mosquito nets are actually one of the oldest and still most effective ways to prevent malaria infection. I read an article in the July 2007 issue of National Geographic called "Bedlam in the Blood," and the author, a journalist named Michael Finkel, notes that the nets—when

used correctly—have been shown to cut malaria infection by one-half and child deaths due to malaria by a third.

Many speakers use this option because it helps distinguish between their own ideas and their borrowed ideas. Some ideas are so important to your message that you must highlight them with their own citations.

- **Front-load your sources.** Another option is to mention your sources in the introduction of your speech.

I looked at several resources for this presentation. The two that provided the best information were Michael Finkel's "Bedlam in the Blood," from the July 2007 issue of the National Geographic, and the website of the Global Fund, an organization based in Rhode Island that funds worldwide efforts to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The site has several reports and fact sheets that provided me lots of current information.

If you front-load, you don't need to cite specific sources within the body of the presentation. However, it's still absolutely necessary for you to *know* which source connects with which idea; this is always required. Should an audience member, your instructor, or your supervisor ask about the connection between any idea and its source, it is your ethical responsibility to provide an answer.

Front-loading is more appropriate for an informative presentation. It assures your listeners that you have done your homework. At the same time, and perhaps more important for the listenability of your presentation, front-loading saves audience members the cumbersome task of processing numerous references, which after a while can start to blend together and wind up meaning nothing. Once you've mentioned your sources in the introduction, you can get on with communicating your ideas, and your audience can sit back and interact with those ideas.

Front-loading is less effective for persuasive speeches. During persuasion, the quality and quantity of your sources are often tremendous assets in helping you achieve your communication goals. You want to ensure the connection of particular ideas with particular sources. Continue citing internally.

- **Use a combination.** A final option is to combine the first two options—front-load some or all of your sources, but make important individual citations during the presentation.

Summary

- **Research for public presentations requires more than elementary skills. Speakers must know how to select, evaluate, and cite research sources in ways appropriate for the topic, audience, and occasion.**
- **All researchers benefit from tips such as starting the research early, narrowing the scope of the research, and creating a documentation system to stay organized.**
- **Web-based research is increasingly popular. There are still numerous other worthwhile sources available to the speaker seeking research material.**

- Researchers must be aware of the wide range of source material and know how to evaluate it for credibility and accuracy.
- The conversational style preferred by public speakers calls for sources to be cited differently in a presentation than they would be in a written document.

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS SUPPORT KEY**

The more information you possess and the more confidence you have in its quality, the more you can self-assuredly communicate your ideas to your listeners. When audience members trust that you've done the work needed to support your ideas, they're more likely to stay connected to you during your talk.

EXERCISES

1. Split the class into several small groups, and send each to a different part of your campus library. Have each group find at least three databases, reference materials, or services they weren't aware of before. Talk to a librarian or staff member for more information about what you find. As each group reports its findings to the rest of the class, have someone create a master list of them for everyone to share at the end.
2. As a class, choose a somewhat narrowed topic you'd all like to know more about. Assess what most people already know about the topic, and decide on the relevant information you would need to research for a twenty-minute presentation to this group.
3. With a small group, brainstorm a detailed yet efficient documentation system that would ensure that each researched idea gets connected to a specific research source. Share your idea with the rest of the class.
4. Choose a topic and find a website you might use for researching it. Evaluate the site according to the seven guidelines listed in the "Did You Know?" box on page 153. Share your analysis with your classmates.
5. Watch a speech on video, or attend a speech on campus. Choose one whose title suggests that the speaker has done some research. Analyze the connection between how (or whether) the speaker cites research and the speaker's credibility.



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 11

Supporting Your Ideas

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Facts, statistics, and examples were relatively easy to incorporate. I’ve been working with those kinds of support since elementary school. Some of the subjective kinds of support were new to me. I enjoyed the challenge of trying to incorporate them in my presentations.”

“Once we were introduced to all these varying forms of support, it was easy to see and hear them being used when I listened to speeches or read articles. It’s fair to say I’ve become a more educated and savvy receiver of messages. For example, I can now detect when someone is using subjective versus objective support. It’s not that I didn’t know the difference before; it’s just that I wasn’t paying attention. Being aware of the difference allows me to better analyze the weight and impact of the message. And you’d better support your ideas well, because I’m all over them.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

Use a variety of forms of support.

STYLE

11A

Select the Right Form of Support

11B

Use Objective Support

1. *Facts*
2. *Definitions*
3. *Statistics*

11C

Use Illustrative Support

1. *Examples*
2. *Descriptions*
3. *Explanations*

11D

Use Subjective Support

1. *Emotional proof*
2. *Personal experience*

11E

Use Testimony as Support

1. *Why use testimony?*
2. *Types of testimony*
3. *General tips for using testimony*
4. *Communicating the testimony*

Key Terms

anecdotal evidence	▶ 180
brief example	▶ 175
definition	▶ 171
description	▶ 177
emotional proof	▶ 179
example	▶ 175
expert testimony	▶ 181
extended example	▶ 177

fact	▶ 170
hypothetical example	▶ 177
illustrative support	▶ 175
lay testimony	▶ 181
objective support	▶ 170
paraphrasing	▶ 183
personal experience	▶ 180
statistics	▶ 172
subjective support	▶ 179
testimony	▶ 181

Presentations are not composed of aimless talk, hot air, and generalizations. Instead, you need strong supporting materials to back up your ideas; listeners are expecting them. Substantiate your ideas, and bring them to life by incorporating such material as facts, examples, testimony, and personal experience. Well-supported ideas increase the listenability of your presentation; by elaborating on your ideas, you reduce your audience's need to make inferences. This chapter examines different types of supporting materials and provides some considerations to keep in mind when selecting them.

11A

Select the Right Form of Support

Supporting your ideas doesn't mean incorporating just any available, random material. Look to the context, the audience, your topic, and your ideas as you decide which supporting materials are relevant and useful. For example, an explanation suffices when you're informing classmates about the digestive system of the domestic cat, but convincing your coworkers to hire Interior Design Firm X for the office renovation project may require supporting recommendations from experts, an appeal to employees' sense of aesthetics, and bottom-line financial data.

Here are some selection criteria to apply to your forms of support. (Add these to what you learned about evaluating a piece of research, 📌 pp. 161–163.) These criteria are applicable to informative, persuasive, and special-occasion presentations.

- **Relevance.** Arguably the most important criterion, relevance means that your form of support has some sensible or logical connection to the idea you're communicating. During preparation and research, speakers often come across intriguing examples and fascinating tidbits. But not all are relevant. For example, in your presentation on the sudden decrease in honeybee populations, you could include, among your other supporting material, a personal experience from your family's beekeeping project. You could mention how you saw for yourself how dramatic and sudden the loss of your

Essentials

Selecting the Right Form of Support

- Is this form of support relevant to the point you are making?
- Does this form of support appropriately complement the audience, topic, and occasion?
- Are you using a variety of supporting materials?

honeybees was. You would be hard pressed, though, to make relevant a description of the differing flavors of alfalfa and clover honeys. Include supporting material only if it makes a point related to your message. Resist the temptation to add an extraneous idea just because it's interesting.

- **Appropriateness.** Your choice of supporting materials should complement the audience, topic, and occasion. For example, a final project for an advanced science class requires a great deal of solid support such as facts, descriptions, and explanations; whereas a farewell speech at your favorite teacher's retirement party might include light-hearted anecdotes and admiring, emotion-laden memories from other students. Be sure to consider the appropriateness of your form of support.
- **Variety.** Each idea you communicate may be backed up with multiple forms of support. Your speech quickly becomes stale if you rely on only the same one or two types of support. Mix things up in any given section of your speech and throughout your presentation by including statistics, examples, emotional proof, explanations, and stories.

Choosing the right form of support for your message is an art as well as a skill. Before you can choose the appropriate form, however, you need an understanding of the various types.

11B

Use Objective Support

Objective support includes facts, definitions, and statistics—ideas that are, for the most part, agreed on, measurable, observable, and consistent. Objective support is based on things *other than* thoughts, opinions, or feelings.

1. Facts

Facts can be proven to be true or to have happened. They are *not* interpretations of data but instead are verifiable and consistent. Here are some examples of facts that support ideas. Are all facts equal? Journalist Leonard Pitts says,

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	FACT PROVIDED TO SUPPORT THE MESSAGE
<i>The great Japanese competitive eater, Takeru Kobayashi, finally looks vulnerable.</i>	<i>Joey Chestnut, from California, ate a world-record sixty-six hot dogs at the Nathan's Famous contest in 2007 to break Kobayashi's six-year reign.¹</i>
<i>Rosa Parks's refusal to move to the back of the Montgomery city bus was not a spontaneous decision.</i>	<i>Parks had already spent twelve years helping to lead her local NAACP chapter, had had training in civil rights organization, and was familiar with earlier challenges to segregation.²</i>
<i>Pig owners must provide shade or mud for their pigs.</i>	<i>Pigs cannot sweat because they have no sweat glands.</i>

Once upon a time, we all drew upon a common pool of facts. You might interpret them differently than I, but we could have an honest disagreement because the facts themselves were not in contention. Now we have designer facts, facts that aren't facts but gain currency because somebody wanted to believe them. . . . Maybe that's the byproduct of the information revolution. We have gone from three networks to 500, one for every worldview, every bias, every demographic set or subset. Now we have facts created for us according to our politics. Now we have "truth" that belongs in quotation marks.³

Which of the following are facts, and which are not?

- Shark attacks kill hundreds of people each year.
- Those who fought the hijackers on United Flight 93 above the fields of Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001, were heroes.
- Child abductions by strangers are common enough that all parents should keep a close eye on their children.
- Plastic water bottles release carcinogenic compounds when reused.
- Cesarean births are as safe as natural births.

None of these is a fact. Between 2001 and 2005 an average of 4.4 people per year were killed worldwide by sharks.⁴ While evidence strongly suggests that several United Flight 93 passengers indeed fought the hijackers, to call someone a "hero" is an interpretation and not a fact. Family members abduct more children than do strangers.⁵ The plastic-water-bottle story is an urban legend.⁶ And many factors, including the health and medical history of the mother, the position of the child, and the experience of the person delivering the baby, go into determining the safest method of childbirth.

Speakers have some homework to do before presenting facts to their listeners. Verify the accuracy of your facts by looking at multiple sources. Make sure you're not incorporating some facts while intentionally omitting others. Research whether there's ideology (opinion) behind the fact. The "Did You Know?" box (🔍 p. 174) highlights one unsettling trend—called truthiness—in which such "facts" are used. Adhere to ethical principles, and protect your credibility by fully understanding your facts and using them honestly in your presentation.

2. Definitions

Definitions explain or clarify what a word, idea, or expression means.

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	DEFINITION TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
<i>The new OSHA standards are meant to reduce work-related hazards in the poultry industry.</i>	<i>OSHA stands for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, a governmental agency housed in the Department of Labor whose mission is to ensure the safety and health of U.S. workers.</i>
<i>Tennis player Martina Navratilova holds the Open Era record for most singles titles (167) and doubles titles (177) won by any woman player.</i>	<i>The Open Era in professional tennis began in 1968 and eliminated the distinction between amateur and professional rules at major tournaments. The Open Era established the Grand Slam international tennis circuit including the French Open, Wimbledon, U.S. Open, and the Australian Open.</i>
<i>U.S. citizens should look to Canada to see the advantages and disadvantages of socialized medicine.</i>	<i>Socialized medicine is a health care system publicly administered by a national government, unlike the U.S. system, which is mostly privately owned and managed for profit.</i>

Definitions take very little time and can make or break a point you are trying to communicate. It is difficult for a listener to stay with you and interact with your ideas if the words you use are unfamiliar. If you have even the slightest question about whether some or all audience members know what a word or expression means, define it. The “Did You Know?” box (◀ p. 176) presents various ways for you to do that.

A definition may also be the foundation for a major section or the whole of your speech. For example, the purpose of one speaker’s entire presentation was to define the *law of unintended consequences*. In the body of the speech, listeners learned about the five principles of the law, gaining a fuller understanding of what the law means. Whether your definition clarifies what an individual word or a larger idea means, this form of support plays an important role in your presentation.

3. Statistics

Statistics are numerical data that describe some sort of relationship. For example, statistics may show how attitudes have changed over time, how behaviors differ between individuals or groups, or how much one thing compares to another.

Statistics can be a tricky form of support. Here are some concerns and potential solutions.

During your research

- **Know that statistics are easily manipulated; context is essential.** Author Aaron Levenstein once said, “Statistics are like a bikini. What they reveal is suggestive, but what they conceal is vital.” And your listeners are savvy. They know that statistics can be manipulated in ways to support just about anything or any point of view. If you are going to use statistics, you must know what they’re actually saying before sharing them with your audience.

For example, say you find a statistic in a pro-environmental article reporting that 1,000 acres of old-growth forest are cut down and removed in Country X each year.

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	STATISTICS TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
<i>Antismoking campaigns have had an effect on U.S. adult smoking rates.</i>	<i>Forty-two percent of U.S. adults smoked cigarettes in the 1960s, whereas 23 percent do so today.⁷</i>
<i>Glacial melt would be bad news for many U.S. cities.</i>	<i>Seventeen of the twenty fastest-growing U.S. counties are on the coasts.⁸</i>
<i>U.S. gays and lesbians tend to be better educated than heterosexuals.</i>	<i>Nineteen percent of all gay men and women possess postgraduate degrees. In comparison, 12 percent of heterosexual women and 14 percent of heterosexual men hold the same level of degrees.⁹</i>

Without knowing anything else about this statistic, you conclude that 1,000 acres constitute a significant loss of trees each year. Your interpretation is that this must represent a horrible blow to Country X's environment. However, the article fails to mention that there are 1.5 *million* acres of old-growth forest in Country X and that 70 percent is protected in a national reserve. At current rates, it would take 450 years to cut down the 30 percent of trees not protected. In the meantime, Country X has a well-managed reforestation program.

Context makes a big difference in how we view or understand statistics. Without context, a speaker can make almost any statistic support nearly any argument. Keep digging so that you understand the larger context in which a particular statistic operates.

- Know the source of your statistics.** Many organizations—whether political, civic, ideological, for profit, or not for profit—collect statistics of their own or pay others to collect statistics for them. They might report only those statistics that support their particular missions or goals. Do your homework before choosing statistics to include in your presentation. Know the source of the statistics, and understand why they were reported in the location you found them. In general, governmental and educational bodies and nonpartisan polling organizations generate and cite unbiased and unmanipulated statistics.
- Understand how the statistics were gathered.** Research *when* the statistics were gathered. Are your statistics up to date, or are they already obsolete? Do they tell a current story or an old one? Are they relevant anymore?

Know *why* the statistics were collected. Were they collected to represent the world as it is (warts and all) or to promote a cause, elect a candidate, sell a product, or reinforce a particular outlook?

Finally, understand *how* the statistics were collected. Were people randomly polled or carefully selected to participate? Were they paid? How large is the sample number of respondents, and how does that number compare to the size of the larger population? Were questions phrased to generate certain responses? Was the research done in face-to-face interviews or behind the anonymity of a computer screen? Were data self-reported or collected by scientific means? You may not be able to find answers to all these questions, but know that they affect the way we interpret the statistics and the faith we place in them.

Did You Know?

Truthiness

Truthiness—a devotion to information you wish were true even if it's not—was recently chosen by the American Dialect Society as its word of the year. It appears that truthiness is here to stay. Read what several commentators say about truthiness and our society.

- Stephen Colbert coined the term *truthiness* on his Comedy Central show *The Colbert Report*, in which he parodies ideologically influenced news anchors by playing one himself. While in character as a “well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-class idiot,” Colbert noted, “I’m not a fan of facts. You see, facts can change, but my opinion will never change, no matter what the facts are.”
- In an interview with *Newsweek*, journalist Frank Rich said, “If I had to date it [the origins of truthiness] from a single point, it was in the mid-1990s, when you simultaneously had the rise of the cable-news networks, the rise of the Internet, the rise of networks covering finance and Court TV—this whole apparatus that’s in place now. It’s harmless if the stories are trivial, like if people want to believe that *Survivor* really is about life-and-death survival. Where it becomes a problem is when it deals with stuff that affects people’s welfare, or the welfare of the country.” In an earlier column in the *New York Times*, Rich wrote, “What matters most now is whether a story can be sold as truth, preferably on television.” He continued, “It’s the power of the story that always counts first, and the selling of it that comes second. Accuracy is optional.”
- Author James Frey gained national attention after his book *A Million Little Pieces* was selected for Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club. After realizing that Frey’s supposed memoir was based more on imagination than on fact, Oprah told Frey on live television that she felt “duped” and, more importantly, that he had “betrayed millions of readers.” Frey tried to defend himself by insisting “the emotional truth is there.” In a commentary on the scandal, MSNBC commentator Jon Bonné praised Winfrey for her “small but bold nudge back out of the halls of truthiness.”



While in character, Stephen Colbert is a fan of truthiness.

While giving a speech, you shouldn't be.

Sources: The American Dialect Society, <http://www.american-dialect.org/index.php/amer-dial/2006/01> (accessed October 23, 2007); Marc Peyser, “The Truthiness Teller,” *Newsweek*, February 13, 2006; © 2006 Newsweek, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of the material without express written permission is prohibited. Frank Rich, “Truthiness 101: From Frey to Alito,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com> (accessed July 30, 2007); and Jon Bonné, “Oprah Strikes a Blow for Truthiness,” *MSNBC*, January 27, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com> (accessed July 29, 2007).

During the presentation

- **Explain what the statistic means.** Since you've researched the statistic to the best of your ability, it's now your responsibility to contextualize it for the audience. For example, if you talk about the 60 percent approval rating of the current president one year into his or her presidency, contextualize it by comparing it to the ratings of past presidents one year into their presidencies. Also explain that the ratings were gathered by a nonpartisan polling organization in a phone survey of 3,500 randomly chosen U.S. adults from all fifty states.
- **Simplify the numbers for your listeners.** Numbers can be hard for listeners to keep track of. Round off numbers when speaking conversationally. For example, say *nearly 32,000* rather than *31,862*. If you give a lengthy list of numbers, summarize what they mean collectively. For example, if you mention that 32 percent of Swiss like activity A, 46 percent take pleasure in activity B, 77 percent enjoy activity C but only 12 percent value activity D, explain how the whole picture is comparable to or different from U.S. preferences.
- **Don't overuse statistics.** Avoid throwing too many statistics at your listeners. Remember: unlike readers, listeners have to interact with numbers at the pace and discretion of the speaker. Audience members cannot stop to think about the statistic, go back to reread it, or seek to better contextualize it. Listeners have a finite capacity for hearing numbers and making sense of them. When numbers begin to run together, few stand out and none have any significance. Choose your statistics wisely. Share those that are essential, and help the audience make sense of them.

11C

Use Illustrative Support

Illustrative support includes examples, descriptions, and explanations. These forms of support clarify, expand on, or provide more information for listeners. In essence, they *illustrate* or help paint a fuller picture. Illustrative support is common in conversational interactions, where you're most likely already skilled in using it. When your public speaking is communication-oriented and listener-focused, illustrative support should come almost naturally. After all, you want to do everything you can to help your listeners understand what you're talking about.

1. Examples

An **example** provides a particular illustration of a broader concept; it is a specific instance of a general case. Listeners like to hear a speaker say *for example*, because it offers them a chance to double-check their understanding by moving from the big picture to the tangible and concrete.

Examples come in several forms: they are either brief or extended, and they are either real or hypothetical.

Brief or extended examples

- **Brief examples.** A **brief example** consists of one or two sentences that provide an instance of the larger idea. It's useful only when the audience can quickly understand or

Did You Know?

Types of Definitions

There are several ways to define a word or idea.

Definition from the dictionary. This is the most common type of definition. The dictionary provides literal or actual meanings.

- *Flotsam* is floating wreckage or debris.
- *Abstruse* means hard to understand.

Definition by comparison. You can define some words by making a comparison to something the audience already knows.

- The prehistoric species *Gomphos elkema* is essentially a 55-million-year-old cousin to today's rabbit.
- *Viral marketing* is a technique that allows an advertising message to spread like an infectious disease.

Definition by contrast. This tells your listeners what the word or idea is *not*.

- *Koi* are not big goldfish. (They are a type of carp.)
- A *fakie* is not something counterfeit. (It's a skateboard trick where you ride backwards.)

Definition by operation. You can explain some words by saying what they do or the functions they perform.

- A *tamper* is a hydraulic machine that packs dirt or stone at a construction site.

Definition by example. These definitions explain something by providing familiar examples.

- *Bodily fluids* include blood, sweat, saliva, and tears.

Definition by explanation. These definitions provide extended details, helping you paint a larger picture for your listeners.

- *Straight edge* is an alternative lifestyle borne of the punk movement. It's dedicated to clean living and advocates total abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, and recreational drugs.

already understands the reference from prior experience. When touting the benefits of a particular laundry chemical, share the brief example of *its power in removing red spaghetti sauce stains*. It's common knowledge that red spaghetti sauce is difficult to remove from clothes. On the other hand, in your speech on the improprieties of state officials, the brief example *just recall the cases of Evan Mecham and Fife Symington* would leave most

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	EXAMPLE TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
<i>There is a strong correlation between earning ability and your level of education.</i>	<i>A recent study showed that workers with only a high school diploma earned an average of \$30,800. People with several years of college but no degree had median earnings of \$35,700. Workers with bachelor's degrees earned a median of \$49,900.¹⁰</i>
<i>Tattooing is one of the most universal means of expression through self-decoration.</i>	<i>Cultures throughout history have tattooed to express, for example, tribal affiliation, status, allegiance, beauty, and sexual allure.</i>
<i>Jennifer Lopez may have many talents, but acting is not among them.</i>	<i>One movie proves the point: Gigli.</i>

listeners mystified. Few would know that both these men were impeached for significant improprieties before completing their respective terms as governor of Arizona.

- **Extended examples.** **Extended examples** are mini-narratives; they have a plot and some characters, and something happens. They draw your audience in and keep them listening. In your presentation advocating the advantages of the Taser (a type of gun using an electric shock rather than a bullet), use the extended example of the police force in City X that recently added Tasers to their regular weaponry. You could share the results of the first six months of Taser use by mentioning how shooting deaths by police dropped, how suspect-apprehension rates increased, and how officers reported feeling just as safe and competent in their jobs with the Tasers by their side.

Real or hypothetical examples

- **Real examples.** Real examples are just that—real. Most examples used in presentations come from real experience, real research, real cases, real history, and real knowledge.
- **Hypothetical examples.** If no example exists to support your idea or if your idea looks into an unknown future, a **hypothetical example** can show what could be. In a presentation on wind farms, you could use a hypothetical example of a community powered by the electricity gathered solely from wind turbines. You could describe the oddly pleasing look of the spinning turbine towers, the lack of overhead electric lines, and the lower prices paid for electricity as you ask listeners to envision this potential future. If you use a hypothetical example, you are ethically obligated to cite it as such. Otherwise, your listeners assume that all examples you use are real.

2. Descriptions

A **description** is a grouping of words that brings an idea to life or creates an image through expanded details. You may need to describe what something looks like, how something happens, how something works, how someone feels, or how we experience something. Descriptions create visual images or feelings in your listeners, allowing them to interact with your message by bringing in their own experiences.

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	DESCRIPTION TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
<i>Wind can damage orange crops.</i>	<i>Winds can cause the tough branches of the orange tree to whip against each other, putting minute scratches on a new, tiny orange. That small scratch develops into a larger blemish that covers a significant part of the mature fruit.¹¹</i>
<i>The Segway device holds great promise for future personal mobility.</i>	<i>The Segway is a scooterlike device that responds to its rider's body movements to move ahead, turn, or stop. It can reach a speed of 12.5 miles per hour, travel twenty-four miles on one battery charge, and carry a 250-pound passenger plus 75 pounds of cargo.¹²</i>
<i>The Irish countryside is some of the prettiest you'll ever see.</i>	<i>Summer months find visitors walking on endless grass trails, most enclosed by 3-foot gray stone walls. The pink, purple, yellow, and white wildflowers make for beautiful contrasts against the green grass and blue sky. It's a gorgeous place to be.</i>



Many Muslim women cover their heads for reasons that may not be known to your non-Islamic listeners. Providing an explanation is a quick and easy way to help your audience stay with you rather than be distracted by internal questions.

3. Explanations

Explanations provide background or additional, detailed information. They go beyond mere definition or description. Explanations look behind the scenes, telling listeners why things exist, how things came to be, why something is done in a particular way, or why certain behaviors occur. Explanations help listeners “catch up” to where you are so they are ready to move on to the next idea with you.

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	EXPLANATION TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
<i>Today, most people believe that dreams reflect unconscious desires.</i>	<i>Before Sigmund Freud, most dreams were understood to be a type of supernatural experience. Freud was the first to offer a new idea. He theorized that dreams were the unconscious surfacing of buried or repressed emotions. By remembering and reflecting on dreams or fragments of dreams, people can come to terms with relationships and the world around them.¹³</i>
<i>Along with medical reasons and environmental factors, lifestyle choices may be contributing to the rise in infertility rates among women.</i>	<i>What do we mean by lifestyle choices? Things such as choosing whether or not to smoke or consume alcohol. Some career choices, too, may create undue stress that can affect childbearing ability. Also, the age at which a woman decides to have a child may be a contributing factor; the longer she puts it off, the harder it may be to become pregnant.</i>
<i>Some Muslim women cover their heads.</i>	<i>Muslim women cover their heads for two main reasons. First, it shows submission to God and the woman's willingness to follow the guidance of the prophet Muhammad. Second, the head covering shows that she is not interested in receiving unnecessary flattery or admiration or, most importantly, attention from someone other than her husband.</i>

11D

Use Subjective Support

Subjective support includes emotional proof and personal experience. These forms of support are not based on facts and are not measurable, observable, or consistent. Instead, subjective support is based on thoughts, opinions, experience, or feelings.

You may be wondering: If these forms of support are not based in reality, how can I include them in a presentation? What could they possibly be worth? Subjective support is worth a great deal, but in different ways than objective and illustrative evidence. Though listeners respect factual support that appeals to their minds, they are also capable of learning and being convinced through emotions and experience.

1. Emotional proof

Emotional proof is not based on fact and is not necessarily logical; it supports your point by referencing human emotions. These emotions are real and genuine to those who experience them, and they can alter and define interactions and events in instructive or meaningful ways. It usually takes a skilled writer, visual artist, or performing artist to successfully evoke emotion in readers and viewers, but a public speech is a powerful delivery system, and even novice public speakers can use emotional proof to sway audiences.

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	EMOTIONAL PROOF TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
<i>Despite years of education and training, many women choose to stay at home with their children rather than pursue career goals.</i>	<i>Many of these women report guilt as the motivating factor for making this choice.</i>
<i>Children in poorer school districts should receive state-funded equipment equal to that available to children in richer districts.</i>	<i>It is not fair to deprive children of needed school equipment because of where their parents choose or can afford to live.</i>
<i>Consider attending your college graduation ceremonies.</i>	<i>The sense of pride Jack felt on that night was incredible. His family felt it, too. They created some lasting memories that evening.</i>

When delivering emotional proof, it is natural for communicators to display, to a degree, the emotions they're referring to. For example, when people speak of something sad, their faces, voices, and bodies typically reflect the emotion. It would be off-putting to talk about something tragic with a smile on your face and a chirp in your voice. Let relevant emotion show through, especially if it's your own emotion you are referencing or using, but don't plan out your emotional display and deliver it like an over-the-top actor; most listeners are turned off by dramatic, cheesy demonstrations of emotion. On the other hand, don't be afraid to show feelings—your own or someone else's. If you're in tune with the emotional rhythms of your presentation and genuinely want to communicate them to your audience, your feelings should come out naturally and meaningfully.

Essentials

Forms of Support

Objective support is material that is measurable, observable, and consistent.

- Facts—can be proven to be true or to have happened.
- Definitions—explain or clarify what a word, idea, or expression means.
- Statistics—describe some sort of relationship in numerical terms between the message and its larger context.

Illustrative support clarifies, expands on, or provides more information for listeners.

- Examples—provide a particular illustration of a more general concept.
- Descriptions—bring an idea to life or create an image through expanded details.
- Explanations—provide background or additional, detailed information.

Subjective support is based on thoughts, opinions, experience, or feelings.

- Emotional proof—references human emotions.
- Personal experience—relates a circumstance from someone’s life or frame of experience.

2. Personal experience

A **personal experience** relates a circumstance from the speaker’s or someone else’s frame of experience. Like emotional proof, personal experience is real and genuine and can alter and define interactions and events, thereby providing meaning.

When offering personal experience, be sure to introduce it as such. Personal experience is a type of **anecdotal evidence**, meaning it is only one case in point and does not necessarily prove a larger point or support a larger body of evidence. Personal experience is therefore usually too weak to act as your *only* form of support. It can, however, add richness to an idea

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
Morbidly obese adults should consider stomach-reduction surgery.	My friend Frank weighed over 300 pounds when he had the surgery two years ago. He’s now down to a healthy 175 pounds and considers the surgery one of the best choices he’s ever made.
Prepare yourself for a visit to the emergency room by following these few simple rules.	Unfortunately, I had to visit the emergency room three times last year, but by the third time, my wait was significantly reduced due to my preparation, which included bringing important medical information with me and knowing the clinic’s insurance-coverage policies ahead of time.
Adopt your next pet from your local shelter.	My mom has three dogs, all of which are completely loyal to her and are great with the family and neighborhood kids. These dogs came from our local shelter, and my mom has been so happy with them that our family will never go anywhere but the shelter to adopt a new animal.

when combined with other supporting material. Audience members' ears typically perk up when a speaker shares a personal experience. People are interested in other people, and most listeners like to hear tidbits about the speaker's personal life.

11E

Use Testimony as Support

Testimony, quoted words that support an idea, can be objective, illustrative, or subjective. It's a useful form of support for catching listeners' attention and convincing them of the weight of your ideas.

1. Why use testimony?

Use testimony for two reasons. First, testimony backs up your own idea by showing how another credible person supports or agrees with it. If you claim that identity theft is on the rise, providing testimony from an official in the fraud division of the U.S. Department of Justice only strengthens your point. If you feel Charles Barkley deserves his election to the Basketball Hall of Fame, testimony from a respected sports writer shows that you are not alone in your thinking.

Second, testimony offers your listeners a glimpse into worlds they may otherwise be unable to access. Though neither you nor your listeners, for example, could ever know what it was like to be a Lost Boy of Sudan, testimony from one of the Lost Boys regarding his plight offers powerful firsthand evidence for your presentation. Few people will ever experience space flight, but testimony from someone who has flown in space adds unique insight to your speech.

2. Types of testimony

- **Expert testimony comes from people with authority on a topic or in a field.** It carries significant weight, especially if the expert has impressive qualifications and is unbiased.
- **Lay testimony comes from people who have firsthand knowledge of or experience in a particular area.** Your sister may not be an expert in race-car driving, but her testimony about her year of race-car-driving lessons can lend credence to your ideas.

3. General tips for using testimony

- **Give your listeners some brief context about the person whose words you are using.** Unless the person is very well known, his or her name alone tells your listeners little. Supply identifying information such as the person's title, occupation, degree, years of experience, or societal role. In essence, explain what makes his or her testimony credible.
- **Ensure that the testimony is relevant to your point.** You want to share only material that strengthens the idea you're communicating. Don't use testimony just because someone famous said it or it's uniquely phrased.

IDEA YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE	TESTIMONY TO SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE
<i>Though shark attacks are relatively few in number, humans seem to have an inordinate fear of and fascination with them.</i>	<i>Naturalist, Pulitzer Prize winner, and retired Harvard professor E. O. Wilson once said of sharks, “We are not just afraid of predators, we are transfixed by them, prone to weave stories and fables and chatter endlessly about them, because fascination creates preparedness, and preparedness, survival. In a deeply tribal sense, we love our predators.”¹⁴</i>
<i>The United States Department of Agriculture incorrectly claimed a 25 percent drop in contamination from listeria (an often fatal food-borne bacteria found in processed meat) from 2002 to 2003.</i>	<i>As a biostatistician at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and mother of a small boy who died of a foodborne illness, Barbara Kowalczyk looked at the USDA’s raw data. She found that the department was comparing figures from all of 2002 with only nine months’ worth of data from 2003. “This is bad science,” she says, “and if you made these mistakes in my Statistics 101 class, I’d flunk you.”¹⁵</i>
<i>Actors who portray real people face different challenges than those playing fictional characters.</i>	<i>Jamie Foxx, who won an Oscar for his portrayal of Ray Charles, was asked how he kept his performance from becoming just an imitation. “You focus on the things the public did not see—how he answered the phone, how he talked to his kids. I got a chance to videotape him, and when he wasn’t being ‘Ray Charles’ he was real subtle. You also get things from his friends, because Ray was very closed up.”¹⁶</i>

- Know the source of the testimony.** If you find a quote by a Dr. Alexander McCormick that perfectly supports your point, research who Dr. McCormick is. Is he a medical doctor or a PhD? Did he purchase his degree online or earn it from an accredited institution? Is he an independent researcher or a spokesperson for a drug company? As with all forms of support, you must have full understanding of and confidence in the material you share.
- Do not take the testimony out of its context.** It’s unethical to take words out of context to try to support a point. For example, suppose you want to highlight the tensions between China and the United States and you find some testimony from the secretary of state regarding recent interactions with her Chinese counterpart. Say the secretary actually said, “While we had some differences, overall the meeting was productive and we found several areas of common ground from which to move forward in our talks.” You cannot select the first half of her sentence and tell listeners, “In her meeting with her Chinese counterpart last week, the secretary stated that there were ‘differences between the two countries.’” Such a sentence would misrepresent the overall meaning of her original testimony.
- Use testimony sparingly.** Testimony backs up your ideas; it should not replace them. Because testimony is easy to gather, some novice speakers rely on it heavily, stringing together a series of words from other people. A presentation replete with quotes may cause listeners to wonder whether any of the ideas you are communicating are your own. Use testimony for the two reasons discussed at the beginning of this section—to back up your own ideas or to offer a glimpse into unfamiliar worlds.

4. Communicating the testimony

Quoting You can quote some testimony directly, especially if it is brief (one or two sentences) or if it is essential to communicate every word exactly as the speaker said it. Use a full quotation when

- the language is memorable or is phrased in such a way that it uniquely reflects the person's perspective or time in history.
- it is difficult to summarize the testimony without changing its meaning.
- it would take much longer to put the idea into your own words.
- you want to comment on the words themselves.

Though you are relying on a conversational style throughout your presentation, it is acceptable to write down and read quoted testimony verbatim. (As always, acknowledge the source.) The audience senses the change in your style and accepts the reading because they know you cannot change the words.

Paraphrasing Though direct quotations work well in the situations just discussed, **paraphrasing**, or putting the testimony into your own words, is acceptable in others. Paraphrase when

- the idea communicated in the testimony is more important than the wording of the testimony.
- the idea in the testimony is too complex to quote verbatim.
- the person's words are too specialized, too inappropriate, or too long to quote verbatim.

Not only is paraphrasing good for maintaining a conversational style and increasing audience comprehension of your ideas, it also shows your ability to simplify ideas. Communicating your ownership of source material increases your credibility. When paraphrasing, tell the audience what you're doing ("let me paraphrase") and stay true to the meaning of the testimony. It is unethical to add your own ideas or interpretations to the paraphrase. As when you are quoting testimony, indicate the source of your paraphrase.

Summary

- **Keep the context, the audience, and your topic in mind as you select and polish ways to support your message.**
- **Objective support includes facts, definitions, and statistics—ideas that are, for the most part, agreed on, measurable, observable, and consistent.**
- **Illustrative support includes examples, descriptions, and explanations. These forms of support clarify, expand on, or provide more information for listeners.**
- **Subjective support includes emotional proof and personal experience. These forms of support are based on thoughts, opinions, experience, or feelings.**
- **Testimony, in the form of a direct quote or paraphrase, is an additional form of support.**

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS SUPPORT KEY**

You've got to show how your ideas have real or practical value or importance. Bringing your ideas to life through a variety of relevant and appropriate supporting materials meets audience expectations and helps them better understand or believe in your message.

EXERCISES

1. *With a group of classmates, decide what types of support (facts, explanations, personal experience, or other) would be best for the following presentations. Be prepared to defend your answers to the larger class.*
 - **Celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the founding of your school**
 - **Persuading listeners to register to vote**
 - **Informing listeners on the benefits of potassium**
2. *Look at the “Did You Know?” box on page 176. Be prepared to define six terms, one from each category, to your classmates. Find words that you think they will benefit from learning!*
3. *Find a statistic of interest. Research its origin, purpose, and context to the best of your ability. Keep digging. As a class, discuss what you have learned.*
4. *Read the transcript of the speech given by President Bush during The World Will Always Remember September 11th ceremony on December 11, 2001. With a group or as a class, note any instances of emotional proof and discuss their effectiveness. Find the transcript at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/20011211-1.html>.*



The Online Learning Center for A Speaker's Resource includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 12

Organizing Your Ideas

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“In my first few speeches, I wasted a lot of time going from one scenario to another, and this created a situation that left my audience spinning in circles, making them work hard to listen and follow me. It also made it difficult for me, because I spent so much time thinking about what I was going to say next that I lost any audience connection I had tried to create. By learning how to form a thesis statement and follow a pattern of organization, I was able to create an ordered atmosphere. Instead of my focus being inward, it was now outward, directed at my audience.”

“The benefits of being organized are too many to mention. Get yourself organized. Everything falls into place from there.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

Finalize your thesis statement.

Organize your message.

SUPPORT

STYLE

12A**Finalize the Thesis Statement and Develop Main Points for an Informative Speech**

1. *Topical pattern*
2. *Chronological pattern*
3. *Causal pattern*
4. *Comparison or contrast pattern*
5. *Spatial pattern*

12B**Finalize the Thesis Statement and Develop Main Points for a Persuasive Speech**

1. *Why pattern*
2. *How pattern*
3. *Problem-solution pattern*
4. *Monroe's motivated sequence*

Key Terms

causal pattern	▶ 194
chronological pattern	▶ 193
comparison or contrast pattern	▶ 196
how pattern	▶ 203
Monroe's motivated sequence	▶ 205
narrowed topic	▶ 189
organizing term	▶ 189
pattern of organization	▶ 190
problem-solution pattern	▶ 204
spatial pattern	▶ 198
topical pattern	▶ 191
why pattern	▶ 201

By this point in the speechmaking process, you should have your topic firmly in place. You've done some research, made a lot of notes, and narrowed your topic into a thesis. The thesis now needs main points to support it. But these main points need to be related to one another and arranged in a logical manner. Organization does that. It helps you focus and, just as important, helps your audience stay with you. This chapter presents a rationale and skills for formalizing your informative or persuasive thesis and then substantiating that idea with main points.

12A

Finalize the Thesis Statement and Develop Main Points for an Informative Speech

An informative speech teaches the audience something new and useful. But in order to teach listeners something new and useful, you've got to have a thesis and main points that work together to achieve that purpose. On  **pages 141–144**, you learned about narrowing your topic into a thesis. It's now time to finalize that informative thesis and develop main points to support it. Luckily, a formula exists for just such a purpose.

Have patience while learning about this formula. First understand its components. You should then quickly see how all the components work together to help you create something of value. Most importantly, realize that the formula is for *draft purposes only*. Before you can be sure that your thesis and main points will work in your actual speech, you need to be sure that they're working on paper. *You would never use these formulaic sentences in your actual speech!*

The formula has two parts. The first part finalizes the thesis, like this:

I want to inform my audience about the (organizing term) of (narrowed topic).

An **organizing term** tells your audience how you plan to develop your narrowed topic in the speech body. You get your organizing term from one of the patterns of organization we'll discuss shortly. Your **narrowed topic** is a limited angle on the general topic. Look to your research as you narrow your topic; the more you know about a topic, the easier it is to narrow it. Table 12.1 ( **p. 190**) shows the difference between a general topic and a narrowed topic. (*Note: The preposition of between the organizing term and the narrowed topic is an important part of the formula. On occasion, another preposition such as on or between may make more grammatical sense.*)

Following is an example of a finalized thesis statement:

*I want to inform my audience about the childhood influences on
organizing term*

Richard Wright's literary themes.
narrowed topic

The second part of the formula develops and arranges the main points that substantiate and bear out the thesis. Most informative speeches have two to five main points. For ease and

Table 12.1 General versus Narrowed Topic

GENERAL TOPIC	NARROWED TOPIC
<i>Richard Wright</i>	<i>Richard Wright's literary themes</i>
<i>Teenage depression</i>	<i>Treatments for depression among teenage girls</i>
<i>Mythology</i>	<i>The quest of the mythic hero</i>
<i>Beef</i>	<i>Bacteria found in poorly processed beef</i>
<i>The Eiffel Tower</i>	<i>The ice skating rink on the tower's first observation deck</i>
<i>Palestine</i>	<i>The factions battling for political control of Palestine</i>

consistency, you'll see three main ideas for most of the examples in this book. Here's what the second part of the formula looks like:

The three (same organizing term from the first part of formula) are:

main point #1

main point #2

main point #3

Following is the completed formula with a continuation of the Richard Wright example :

The three childhood influences are:
organizing term

his family life and dynamics

the segregation he witnessed and experienced

the violence he witnessed and experienced

You develop your main points according to a specific **pattern of organization**. The pattern of organization tells your audience how your main points are related to one another. Though you'll choose only one pattern of organization for any given speech, you should be familiar with all of them. A working knowledge of all the patterns lets you decide on the best approach possible for your particular topic, audience, and occasion.

Each pattern of organization has its own list of organizing terms for you to plug into the first and second parts of the draft formula. Note how the organizing term acts as a clear stepping stone toward developing the main points that substantiate the thesis.

Here are five classic patterns of organization for informative speeches familiar to most Western audiences. We'll use the topic of "elephants" as an example for each pattern. Note that each example uses one organizing term and one potential narrowed topic.

1. Topical pattern

- **Definition.** Sometimes known as classification or division, the **topical pattern** divides the topic into subclasses or subtopics based on their similarity.
- **Organizing terms.** *Kinds, classes, varieties, brands, breeds, features, categories, methods, techniques, schemes, strategies, influences, policies, tactics, shapes, levels, sizes, theories, assumptions,* and the like.
- **Hint.** Avoid the terms *aspects* and *things*. Though they appear to work as organizing terms, these words are too vague to be useful. For example, almost anything can qualify as an *aspect* of something else. These two terms *do not* help you narrow and focus your speech.
- **Example.** While researching elephants,¹ the speaker learned that these great beasts don't just hang around randomly within their herd. Instead, members are relegated to various groupings called social circles. An elephant's history on its mother's side determines its standing within the herd and thus its social circle.

I want to inform my audience about the

categories of elephant social circles.
organizing term narrowed topic

The three categories *are:*
organizing term

the central structure (composed of the matriarch and her calf)
main point #1

the main family unit (the matriarch's other offspring and her sisters)
main point #2

the bond group (other relatives with their own families)
main point #3

- **Thesis statement/main idea check.** After you have filled in your formula, which may take additional research, you now want to check that it works as a full sentence. Begin your check with the narrowed topic, use some connecting words that include the organizing term, and end with a listing of the main points. This full sentence should make sense.

Check: Elephant social circles are classified as one of several categories,
narrowed topic connecting words including the organizing term

which are the central structure, the main family unit, and the bond group.
a list of the main points

- **Thesis.** You are now done with your draft; your structure is working on paper. In your actual speech, your thesis may sound something like this: "An elephant's place within

the herd depends on its social circle.” If you succeed in communicating your idea, your audience leaves your presentation understanding the world in this one new way.

- **How the thesis, along with a preview of the main points, might sound in the actual speech.** *An elephant's place within the herd depends on its social circle, of which there are typically three. I'll be discussing all three social circles in my speech today. You'll learn first about the central structure, composed of the matriarch and her calf; second, the main family unit, containing the matriarch's other offspring and her sisters; and finally, the bond group, encompassing the matriarch's other relatives and their own families.*

Try one yourself:

David Brooks, a columnist for the New York Times, wrote recently about the major determinant of the United States' future growth—the development of its human capital.² After an introduction arguing for this development, Brooks spends the majority of the column describing five kinds of human capital: cultural capital (the habits, assumptions, emotional dispositions, and linguistic capacities we unconsciously pick up from families, neighbors, and ethnic groups); social capital (the knowledge of how to behave in groups and within institutions); moral capital (the ability to be trustworthy, organized, and dependable); cognitive capital (brainpower); and aspirational capital (the fire-in-the-belly ambition to achieve).

How would Brooks's material fit into the thesis draft formula?

I want to inform my audience about the

_____ of _____
organizing term narrowed topic

The five _____ are:
organizing term

main point #1

main point #2

main point #3

main point #4

main point #5

Now do the thesis check:

Check: _____
narrowed topic *connecting words including the organizing term*

a list of the main points

2. Chronological pattern

- **Definition.** In the **chronological pattern**, the thesis follows a time pattern and shows how events or ideas occur over time, either forward or backward; the relationships between the main points are based on time or sequence. Narratives, for example, are told chronologically.
- **Organizing terms.** *Steps, stages, periods, legs, phases, chapters, epochs, historical eras*—words that refer to the passing of time.
- **Hint.** It's tempting to use the word *history* as an organizing term for the chronological pattern, because it seems to work in the first part of the formula. *History*, however, does not work in the second part of the formula. To say something has three *histories* makes no grammatical sense.
- **Example.**

I want to inform my audience about the

steps of training an elephant for circus performance.³

organizing term narrowed topic

The three steps are:

"breaking" the elephant (training it to be submissive)

beginning training techniques (such as lying down)

secondary training techniques (such as raising a foot)

Check: Training an elephant for circus performing requires several steps, including “breaking” the elephant, training it in beginning techniques, and then training it in secondary techniques.

- **Thesis.** “Elephants go through a series of training steps in order to prepare for circus performance.”
- **How the thesis, along with a preview of the main points, might sound in the actual speech.** *Training an elephant for circus performance requires a series of specific training steps. First, we'll talk about how the elephant needs to be broken, or made submissive to a trainer. Next, you'll learn that only then can the elephant be taught some beginning performance techniques such as lying down. Following this beginning training, the elephant can then be taught some secondary techniques, such as raising a foot or turning around in a circle.*

Try one yourself:

Monarch butterflies experience four distinct stages of metamorphosis. They are born as an egg, are hatched as a caterpillar in the larval stage, form a pupa during the chrysalis stage, and emerge from the pupa as a fully formed butterfly.

How would this information about a butterfly's life fit into the thesis draft formula?

I want to inform my audience about the

_____ of _____.
organizing term *narrowed topic*

The four _____ *are:*
organizing term

main point #1

main point #2

main point #3

main point #4

Now do the thesis check:

Check: _____
narrowed topic *connecting words including the organizing term*

a list of the main points

3. Causal pattern

- **Definition.** The thesis in a **causal pattern** focuses on either the causes of something or its effects. Avoid a presentation that examines the causes *and* the effects. Your speech will veer off in two major directions instead of remaining focused on just one.
- **Organizing terms.**
 - For a cause speech—*causes, reasons, grounds, sources, roots.*
 - For an effect speech—*effects, results, consequences, impacts, outcomes, end products.*
- **Example.**

I want to inform my audience about the

_____ *causes* _____ of *declining elephant populations in Africa.*
organizing term *narrowed topic*

Now do the thesis check:

Check: _____
narrowed topic *connecting words including the organizing term*

_____.

a list of the main points

4. Comparison or contrast pattern

- **Definition. Comparison** teaches something new by showing the *similarities* between two seemingly *unlike* things, one of which is typically already familiar to the audience. **Contrast** teaches something new by showing the *differences* between two seemingly *similar* things, one of which is typically already familiar to the audience. Avoid a presentation that compares *and* contrasts. The speech will veer off in two major directions instead of remaining focused on just one.
- **Organizing terms.**
 - For a comparison speech—*similarities, parallels, resemblances*.
 - For a contrast speech—*differences, dissimilarities, distinctions*.
- **Example.** In this example, the audience is already familiar with the idea of people putting horses to work. They may not know that people in other parts of the world put elephants to work in many of the same ways. That is the new idea you want to teach.

I want to inform my audience about the

similarities of (or between)
organizing term

the working elephant and the working horse.
narrowed topic

The three similarities are:

their use as a pack animal

their use as an agricultural assistant

their use in ceremony and tourism

Check: Working elephants and working horses are used similarly, especially as pack animals, as agricultural assistants, and as props in ceremonies and tourism-related activities.

- **Thesis.** “Some cultures put elephants to work in many of the same ways we put horses to work.”



Teach your listeners something new by comparing it to something they already know. This painted elephant (left), ready for the Annual Elephant Festival in Rajasthan, India, is compared to the more familiar image of this costumed horse (above), marching in an Oktoberfest parade in Munich, Germany.

- **How the thesis, along with a preview of the main points, might sound in the actual speech.** Here in the West, we are used to seeing horses at work, but you'll see that some cultures put elephants to work in many of the same ways. Much like horses, elephants are used (1) as pack animals, (2) as assistants in agriculture, and (3) as props in ceremonies and tourism-related activities.

Try one yourself:

Many people mistakenly think that Cinco de Mayo celebrates Mexico's day of independence from Spain in 1810. Cinco de Mayo instead commemorates the Mexicans' defeat of the French army at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Mexico celebrates its independence day on September 16. The two Mexican holidays differ in purpose and in the way they are celebrated.

How would this information about the differences between the two Mexican holidays fit into the thesis draft formula?

I want to inform my audience about the

_____ of (or between) _____
organizing term narrowed topic

The two organizing term are:

main point #1

main point #2

Now do the thesis check:

Check: _____
narrowed topic *connecting words including the organizing term*

a list of the main points

5. Spatial pattern

- **Definition.** The **spatial pattern** discusses the topic according to the way things fit together in a physical space of any size; the supporting points relate to each other according to a geographical pattern or a relative physical relationship such as top to bottom, east to west, inside to outside. This pattern works well when the speaker wants to create a mental picture of something whole that is made of various elements set apart by physical location. Note the root word *space* in the term *spatial*.
- **Organizing terms.** *Districts, sections, boroughs, regions, areas, segments, sectors, divisions, layers, strata, components.*
- **Example.** This example shows that not all Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are alike. Instead, there are several recognized subspecies, distinguished by region.

I want to inform my audience about the

regions of Asian elephant subspecies.
organizing term narrowed topic

The three regions are:

southern India and Sri Lanka (Elephas maximus maximus)

Southeast Asia (*Elephas maximus indicus*)

Malaysia and Sumatra (*Elephas maximus sumatrensis*)

Check: Asian elephant subspecies are found in three distinct regions, which are southern India and Sri Lanka, where you'll find *Elephas maximus*.

Essentials

Patterns of Organization for Informative Speeches

Here are five classic patterns of organization for informative speeches. The topic of “Italy” provides the examples.

PATTERN	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE OF A THESIS AND MAIN POINTS
Topical	Main points are based on some sort of classification system or identifiable grouping.	<i>Italy is known for its famous cities, including Rome, Florence, and Venice.</i>
Chronological	Main points relate to each other according to time.	<i>Italy's history over the last 150 years is often divided into the three eras of the Kingdom, the Fascist era, and the Republic.</i>
Causal	Main points show the causes or the effects of something.	<i>Italy's wines are among the world's most renowned because of the soil and the moderate climate in which the grapes are grown.</i>
Comparison or contrast	Main points show how one idea compares or contrasts with another idea.	<i>Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece share many similarities in their architecture, political systems, and contributions to the art of public speaking.</i>
Spatial	Main points relate to each other according to placement or location.	<i>To learn about modern Rome, you need to understand its distinct neighborhoods, including the religiously significant area of the Vatican, the tourist area of Piazza Navona, and the older, quieter areas of Trastevere.</i>

maximus; Southeast Asia, home of *Elephas maximus indicus*; and Malaysia and Sumatra, the territory of *Elephas maximus sumatrensis*.

- **Thesis.** “Asian elephant subspecies inhabit specific geographic locations.”
- **How the thesis, along with a preview of the main points, might sound in the actual speech.** *There is no such thing as a “pure” Asian elephant. Rather, you’ll learn that Asian elephants belong to one of many subspecies, each identified as living in a specific geographical region. Let’s look first this afternoon at the Asian elephant subspecies *Elephas maximus maximus*, found in southern India and Sri Lanka. We’ll then look at *Elephas maximus indicus*, found in Southeast Asia, and lastly at *Elephas maximus sumatrensis*, from Malaysia and Sumatra.*

Essentials

Organizing Terms Used in Informative Speeches

Here is a summary of suggested organizing terms for informative speeches according to each type of speech pattern. These are not finite lists.

PATTERN	ORGANIZING TERMS
Topical	<i>kinds, classes, varieties, brands, breeds, features, categories, methods, techniques, schemes, strategies, influences, policies, tactics, shapes, levels, sizes, theories, assumptions</i>
Chronological	<i>steps, stages, periods, legs, phases, chapters, epochs, historical eras</i>
Causal	Cause speech— <i>causes, reasons, grounds, sources, roots</i> Effect speech— <i>effects, results, consequences, impacts, outcomes, end products</i>
Comparison or contrast	Comparison speech— <i>similarities, parallels, resemblances</i> Contrast speech— <i>differences, dissimilarities, distinctions</i>
Spatial	<i>districts, sections, boroughs, regions, areas, segments, sectors, divisions, layers, strata, components</i>

Try one yourself:

In your biology class, you are assigned the topic of “the plant cell.” After some brief research, you decide to talk about the plant cell by focusing on each of its major parts—the cell wall and membrane, the cytoplasm containing the organelles, and the nucleus—starting from the outside and moving inward.

How would this information on the parts of a plant cell fit into the thesis draft formula?

I want to inform my audience about the

_____ of _____.
organizing term narrowed topic

The three _____ *are:*
organizing term

main point #1

main point #2

main point #3

Now do the thesis check:

Check: _____

narrowed topic *connecting words including the organizing term*

a list of the main points

12B

Finalize the Thesis Statement and Develop Main Points for a Persuasive Speech

Persuasive speeches attempt to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. You can develop them with a two-part formula as well. Once you've completed the first part of the formula, you're close to finalizing your persuasive thesis. The second part of the formula gives you the main points. Look to the research you've already done as you undergo this step, but realize that you may need to do more. Note that you would *never* use the completed formula sentences during the speech. These sentences serve only to help you draft your organization.

The first part of the formula finalizes your thesis. Fill in the blank to create a complete sentence.

(If the goal is to create or reinforce thinking):

I want to persuade my audience to think or believe _____.

narrowed topic

(If the goal is to motivate your audience to action):

I want to persuade my audience to (do) _____.

narrowed topic

The second part of the formula depends on the persuasive pattern you choose. Here are four of the most common types.

1. Why pattern

- **Definition.** The **why pattern** justifies the thesis by arguing *reasons why*. Speakers tell *why* the audience should adopt, reject, or reinforce beliefs or do what the speaker is attempting to convince them to do (or not to do). This pattern also works well if you want to refute another person's argument.
- **Organizing terms.** *Reasons, causes, advantages, benefits, explanations, motives, arguments, proofs, grounds,* and similar words.
- **Example.** Unlike an informative speech following a causal pattern, the why pattern of persuasive speaking doesn't just explain what the reasons are; it also argues the *rationality* or the *strength* behind the reasons.

I want to persuade my audience to believe that

the international ban on ivory trading must remain intact.

narrowed topic

The *reasons* *why the ban must remain intact include:*
organizing term

the negative effect on the male-female ratio of elephants
main point #1

the threat of extinction it poses to elephants overall
main point #2

Check: *The international ban on ivory trading must remain intact*
narrowed topic

for several reasons *including the negative effect on the*
connecting words including the organizing term *a list of the main points*

male-female ratio of elephants and the threat of extinction it poses.

- **Thesis.** “There are several essential reasons the world markets must support the international ban on ivory trading.”
- **How the thesis, along with a preview of the main points, might sound in the actual speech.** *The current international ban on ivory trading must remain intact. The ban has brought elephant populations back to healthy levels but is being threatened with repeal. This afternoon I hope to convince you, first, that a repeal of the ban would lead to an unhealthy imbalance of male-to-female elephants and, second, that the threat of extinction would be real for elephant populations worldwide.*

Try one yourself:

You’ve been studying a foreign language for several years and have seen how it’s opened up your world and your thinking in new ways. You plan to convince your audience to study a foreign language by stressing three main benefits in particular: to increase their global understanding, to improve their employment potential, and ironically, to improve their understanding of their own language and culture.

How would this material fit into the persuasive thesis draft formula?

I want to persuade my audience to (do) _____.
narrowed topic

The _____ *are:*
organizing term

main point #1

main point #2

main point #3

Now do the thesis check:

Check: _____

narrowed topic *connecting words including the organizing term*

a list of the main points

2. How pattern

- **Definition.** The thesis of the **how pattern** persuades the audience to follow (or abandon) certain *ways* of thinking or behaving (i.e., *how* they think or behave). The speaker does not *inform* about the “ways how” but rather *convinces* the audience that the “ways how” are (or are not) valuable, reasonable, achievable, affordable, or convenient.
- **Organizing terms.** *Ways, techniques, events, actions, measures, procedures, manners, methods,* and so on.
- **Example.**

I want to persuade my audience to boycott circuses that use performing elephants.

narrowed topic

The _____ ways _____ in which you can do your part include:

organizing term

_____ educating those in your community about how elephants are trained _____

_____ expressing your concern and making demands to such circuses _____

_____ not supporting such circuses through any financial means _____

Check: *Boycott circuses that use performing elephants in several ways, including educating those in your community, expressing your concern and making demands to such circuses, and not supporting such circuses through any financial means.*

- **Thesis.** “Boycott any circus that chooses to use performing elephants.”
- **How the thesis, along with a preview of the main points, might sound in the actual speech.** By the end of my presentation, I hope you’ll be inspired to boycott any circus forcing elephants to perform. You’ll see just how easy and effective it can be to do your part through such simple means as educating those in your community, expressing your concern and making demands, and, most importantly, not giving one cent of your money to any such circus.

Try one yourself:

You've been learning about things that individuals can do to reduce their impact on the environment, and you want to share these with others during your speech. You decide to focus on two major categories of efforts you've found to be especially feasible: taking immediate action on simple things (like turning off all household electrical items when not in use) and investing in some products now that will pay off in the long run (like replacing all incandescent bulbs in the house with compact fluorescents).

How would this material fit into the persuasive thesis draft formula?

I want to persuade my audience to (do) _____.
narrowed topic

The _____ are:
organizing term

main point #1

main point #2

Now do the thesis check:

Check: _____
narrowed topic *connecting words including the organizing term*

a list of the main points

3. Problem-solution pattern

- **Definition.** The **problem-solution** persuasive speech defines a problem and offers a feasible solution for it.
- **Organizing terms.**
 - Other terms for *problem*—*challenge, obstruction, difficulty, crisis, predicament, dilemma, question, uncertainty, reservation*, and so on.
 - Other terms for *solution*—*answer, key, resolution, response, cure, antidote, way out, escape*, and so on.
- **Example.**

*I want to persuade my audience to believe that their financial donation can go directly to saving African elephants.*⁴

narrowed topic

The challenge is the ever-increasing need for a widened organizing term for the problem

conservation ethic regarding African elephants.

*One feasible _____ response _____ is to donate to the Save the Elephants
organizing term for the solution*

GPS (Global Positioning System) collar program, in which Samburu women from Kenya bead beautiful elephant-tracking collars.

Check: *The “problem” and the “solution” actually form the main points; therefore a check is not as necessary in this pattern, although you should be sure that your response actually addresses or solves the specific problem you cite.*

- **Thesis.** “Your financial donation can directly benefit African elephant conservation.”
- **How the thesis, along with a preview of the main points, might sound in the actual speech.** *Elephant conservation in Africa is essential, and your direct financial donation can help meet this challenge. I know that by the end of my presentation, you’ll see the need to send whatever you can to the Save the Elephants beaded-collar program, in which Samburu women from Kenya create beautiful collars for housing the GPS systems that allow scientists to track the health and welfare of these important animals.*

Try one yourself:

You’re frustrated to learn about the plight of some of your friends who, because of a lack of U.S. citizenship, are having a tough time getting jobs. You’ve read a lot about the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, and you agree that two years of college or military service should open the door to U.S. citizenship for undocumented young people.

How would this material fit into the persuasive thesis draft formula?

*I want to persuade my audience to believe that _____.
narrowed topic*

*The _____ is _____.
organizing term for the problem*

*One feasible _____ is _____.
organizing term for the solution*

4. Monroe’s motivated sequence

Alan Monroe, a pioneer in the field of communication, developed a variation on the problem-solution pattern in the mid 1930s.⁵ His **motivated sequence** has stood the test of time and is widely used by public speakers who want listeners to reconsider a predisposition, firm up a present commitment, or move to action. The sequence relies on five steps—*attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action*.

The motivated sequence still requires a thesis statement. One option is to add it to the attention step, in essence making that step the introduction. Use the persuasive formula introduced on ◀ **page 201** to create your thesis.

Essentials

Patterns of Organization for Persuasive Speeches

Here are four classic patterns of organization for persuasive speeches. The topic of “Italy” again provides the examples.

PATTERN	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE OF A THESIS AND MAIN POINTS
Why	Main points argue the reasons for supporting or opposing a particular idea.	<i>Italy deserves its reputation as one of the Western world’s greatest cultures because of its legacies in art, music, and science.</i>
How	Main points argue for the way something should be done.	<i>The United States should look to Italy’s Slow Food movement—using local ingredients and time-honored recipes and lingering over the pleasures of eating—as inspiration.</i>
Problem-solution	Main points consist of a problem and a proposed solution for the problem.	<i>Italy could clean up the Po River if Milan would implement modern systems to treat sewage and waste water.</i>
Monroe’s motivated sequence	Relies on five steps: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action.	<i>Visit Italy’s Amalfi coast on your next vacation (use the five steps to motivate your audience to action).</i>

Attention The first step is to gain your audience’s attention; no persuasion can occur if your audience is not with you. Use one or more of the attention-getting strategies (❶ p. 228), including startling statistics, an engaging anecdote, or a relevant quotation. The attention step should not only gain the audience’s attention, but also prepare listeners for the upcoming discussion, just as any good introduction would do.

Continuing with the theme of elephants, here’s an example, in outline form, of how a speech on the need for improved elephant-conservation management⁶ would play out under the motivated sequence.

- (Anecdote) *The culling (killing) of adult elephants in Kruger National Park, South Africa, pre-1995, in the name of herd management, has had apparent negative physical and psychological effects on the young elephants left in the herd.*
- *Better options must exist.*
- (Thesis) *Elephant contraception provides a better alternative to the culling of excess elephant populations.*

Need Once you have the audience’s attention, you next establish the existence of the need or problem. Use hard evidence, illustrations, and stories to describe the problem and

Essentials

Organizing Terms Used in Persuasive Speech

Here is a summary of suggested organizing terms for persuasive speeches according to each type of speech pattern. These are not finite lists.

PATTERN	ORGANIZING TERMS
Why	<i>reasons, causes, advantages, benefits, explanations, motives, arguments, proofs, grounds</i>
How	<i>ways, techniques, events, actions, measures, procedures, manners, methods</i>
Problem-solution	Terms for <i>problem</i>—<i>challenge, obstruction, difficulty, crisis, predicament, dilemma, question, uncertainty, reservation</i> Terms for <i>solution</i>—<i>answer, key, resolution, response, cure, antidote, way out, escape</i>

to convince listeners that the need exists, that it's significant, and that it's likely to persist if no action is taken to combat or satisfy it. Most importantly, show how the need affects, influences, or shapes the lives of your specific listeners. Convince them that they should care enough to take action.

- *South Africa is the native range for elephants.*
- *Human encroachment on this land led to a reduction of the elephants' range.*
- *Kruger National Park was established, allowing for increased protection of elephant populations, and this protection has created a current overpopulation of elephants.*
- *The consequences of this overpopulation affect people, elephants, the land, and the ecosystem.*
- *Culling of herds is the existing preferred mode of management because it is relatively easy and provides meat to many processing plants built just outside park boundaries.*
- *Culling is cruel, morally wrong, and psychologically damaging to surviving elephants.*
- *Because we don't live in South Africa, we don't depend on elephants for our livelihood, but we should take a moral stand on a beloved, environmentally important creature. We should also support South Africa's tourist industry, since elephants are a major draw of safaris.*

Satisfaction The main function of the third step, satisfaction, is to present a solution to the need. Here, you not only outline the answer to the need but also convince the audience that the solution is realistic, feasible, and preferable to other alternatives. If applicable, you may have to answer any potential objections or counterarguments others have to your proposed solution.

- *Elephant birth control is a better answer.*
- *Audrey Delsink's research and results on pachyderm contraception is showing feasibility and success.*

- *The same contraception has shown success in wild horse and deer populations in the United States.*

Visualization The main purpose of visualization is to intensify your audience's desire to see the proposed solution through by having them visualize the future. There are two versions of the future you can describe: one in which your solution *has* been implemented and one in which it *has not*. Depending on your topic, you may choose to discuss only one future, or you may choose to discuss them both. Again, be sure to discuss relevance. Show your audience how *they* stand to lose or benefit from the future you describe.

Positive Visualization

- *population growth under control*
- *elephant families together*
- *elephants supporting the ecosystem in a healthy way*
- *elephants available to support tourism interests*

Negative Visualization

- *population out of control*
- *ecosystem damaged*
- *culling on the increase*
- *damaged elephants becoming more aggressive*
- *an increase in elephant meat-processing plants resulting in even more culling*

Action The final step in the motivated sequence provides ways for the audience to get personally involved in action that meets the need or solves the problem. Involvement can mean taking direct action, altering a predisposition, or firming up a way of thinking. If you ask your listeners to take direct action, be specific and realistic. Add to your persuasion by telling the audience that *you* have taken the same action (or are taking steps to do so); convince them you “walk your talk.” Summarize your ideas, make your call to action, and create a sense of completion so that your listeners know you are wrapping things up.

- *Pachyderm contraception works. (Provide more results from Delsink's studies.)*
- *Taking no action means supporting those who want to cull herds to supply meat-processing plants, because that's what is happening now.*
- *Make donations to Delsink's project via the Makalali Game Reserve.*
- *If you're interested in a safari, research management practices before you commit. Don't support those that cull herds.*
- *Contraception works for all kinds of species and can work for elephants, too.*

Depending on your topic and audience, some steps in the motivated sequence may require more time and energy than others. For example, if your audience is already convinced of the need, quickly highlight that step and spend more time on the last three steps. If your audience is gathered because they believe in one particular solution, skim the first three steps and help them visualize an outcome, but spend the majority of your time on the action step. If your audience is unaware of the need or hostile toward your proposed solution, action might be less important than some of the earlier steps. In other words, the motivated sequence is not a rigid procedure. Instead, it provides guidelines for persuading a particular audience on a particular occasion.

Summary

- Each thesis statement is further explained or argued through a number of main points. These main points form the body of the speech.
- Informative and persuasive thesis statements and their main points can be prepared using a formula containing an organizing term and a narrowed topic.
- Informative arrangements include the topical, chronological, causal, comparison/contrast, and spatial patterns of organization.
- Persuasive arrangements include the why pattern, the how pattern, the problem-solution pattern, and Monroe's motivated sequence.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THESE STRUCTURE KEYS

A speech is not just a hodgepodge of interesting details. Instead, you communicate one idea and support it through several main points arranged to relate to your thesis and to one another in a logical way. Your listeners expect and want a well-organized message. It's your responsibility to provide it.

EXERCISES

1. Complete the informative "try one yourself" exercises in Section 12A. Do the same for the persuasive exercises in 12B.
2. Select a topic, and outline five informative speeches from it (thesis and main points only), one from each of the five informative patterns of organization. Choose an easy topic (cars, gum, music, fairy tales) for which you don't need to do any research.
3. Stick with the same topic (or choose a new one), and now create three persuasive speeches (thesis and main points only), one each from the why, how, and problem-solution patterns.
4. With a partner in class, choose one topic, and create two 1- to 2-minute presentations—one informative and one persuasive. The topic can be light; this is just an exercise. Go up to the front of the room to present your speeches. Have your classmates detect the patterns you used.



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 13

Outlining Your Ideas

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“The act of sitting down to outline my message was actually a relief. I had done so much research that my head was spinning with ideas. I couldn’t see how I was going to make sense of it all. Having all my ideas there, on one page, helped me focus and move forward.”

“The outlining for me was a relatively easy step. I had a good understanding of the principles of outlining before coming into this class, so it was easy to apply them. A solid outline is the only place to start any communication project—whether it’s an essay or a speech.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

Outline your message.

SUPPORT

STYLE

13A**Understand the Role of the Preparation Outline**

1. *The outline shows the relationships between your ideas*
2. *The preparation outline is not your speaking outline*

13B**Create the Preparation Outline**

1. *Be consistent in your numbering, lettering, symbols, and indentation*
2. *Use full sentences*
3. *Label the speech parts*
4. *Title the speech*
5. *Attach a bibliography*

Key Terms

bibliography	► 221
main point	► 212
parallel idea	► 214
preparation outline	► 212
subordinate idea	► 214
subpoint	► 212
sub-subpoint	► 212
superior idea	► 214

You've learned how to narrow your topic into a thesis and organize your main ideas according to a pattern thereby creating the backbone of your speech. Now you can organize your ideas into an outline. Like the outline you create for an essay, your speech outline acts as a blueprint, a set of plans to follow during the later stages of speech preparation and delivery. A clear and complete speech outline assures you of a well-organized message in which all the ideas relate to each other in some logical fashion. And once you know exactly where you're going structurally, you can more easily take your listeners there with you. This chapter first goes in-depth into the purpose of the outline and highlights the difference between a preparation outline and a speaking outline. It then provides guidelines for creating a clear and cohesive preparation outline for the body of your speech. Chapters 14 and 15 provide guidance in outlining your introduction and conclusion.

13A

Understand the Role of the Preparation Outline

A successful presentation begins with the building of a **preparation outline** that presents all your thoughts—each written as a full sentence to express a complete idea—in one place. This outline first allows you to plan the order of your ideas. More importantly, it ensures that your ideas relate to one another logically, are well balanced, and are adequately supported. These are essential speechmaking steps that will give you—and, in turn, your listeners—confidence in your structure.

Be flexible while building your preparation outline. Realize that the outline is in a constant state of flux as you perform relevant research and think about what you want to say. It's rare for a preparation outline to come out completely as you want it in the first draft. You'll rework yours several times as you arrange, rearrange, add, and subtract ideas. Finally, not only is the preparation outline essential for your own speech success, it lets you communicate your speech plan to others such as your instructor, supervisor, or speaking host if needed.

1. The outline shows the relationships between your ideas

An effective presentation aims to communicate one new idea to your listeners. Therefore, you need to highlight that one major idea—the thesis—and make sure that all the other ideas in the presentation somehow relate to it. Those other ideas are known as:

- **Main points**—these are the larger ideas that support the thesis. Most speeches have two to five main points.
- **Subpoints**—these ideas support a main point. Nearly all main points have subpoints, typically two or more of them.
- **Sub-subpoints**—these ideas support a subpoint. Not all subpoints have sub-subpoints, but when they do, there are usually two to four of them.

The preparation outline needs to show the relationship of your ideas to one another.

A typical outline of ideas looks like this:

THESIS

MAIN POINT #1

Subpoint A

Subpoint B

sub-subpoint 1

sub-subpoint 2

Subpoint C

MAIN POINT #2

Subpoint A

sub-subpoint 1

sub-subpoint 2

Subpoint B

Here is a sample preparation outline of a speech body.¹

Title: *All Eyes on Saturn*

Speech purpose: To inform

Thesis: SATURN'S DISTINCTIVE FEATURES MAKE IT ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL PLANETS.

I. THE COMPOSITION OF THE PLANET ITSELF IS UNIQUE. (first main point)

A. Unlike the terrestrial planets, Saturn has an interior of mostly simple molecules such as hydrogen and helium. (first subpoint)

1. It also has traces of water, ammonia, ice, and methane. (first sub-subpoint)

2. It is the least dense of all the planets and would float in water. (second sub-subpoint)

B. Its interior core is very hot. (second subpoint)

1. Saturn's temperature is 12,000 Kelvin (11,700° Celsius) at the core. (first sub-subpoint)

2. Saturn radiates more energy into space than it receives from the sun. (second sub-subpoint)

3. This heat contributes to the unusual motions of its atmosphere. (third sub-subpoint)

II. SATURN IS PROBABLY BEST KNOWN FOR ITS RINGS. (second main point)

A. Saturn is not the only planet with rings, but it is the most famous. (first subpoint)

B. The rings are multifaceted. (second subpoint)

1. They are composed of silica rock, iron oxide, and ice particles. (first sub-subpoint)

2. Individual particles range in size from specks of dust to chunks the size of small automobiles. (second sub-subpoint)

3. Rings can measure up to thousands of kilometers in diameter. (third sub-subpoint)

4. Rings average close to one kilometer in thickness. (fourth sub-subpoint)

C. In 1610 Galileo was the first to record observation of the rings. (third subpoint)

1. He couldn't explain them. (first sub-subpoint)
 2. Thanks to the work of astronomers ever since, we now have a greater, yet not complete, understanding of these rings. (second sub-subpoint)
- III. SATURN'S MOONS ARE ANOTHER NOTEWORTHY FEATURE. (third main point)
- A. NASA reports that fifty-six satellites (moons) have so far been observed. (first subpoint)
 - B. The moons vary in composition. (second subpoint)
 1. They vary in material. (first sub-subpoint)
 2. They also vary in size. (second sub-subpoint)
 - C. Their orbital planes differ. (third subpoint)
 1. Two moons orbit within the gaps between the main rings. (first sub-subpoint)
 2. Some moons interact with the rings. (second sub-subpoint)
 - D. Some of the moons are worthy of individual discussion. (fourth subpoint)
 1. Titan, the second-largest moon in the solar system, is so large that it affects the orbits of nearby moons. (first sub-subpoint)
 2. Iapetus has one bright side and one dark side, with a huge ridge running around most of its dark-side equator. (second sub-subpoint)
 3. Phoebe orbits the planet in a direction opposite that of Saturn's larger moons. (third sub-subpoint)

The outline shows superior, subordinate, and parallel ideas In the preceding outline, ideas relate to each other in one of three ways: they are *superior*, *subordinate*, or *parallel* to other ideas in the outline.

- **Superior ideas** are larger ideas that need other ideas to support them; they are superior to or more important than other ideas. In the preceding example,
 - the thesis is superior to the three main points.
 - the first main point is superior to its two subpoints.
 - within the first main point, the first subpoint is superior to its two sub-subpoints.
- **Subordinate ideas** are ideas that support other ideas; they are less important than other ideas. In the preceding example,
 - the three main points are subordinate to the thesis.
 - four subpoints are subordinate to the third main point.
- **Parallel ideas** are ideas equal to each other in importance. In the preceding example,
 - the first main point is parallel to the second and third main points.
 - the first subpoint under the second main point is parallel to the other two subpoints, also under the second main point.
 - the thesis, being the "most superior" idea in the outline, has no parallel idea.

The outline ensures adequate support for each idea A good outline ensures that each idea has a sufficient amount of support beneath it, or backing it up. In the Saturn example, the thesis has three solid main points. The first main point has two clear subpoints, both of which

have some sub-subpoints. As you prepare your own outline for your presentation, make sure that your thesis has at least two main points; it is illogical to have just one. If for some reason you only have one main point, then you most likely do not have full support for your thesis. In this case, chances are your only main point is the same as your thesis, and you'll need to go back to your research to rethink and broaden your message.

As a general rule, each main point for your presentation has at least two subpoints. A subpoint frequently has a few sub-subpoints and, on rare occasions, a few sub-sub-sub-points, but that is about as "low" as you want to go. The more levels of ideas you have, the greater the likelihood that you—and your listeners—will get lost in a structural haze.

Here are some examples of inadequate support.

Wrong—Too Few Main Points to Back Up the Thesis

THESIS

MAIN POINT #1

Wrong—Too Few Subpoints to Back Up Main Point #3

THESIS

MAIN POINT #1

Subpoint A

Subpoint B

Subpoint C

MAIN POINT #2

Subpoint A

Subpoint B

Subpoint C

Subpoint D

MAIN POINT #3

Subpoint A

Wrong—Too Many Lower-Level Ideas

THESIS

MAIN POINT #1

Subpoint A

Subpoint B

Sub-subpoint 1

Sub-subpoint 2

Sub-sub-subpoint a

Sub-sub-subpoint b

Sub-sub-sub-subpoint i.

Sub-sub-sub-subpoint ii.

Sub-sub-subpoint c

Sub-sub-subpoint d

MAIN POINT #2

Subpoint A

Sub-subpoint 1

Sub-sub-subpoint a

Sub-sub-sub-subpoint i.

Sub-sub-sub-subpoint ii.
 Sub-sub-subpoint b
 Sub-sub-subpoint c
 Sub-subpoint 2
 Subpoint B

The outline ensures a balance of ideas Finally, the outline helps you see whether you have a relatively good balance of ideas. In the Saturn example, each main point, with its varying number of subpoints and sub-subpoints, gets roughly equal “playing time.” As you prepare your own outline, ensure that you give each idea approximately equal attention. While you certainly don’t need to calculate this balance exactly, listeners are thrown off balance and may begin questioning your planning if you spend six minutes on the first main point, five on the second, and only one on the third.

Here is an example of poorly balanced ideas:

Wrong—Improper Balance of Support for Main Point #3

THESIS

MAIN POINT #1

Subpoint A

Subpoint B

Sub-subpoint 1

Sub-subpoint 2

Subpoint C

MAIN POINT #2

Subpoint A

Subpoint B

Subpoint C

Subpoint D

MAIN POINT #3

2. The preparation outline is not your speaking outline

Though your preparation outline is an invaluable tool for creating your speech plan, you won’t be taking it up to the speaking platform with you at the time of your presentation. For that, you need a set of speaking notes, fully discussed in Chapter 18. Some speakers present with no notes at all. This doesn’t mean they didn’t create a preparation outline ahead of time! They most certainly did.

13B

Create the Preparation Outline

Here are some general guidelines for creating your preparation outline. Your instructor may require a preparation outline from you prior to your speech and, if so, may have a preferred format; be sure you follow it.

1. Be consistent in your numbering, lettering, symbols, and indentation

Visual consistency helps you see the relationship of ideas quickly. You achieve consistency by building in similarities and variation in numbering, lettering, indentation, and other symbols such as typeface (italics, boldface, etc.), capitalization, and type size. Here are two examples.

Visually Inconsistent

- I. First main point
 - A. First subpoint
 - B. Second subpoint
 - 1. First sub-subpoint
 - a. First sub-sub-subpoint
 - b. Second sub-sub-subpoint
 - 2. Second sub-subpoint
 - C. Third subpoint
- II. Second main point
 - A. First subpoint
 - 1. First sub-subpoint
 - 2. Second sub-subpoint
 - B. Second subpoint

Visually Consistent

- I. FIRST MAIN POINT
 - A. First Subpoint
 - B. Second Subpoint
 - 1. First sub-subpoint
 - a. first sub-sub-subpoint
 - b. second sub-sub-subpoint
 - 2. Second sub-subpoint
 - C. Third Subpoint
- II. SECOND MAIN POINT
 - A. First Subpoint
 - 1. First sub-subpoint
 - 2. Second sub-subpoint
 - B. Second Subpoint

2. Use full sentences

Key words and trigger phrases are all you need for speaking conversationally from your notes during the speech delivery. Preparation outlines, however, require whole sentences to ensure that each part of the outline expresses a complete idea. Here are some examples.

Less Effective

- II. RINGS
 - A. Most famous
 - B. Composition
 - 1. Silica rock, iron oxide, and ice particles
 - 2. Size range
 - 3. Diameter
 - 4. Thickness

More Effective

- II. SATURN IS PROBABLY BEST KNOWN FOR ITS RINGS.
 - A. Saturn is not the only planet with rings, but it is the most famous.
 - B. The rings are multifaceted.
 - 1. They are composed of silica rock, iron oxide, and ice particles.
 - 2. Individual particles range in size from specks of dust to chunks the size of small automobiles.
 - 3. Rings can measure up to thousands of kilometers in diameter.
 - 4. Rings average close to one kilometer in thickness.

3. Label the speech parts

To make sure that you have all the necessary components, label the parts of your speech after you've incorporated everything, including the introduction, the conclusion, and transitions into the outline. Ask your instructor whether he or she prefers using parenthetical or marginal annotations (or some other format) to label the parts. Following is a sample of a fully labeled preparation outline.

Did You Know?

Alternate Formats for Outlining

Not everyone's mind works best with the standard linear outline format. You can outline your speech ideas in a variety of visual formats. Figures 13.1 and 13.2 show two, the mind map and the organizational chart. We discussed the mind map earlier as a way to generate topic ideas (p. 137).

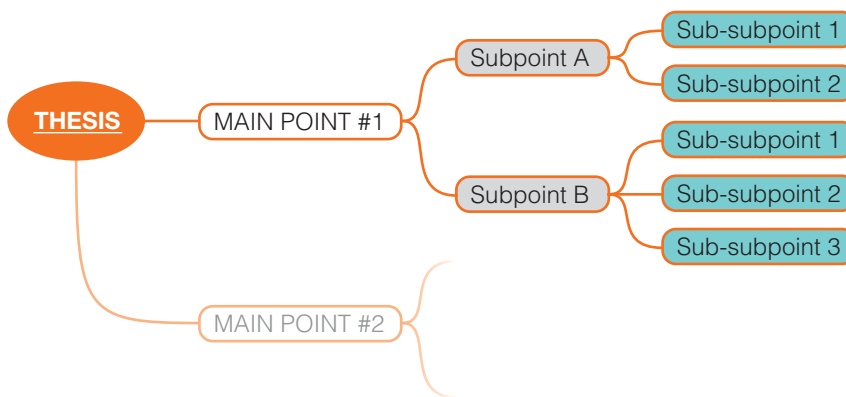


Figure 13.1 The mind map is an alternate format for your preparation outline.

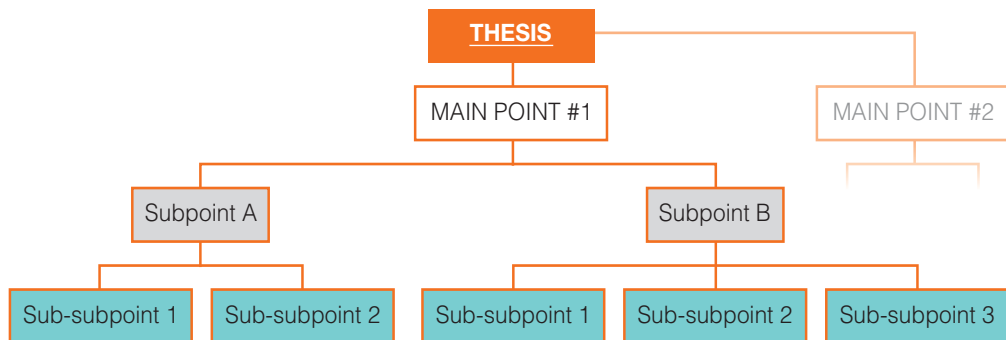


Figure 13.2 The organizational chart is an alternate format for your preparation outline.

Preparation Outline for *The Story of the Statue of Liberty***Title:** *The Story of the Statue of Liberty*²**Speech Purpose:** To inform**Thesis:** THE STATUE OF LIBERTY HAS A RICH AND FASCINATING HISTORY FOR PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES AND THOSE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHO VALUE U.S. IDEALS.**Introduction**

- (Attention material: visual) I've got \$5 in my pocket for anyone who knows the original name of this statue. Answer: Liberty Enlightening the World.
- (Audience connection) We're a nation of immigrants. She has meaning for most citizens or people living here. She is a well-known national icon. But how much do we really know about her?
- (Thesis) The Statue of Liberty has a rich and fascinating history for U.S. citizens and people throughout the world who value U.S. ideals.
- (Credibility) The information I'll share with you today comes from *The Story of the Statue of Liberty*, by Betsy Maestro; the National Park Service's official website on the Statue of Liberty; and my own trip to New York last summer.
- (Preview) In my presentation, you'll hear first about the construction of Lady Liberty; second, the artist's intended symbolism; and finally, the symbolism she has had and continues to have for U.S. citizens today.

Transition: Let's first look at her birth.

Body

- I. THE STORY OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY'S CONSTRUCTION HAS SEVERAL FASCINATING ELEMENTS.
 - A. She was conceived as a joint effort between France and the United States to recognize the friendship established during the American Revolution and to celebrate the centennial of the American nation.
 - B. Both countries shared in the design and construction.
 1. France supplied the statue, designed by Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi.
 2. The United States designed and supplied the pedestal.
 - C. Three-hundred fifty pieces of the statue arrived in New York Harbor from France in June 1885 and were reassembled there. The Statue of Liberty opened October 28, 1886.
 - D. The details of her construction are remarkable:
 1. The inside structure is made of iron rods and was designed by Gustav Eiffel (who designed the Eiffel Tower).
 2. A 2.5 millimeter copper skin is attached to the iron infrastructure. The copper can move independently of the iron framework.
 3. The statue's size is colossal.
 - a. It measures 154 feet from the ground to the top of the pedestal.



Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi incorporated many symbols in his design of the Statue of Liberty. Her torch symbolizes truth and liberty, while the seven points of her spiked crown represent the seven seas and the seven continents.

- b. It measures 151 feet from the top of the pedestal to the top of the torch.
 - c. The total height is 305 feet.
 4. Her total weight is substantial
 - a. There are 125 tons of steel.
 - b. Her concrete foundation weighs 27,000 tons.
 5. Her wind sway is 3 inches. The torch can sway 5 inches.

Transition: Now that you have a sense of her construction, I'll tell you how Bartholdi designed the statue with intended symbolism.

II. BARTHOLDI'S INTENDED SYMBOLISM IS MULTIFACETED.

- A. The torch symbolizes truth and liberty for the world.
- B. Seven points of her spiked crown (the nimbus) represent the seven seas and the seven continents.
- C. Twenty-five windows in the crown symbolize the gemstones found on earth.
- D. The tablet in her left hand says July 4, 1776 (in Roman numerals), marking the day of American independence.
- E. Her back leg symbolizes the fact that freedom progresses slowly.
- F. Broken chains at her feet symbolize the breaking of the shackles of tyranny.

Transition: While Bartholdi's symbolism still stands, Lady Liberty has since become even more symbolic.

III. PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE ASSIGNED HER ADDITIONAL SYMBOLISM.

- A. She represents victory over internal and external strife.
- B. She continues to represent the welcoming of immigrants to our country.
- C. She plays a large symbolic role for military personnel.
 1. She was a reminder to soldiers, especially during the world wars, of what they were fighting for. The statue was often the last thing they saw leaving the country and the first thing they saw upon returning.
 2. She continues today as a symbol of the United States for military personnel throughout the world.
- D. She was the site of some of the official ceremonies for the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the country.
- E. She took on new symbolism after September 11, 2001, reminding people that U.S. ideals are still here, still standing for truth and freedom.

Essentials

Tips for Creating the Preparation Outline

- Be consistent in your numbering, lettering, symbols, and indentation.
- Use full sentences to ensure complete ideas.
- Label the speech parts.
- Give the speech a title that attracts attention yet communicates the main idea.
- Attach a bibliography.

Conclusion

- (Review of main points and thesis) Today you've learned the rich story of the Statue of Liberty's construction and her original and ever-evolving symbolism.
- (More audience connection) The Statue of Liberty remains a powerful and relevant figure, whether we're citizens of the United States, noncitizens living here enjoying the liberties of the nation, or people in other parts of the world desiring, fearing, or loathing the liberties she symbolizes.
- (Audience take-away) If you have not yet seen her in person, join the roughly five million visitors from around the world who visit her each year. It's an experience you won't forget.
- (Clincher) Whatever she may be called in the future, today the Statue of Liberty reminds us that liberty starts within ourselves and radiates out from there.

4. Title the speech

Some instructors require a title for your in-class presentations, and some don't (check with yours). However, if the speech is going to be publicized or published, a title is required. Spend some time with your title rather than just slapping one on to get it over with. Create a title that attracts audience attention yet ultimately communicates your topic. Table 13.1 (◀ p. 222) shows some examples of titles that may be clear or catchy, but not both.

Which is better? Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. Often the answer depends on the degree of formality of the speech context and the personality of the speaker. One option is to blend the two approaches by including the clever or catchy part as the main title and the more communicative, utilitarian part as the subtitle. Connect the two with a colon, as in the examples in Table 13.2 (◀ p. 222).

5. Attach a bibliography

If your speech contains researched material, it is your ethical responsibility to attach a **bibliography**, a list of all the resources you used for the speech project. Add the bibliography

Table 13.1 Clear or Catchy Titles

CLEAR TITLE (THOUGH NOT ALWAYS CATCHY)	CATCHY TITLE (THOUGH NOT ALWAYS CLEAR)
<i>Mango Production in the Caribbean</i>	<i>Orange Orbs in a Palm-Tree Paradise</i>
<i>Google's Competition</i>	<i>The Search for Improved Search</i>
<i>The Saguaro Cactus</i>	<i>Get Hooked!</i>
<i>The History of Laser Dentistry</i>	<i>Gentle Dental</i>
<i>Lance Armstrong</i>	<i>A Champion in Spandex</i>

Table 13.2 Clear and Catchy Titles

<i>Flying Rats: The Problem with Pigeons</i>
<i>A Split Decision: The Debate over Human Cloning</i>
<i>Big Business: Breast Implants and the Plastic Surgery Industry</i>
<i>Fur Crazy: Join the New Anti-Fur Campaign</i>
<i>Staged Rage: A Look Behind the Success of Xtreme Cage Fighting</i>

to your outline under the heading “Works Cited,” “Bibliography,” “Notes,” or “Research Citations.” Ask your instructor for his or her preferred wording and format preference (See the Resources section for details on citing sources and documentation styles).

Summary

- All speeches begin with the building of ideas. The preparation outline presents all your complete thoughts in one place.
- The preparation outline ensures that your ideas relate to one another logically, are well balanced, and are adequately supported.
- An essential tool while building your ideas, the preparation outline differs greatly from your speaking outline, the notes you take up to the speaking platform with you on the day of your presentation.
- Guidelines for creating a general preparation outline include being visually consistent with your numbering, lettering, symbols, and indentation; using full sentences; labeling all speech parts; adding a title if necessary; and attaching a bibliography.

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRUCTURE KEY**

You want to be satisfied that all relevant ideas are present and arranged coherently well before the day you greet your audience. It's your outline that lets you manage these many details of speechmaking and ensures that your listeners can follow the structure of your ideas on speech day.

EXERCISES

1. *Select and copy a transcript of a speech. Cut the copy up paragraph-by-paragraph, and mix the pieces of paper up. See if you can put the speech back together. Determine the reasons for your success or lack thereof.*
2. *With a partner, find a three- to five-minute recorded speech in the library or on the web. While you listen, see whether you can reconstruct the speaker's preparation outline. Was it easy or difficult to do this? Why or why not?*
3. *Can you think of an alternate system for outlining your ideas other than the linear, mind-map, or organizational-chart format?*
4. *Consider your last speech or your next speech. Come up with at least five titles for it. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each choice.*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 14

Creating the Introduction

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Though you prepare the introduction late in the speech-preparation process, believe me when I say you can’t view it as an afterthought. That intro is the first impression the audience has of you. A light and unimaginative intro gets you nowhere, because you’re likely to lose your listeners even before you begin. I know—I thought I could wing my first intro. But take it from me: you definitely want to have a plan for what you’re going to say, because it makes a difference.”

“As far as the introduction goes, my class liked the descriptive phrase ‘tell them what you’re going to tell them.’ It’s succinct and right on target.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

Introduce your ideas.

SUPPORT

STYLE

14A**Understand the Role of the Introduction****14B****Develop the Introduction**

1. *Capture the audience's attention*
2. *Introduce the topic and the thesis*
3. *Preview the main points*
4. *Create a connection between your audience and your ideas*
5. *Build initial speaker credibility*
6. *Provide other orienting material*

14C**Communicate the Introduction**

Key Terms

attention material	▶ 228
audience connection	▶ 233
feed-forward	▶ 235
literal question	▶ 229
rhetorical question	▶ 229
self-deprecating humor	▶ 229
speaker credibility	▶ 234

A speaker's initial contact with the audience is crucial. During your speech preparation, you want to build an introduction of beauty, purpose, and substance. During delivery, you want to gain attention and trust and create relevance as you prepare your listeners for the upcoming tour of your ideas. A well-developed and engagingly delivered introduction increases a presentation's listenability by providing audience members with a bright and colorful road map for the approaching speech body. If you've properly prepped them, listeners don't have to work so hard to stay with you while you discuss your major ideas. This chapter identifies the role of the introduction, describes the parts of a successful introduction, and provides guidance on communicating those parts to your audience.

14A

Understand the Role of the Introduction

Like a memorable film or a gripping novel, a presentation needs somewhere to start, a place to launch what is to follow. All speeches need an introduction. A relatively brief but essential portion of the speech (comprising 10 to 20 percent of the presentation), the introduction performs several functions:

- **Warms up your audience.** One function of the introduction is to break the ice, establish rapport, and create a social atmosphere with your listeners. Many parts of the introduction (which you'll soon read about)—while conveying important content—also serve the purpose of creating social bonds between the speaker and the audience.
- **Introduces your communication style.** Whether you want it to happen or not, your audience is going to check you out as soon as you start speaking. It's basic human nature to assess a fellow communicator. Your listeners typically take some time to get used to your voice, your speaking style, and your appearance before they interact with the heart of your message. The introduction gives them the opportunity to do so.
- **Fulfills listener expectations.** An effective presentation has a kind of expected rhythm. It begins in some identified place, takes listeners somewhere meaningful, and then looks back, reflecting on the ideas covered. Your listeners have heard many speeches in the past and have a general sense of what structural parts are included in the presentation experience. Audience members therefore anticipate your introduction. A speaker who skips the warm-up and immediately jumps into the body of the speech catches the audience off guard and may have trouble getting them back again. Meet your listeners' expectations. Give them an introduction.
- **Orients your audience for the upcoming message.** Most importantly, your introduction prepares your listeners for the ideas you'll be expounding on in the body of your speech. Many public speaking instructors and coaches rely on the following phrases to explain the overall purpose of each major part of the speech structure—introduction, body, and conclusion:

- *Tell them what you're going to tell them.*
- *Tell them.*
- *Tell them what you've told them.*

Tell them what you're going to tell them defines the introduction. Keep it in mind as you prepare.

14B

Develop the Introduction

Though the introduction is the first part of the speech you'll present, you prepare it only after you've outlined the body. If the introduction is indeed the road map to the body, the body is the road, and you must build that first.

There are no firm rules for developing an introduction. This chapter provides some time-tested suggestions for developing yours, but remember that no two introductions need be alike. Critically examine the specifics of your topic, audience, and occasion when developing your introduction. Most informative and persuasive speeches benefit from full introductions containing most or all of the following components; special-occasion speeches are more flexible by nature, and their introductions may be shorter. The primary introductory components are:

- Capturing the audience's attention
- Introducing the topic and thesis
- Creating audience connection
- Establishing speaker credibility
- Previewing the main points

While it's customary to begin by capturing the audience's attention and finish with a preview of the main points (thereby creating a natural bridge to the body of your speech), the other components of your introduction can come in any order that works for your presentation.



What's your plan to capture your audience's attention?

One way to view the introduction is to see it as its own contained narrative. The introduction is the “pre-story” for the “story” told in the body. Make sure that the parts of the “pre-story” flow together in a coherent manner while saying what you want to say. One typical order of the speech parts looks like this, with each part covered separately and only once:

- Capture attention
- Introduce topic
- Connect with audience
- State thesis
- Begin building credibility
- Preview main points

Yet another may look like this, each part blending into other parts and perhaps returned to more than once:

- Capture attention
- Begin to connect with audience
- Introduce topic
- Begin building credibility
- Continue connecting with audience
- Narrow topic as you build up to thesis
- State thesis
- Develop more audience connection
- Establish more credibility
- Preview main points

Feel free to experiment with the ordering of your introductory components. Try one, and then try another. Keep playing with it until it makes sense to you and to your scheduled listeners.

1. Capture the audience's attention

A speaker must capture and hold the audience members' attention before they will listen. Plan some **attention material** that will gain your listeners' notice and make them want to stay with you during your presentation. Apply your creativity to the following list of traditional devices, or come up with something uniquely yours.

Whatever approach you take to this initial material, make sure its content is appropriate and relevant to your topic, audience, and occasion. For example, it makes sense to begin with some eye-opening statistics on income inequality in your presentation on the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots. On the other hand, it makes little sense to begin with a joke about a penguin (even a G-rated one!) if your topic is Vincent van Gogh. Showing a shocking picture of earthquake devastation would misdirect the audience's mood at a ceremony meant to honor those killed in the catastrophe. People in attendance would know how the victims died and such pictures would be gratuitous.

Here are some traditional strategies for catching your audience's attention.

- **Tell a story.** Audiences like narratives and almost always tune in to a story. Open your speech with a story from the past, present, or future about yourself, another person, or even someone in the audience. Because introductions are relatively brief, offer a shortened version, or tell part of the story now and other parts of it at later points in the speech. Make your narrative relevant to your topic and to the point you are making in your speech.
- **Engage the audience.** Audiences are generally happy to get involved in a presentation. Ask audience members for a show of hands, request that they write something down to refer to later, or get them to perform a relevant action.
- **Make a reference to the audience, occasion, or moment in time.** Audiences like to hear about themselves and the speech event they are attending. Many speakers open their presentations with a specific reference to the geographical location (*here in The Lone Star State*), the weather (*but it's a dry heat, right?*), the purpose for gathering

(weddings are famous for . . .), or the moment in time (*as we come to the end of the fiscal year*). Such references help create a common bond between speaker and audience, bringing the mutual communication experience into the here and now.

- **Ask a question.** Audiences are well trained to respond to questions. Asking one is an effective way to start your presentation. Questions may be literal or rhetorical.

A **literal question** is concrete and looks for an actual answer from the audience. Examples of literal questions include:

How many of you have been to Niagara Falls?

Has anyone experienced a headache from caffeine withdrawal?

Who can give me a definition of the word ennui?

Rhetorical questions don't require actual answers but instead invite the audience to respond silently. Here are some examples:

Where were you the morning of September 11?

What's your first reaction when you think of Hollywood?

Which side of the term limits debate are you on?

If you ask a question at any point in your presentation, whether at the beginning or somewhere in the middle, wait for an answer. It can be tempting for hurried speakers to ask a question and then immediately pounce on their next sentence. Such impatience, however, allows no time for the audience to offer a response, whether literal or silent.

Also, while a question makes for valid opening material, beware of overusing it. Questions are relatively easy to prepare, and many speakers end up relying on them for every speech. Challenge yourself to think beyond questions. How else can you open up your presentation?

- **Use images or sound.** Audiences are naturally drawn to images and sounds. Incorporating one or more into your opening is a great way to gain attention. Project a picture on a screen, display an object, or play a brief piece of music. Your images or sound clips don't have to convey important content at this point; they just need to capture attention in a way that's relevant to the main point you will be making in the speech.
- **Use humor.** Audiences like to laugh, and if it's appropriate for your topic, nothing breaks the ice like humor. Humor, however, is tricky. First, you must be believable as a funny person, and not everyone is! Most importantly, though, humor can quickly offend, tarnishing your credibility and distancing your audience from you at exactly the time you want to connect with them. It is *not* okay to use humor that has as its target race, culture, sexual orientation, body parts, body shape, religion, occupation, or even hair color. Most of the "humor" in such jokes relies on stereotypes, and stereotyping says more about the speaker than it does about anyone being targeted by it. Irony, wit, puns, twists, and odd observations can be successful. Nothing, however, tops a speaker's **self-deprecating humor**, especially for Western audiences. Using yourself as the object of

humor increases your likability and makes an audience feel closer to you. Of course, as always, examine your topic, audience, and occasion before deciding how—or whether—to use any type of humor.

- **Start with a quotation.** Quotes are pithy statements carrying a memorable punch. If using a quote, give the name of the author, and provide a sentence about who the author is, especially if his or her name is not widely known (“Did You Know?,” ◀ p. 231). Here are some examples:
 - A speech on the power or ubiquity of computers could open with this ironic quotation from IBM Chairman Thomas Watson, made in 1943: “I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.”
 - A presentation on the necessity for free speech, political justice, or human rights could use this quotation from politician Eleanor Holmes Norton: “The only way to make sure people you agree with can speak, is to support the rights of people you don’t agree with.”
 - Comedians provide amusing quotations for lighter occasions. Chic Murray, a Scottish comedian, is the author of this self-deprecating quote: “My father was a simple man. My mother was a simple woman. You see the result standing in front of you, a simpleton.”
- **Surprise or startle them.** Another way to grab your listeners’ attention and make them want more is to say something surprising or startling. Many such pieces of information come in the form of statistics, stories, statements, and strange facts. If you choose this attention material, the content must be ethical and relevant to your topic; don’t shock people just for the sake of shocking them. Begin your speech about the costs of a college education by mentioning that it takes, on average, \$1.5 million to raise a middle-class child to age 22.¹ Your speech on the history of the U.S. flag can begin with the surprising fact that the national anthem of the United States, which invokes the image of the flag after a battle, is set to the tune of an English drinking song—“To Anacreon in Heaven.”²
- **Puzzle them or pique their curiosity.** Planting a seed that attracts the natural curiosity of your listeners is an effective way to open your speech. Assert the notion that gay men have had a profound and positive impact on Western culture. Say that a new device has been invented that just may revolutionize human transportation. Chances are good your audience will continue listening to hear you reveal more.

2. Introduce the topic and the thesis

You’ll generally communicate the thesis, the structural core of your presentation, somewhere in the introduction. Withholding the thesis until the conclusion of the presentation may create an atmosphere of suspense and drama in some special-occasion speeches and may work in a persuasive presentation where the central idea is especially controversial, but most informative and persuasive presentations benefit from an early thesis. The thesis prepares your audience to listen to the upcoming body. Providing an overtly placed and stated main idea is simply smart speaking.

Your thesis must make sense to your listeners by the time you communicate it. Here is the start of an introduction with a misplaced, disconnected thesis.

Did You Know?

Sources for Quotes

People enjoy compiling the memorable words of others. Each of the following books consolidates a variety of quotations, usually categorized by topic, in one handy source:

- *The Yale Book of Quotations*, edited by Joseph Epstein. Yale University Press, 2006.
- *The Most Brilliant Thoughts of All Time (In Two Lines or Less)*, by John M. Shanahan. Collins, 1999.
- *Phillips' Book of Great Thoughts & Funny Sayings: A Stupendous Collection of Quotes, Quips, Epigrams, Witticisms, and Humorous Comments. For Personal Enjoyment and Ready Reference*, edited by Bob Phillips. Tyndale House Publishers, 1993.
- *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations: A Collection of Passages, Phrases, and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature* (17th ed.), by John Bartlett. Little, Brown, 2002.
- *Great Quotes from Great Leaders*, edited by Peggy Anderson. Career Press, 1997.
- *1001 Motivational Quotes for Success: Great Quotes from Great Minds*, by Thomas J. Vilord. Garden State Publishing, 2002.

Numerous websites also provide an endless variety of quotations, typically categorized by topic. Check out the following:

- Quotegarden.com—inspirational, thought-provoking, humorous, literary, and special-occasion quotes
- Quotationspage.com—more than 25,000 quotes from more than 3,000 authors; it also hosts a quotations blog
- Bartleby.com/100—an online source for *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (see book list above)
- Lovepoemsandquotes.com—love quotes and famous quotes
- Uselessmoviequotes.com—more than 2,600 quotes from over 220 movies, ranging from comedies to philosophical dramas, intellectual science fiction to terrifying horror
- Weirdwebsites.com and Weirdquotes.com—two sources of weird quotes, strange sayings, proverbs, mottos, axioms, maxims, adages, and odd one-liners

(Attention material) *People are often surprised to find out that there are twenty-six identified species and at least eighty-five subspecies of rattlesnakes. Some of these have exotic names like the Oaxacan blacktail rattlesnake, the Tamaulipan rock rattlesnake, and the Central Plateau pygmy rattlesnake.*



(Thesis) *Today, you'll learn about several treatments for rattlesnake bites.*

Essentials

Ways to Get the Audience's Attention

- Tell a story.
- Engage the audience.
- Make a reference to the audience, occasion, or point in time.
- Ask a question.
- Show images or play sound.
- Use humor.
- Deliver a quotation.
- Surprise or startle.
- Pique curiosity.

In this example, listeners would rightfully sense a large gap between the intriguing information included in the attention material and the equally interesting thesis. They would inevitably be distracted from listening, despite their interest, because they would be busy wondering how those two ideas connected to one another. It is the speaker's job to create a logical flow of information between ideas.

Many presenters like to discuss the topic briefly in a broader fashion and then narrow their way toward the thesis. For example, if the central idea of your speech is "treatments for rattlesnake bites," prepare your audience by first introducing the rattlesnake as a venomous creature, then moving toward rattlesnake habitats, then toward what may happen when humans venture into those habitats, then toward the likelihood of more bites occurring. The thesis, "treatments for rattlesnake bites," now makes sense for your listeners when you all arrive there together:

(Attention material) *People are often surprised to find out that there are twenty-six identified species and at least eighty-five subspecies of rattlesnakes. Some of these have exotic names like the Oaxacan blacktail rattlesnake, the Tamaulipan rock rattlesnake, and the Central Plateau pygmy rattlesnake.*



Whatever the species, all rattlesnakes have venomous bites.



Rattlesnake habitats are found around the world.



Humans are increasingly venturing into those habitats.



Bites are more likely to occur with increased human-rattlesnake interaction.



(Thesis) *Today, you'll learn about several treatments for rattlesnake bites.*

3. Preview the main points

Another purpose of the speech introduction is to preview the main points you'll be discussing in the body. Previewing sets up a mental road map, preparing listeners for the main stops they can expect along the upcoming tour of ideas. Many speakers like to communicate the preview soon after the thesis, because these two introductory components are so connected. It is helpful to use words such as *first*, *second*, *next*, and *finally* to let the listeners know you're previewing the main points. Here is an example of the speaker's preview for the speech on rattlesnake bite treatments:

The main treatments we'll be covering today include, first, washing and cleaning the bitten area; second, immobilizing the bitten area and keeping it lower than the heart; next, using a suction device; and finally, counteracting the venom with an antivenin.

4. Create a connection between your audience and your ideas

The introduction is your first opportunity to create a connection between your audience and the ideas you plan to communicate (see Chapter 25 for more on connecting with the audience throughout the presentation). When you create **audience connection** in the introduction, you relate to your listeners' needs and wants, establishing relevance as you convince them that your tour of ideas is worth their time.

The topic, audience, and occasion determine how much audience connection you need to make; some connections are easier to create than others. For example, a speaker giving a presentation on "creating a terrific college scholarship application" before a group of high school seniors does not have to work too hard at establishing a connection, especially if the listeners are attending the presentation voluntarily. They are there because they want the information. Nonetheless, a brief connection should be made.

A speaker sharing material without obvious relevance, on the other hand, may have more of a challenge when creating audience connection. For an informative speech on "China's taste for ice swimming," for example, a speaker would have to think more abstractly and look beyond the specific topic. This speaker could appeal to listeners' desire to know more about an increasingly important country with a traditionally closed past. In addition, the speaker could appeal to listeners' desire for offbeat party-conversation topics or to their taste for human eccentricities in general.

However you choose to establish the connection between your audience and your ideas, verbalize it; don't assume it. Though you may be passionate about the topic, there's no guarantee that all your audience members share your fascination. It may be obvious to you how the topic relates to your listeners, but they may not see it in the same way. Talk up the connection. Be open and obvious. Create the connection from more than one angle if you can. Try making connections on an intellectual, social, emotional, psychological, and interpersonal level.

5. Build initial speaker credibility

The introduction is also your first opportunity to begin building your **speaker credibility**. Audience members want to know that they're about to give their listening energy to someone sufficiently knowledgeable and prepared to lead the tour of ideas. Building speaker credibility is not about bragging and boasting; instead, it objectively assures your audience that you are the right person for the job.

Here are some ways you can build credibility in the introduction of your speech. (See Chapter 26 for ways to continue building credibility *throughout* the presentation.)

- **Communicate your interest in the topic.** Audiences are curious about why *you* are discussing your chosen topic. For your informative presentation on adobe, talk about how you learned to appreciate this historic building material during a trip to New Mexico and how you were inspired to come home and learn more about it. For your persuasive speech arguing a theory about why Machu Picchu was abandoned, mention how the Peruvian Lost City has intrigued you ever since you first learned about it back in fifth grade. The more passionate and personal a connection you can show toward your ideas as you introduce them, the more likely your audience is to view them in the same way and tune in to listen.
- **Talk about your research.** Though you are probably not the world's foremost expert on your chosen topic, you *have* done your homework. There's a good chance you know more about your topic than most, if not all, of your audience members. Mention the books you read, your interview with a local expert, or the training seminar you attended. Such information increases the confidence your listeners have in you.
- **Connect yourself to other credible sources.** Yet another way to boost your credibility is to connect yourself to sources your listeners already consider credible. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, for example, is known by most as a serious journal containing relevant, well-researched, and peer-reviewed medical information. Using information from one of its articles not only enhances the credibility of your content; it also makes you look good for finding it, making sense of it, and communicating it. Connecting yourself to a credible person or organization is another idea. Mention your karate studies with your nationally known and respected sensei; talk about your summer internship with a reputable auto body shop; or share information learned in a course led by a popular and respected professor.
- **Mention other relevant personal information.** Look at your topic, and talk up any relevant personal information that can lend you credibility. Your accounting degree, for example, is sure to give your audience confidence in your presentation on tax preparation, though it's less relevant for your speech outlining the success of your city's graffiti task force. Your age, personal connections, credentials, membership in a group, or specific education or training can also increase your credibility—when they're relevant to the topic you are discussing.

6. Provide other orienting material

The particulars of your speech may require you to add some other orienting material. To fully prepare your audience for the upcoming development of the main idea in the body of the speech, you may need to

Essentials

Parts of the Introduction

- Capture the audience's attention.
- Introduce the topic.
- Expand on it so that it leads logically into the thesis.
- Preview the main points.
- Create initial audience connection.
- Begin building speaker credibility.
- Provide any other necessary orienting material.

- define terms.
- show a location on a map.
- briefly explain a concept.
- explain who someone is.
- provide some brief history or context.

For example, in her informative speech on the political tensions between Iran and Iraq, one student briefly showed a map of the region so that listeners could see the length of their shared border and have a better appreciation of the role geography plays in their strained relations. The introduction is the place to provide any kind of “knowledge boost” you think better prepares your audience for listening to your larger message.

14C

Communicate the Introduction

The introduction is an important part of your presentation; you want to get your tour of ideas off to a good start. *How* you deliver the introduction is as important as what you say. Taking your introduction seriously during your practice sessions pays off when you get to the actual speech. Here are some tips for communicating your introduction.

- **Smooth out the introductory components; avoid the checklist sound and feel.** Even though you are, in essence, completing a checklist of the introductory components, don't make it obvious to your listeners that that's what you're doing (*this sentence is my attention material . . . check; this next one my credibility . . . check*). Smooth out the components to create a natural, seamless flow from one to the next.
- **Use feed-forward prior to your thesis.** **Feed-forward** tells your listeners that an important message, such as the thesis or the main points, is about to occur. Phrases such as *today in my presentation . . . , I want you to understand . . . , or after hearing*

Essentials

Tips for Delivering the Introduction

- Avoid the checklist sound and feel. Aim for a smooth flow.
- Use feed-forward prior to the thesis.
- Understand the power of your nonverbal communication.
- Speak at a normal pace.
- Begin. There's no need to announce your name and topic beforehand.
- Practice!

my talk this morning, I hope you'll be inspired to . . . get an audience's attention and tell them to "listen up because something important is about to happen."

- **Consider the power of your nonverbal communication.** Don't underestimate the power of your nonverbal behaviors in the introduction. Stand confidently but naturally. Smile and use a friendly, normal tone of voice. Look at your audience. Show them that you're a knowledgeable person who has some interesting and worthwhile ideas to share. Communicate through your words and actions your genuine interest in your ideas. When listeners sense that you care, they're more likely to care, too. In Chapter 22, we'll discuss in greater detail the influence your body and nonverbal behaviors has on your listening audience.
- **Don't rush the introduction.** Your level of speaker's energy may be high at the outset of your speech, but for most people, that energy level drops off significantly after the first minute or so. Acknowledge that this might happen, and make it a point to deliver your introduction at a normal pace.
- **Don't announce your name and topic before beginning your speech. Just begin.** On occasion, a new speaker feels the need to announce his or her name and topic before beginning the presentation. Pre-speech proclamations such as *My name is Benny Franklin, and my speech is about electricity* are not necessary. Just start the introduction as you have it planned. In many of your speaking contexts, the audience already knows who you are, and your topic becomes evident once you start talking. In a speaking situation where the audience does not know you, you can count on being introduced by someone.
- **Practice your introduction several times.** For some speakers, the introduction is the most awkward part of the speech. These speakers sense the importance of the introduction and want their presentation to get off to a good start. Practice your introduction several times. Once you've done so, you will have a general sense of what you want to say. Carry that confidence with you into the actual presentation. Your introduction will go well! See Chapter 19 for a full discussion on practicing.

Summary

- The introduction performs several helpful functions, including establishing a rapport with listeners, introducing your communication style, fulfilling listener expectations, and orienting them for the upcoming message. Listeners are expecting you to provide this important section of the speech structure.
- The main components of a speech introduction are attention material, mention of the topic, statement of the thesis, initial audience connection, initial speaker credibility, and a preview of the main points. Speakers can tailor the order in which they organize these components.
- The way you communicate your introduction is as important as its content.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRUCTURE KEY

A preview of your ideas helps your listeners know what to expect. Your effort to create a full introduction during speech preparation is time well spent, and delivering the introduction with confidence and enthusiasm helps your audience better understand what you want them to know, do, or believe.

EXERCISES

1. Find a transcript of a speech in a book or on the web. On a separate piece of paper, outline the ideas in the introduction according to their functions. What sort of attention material did the speaker use? Can you spot the thesis? The initial attempts at audience connection and credibility? Keep going.
2. Using the same speech, propose an alternate structure for the components of the introduction. For example, would the thesis have been better placed elsewhere? How about the audience connection?
3. Consider your last speech. Come up with five alternate types of attention-getting material. Would one of these have been more effective than the one you used?
4. A day or so before your next round of speeches, take turns delivering the introductions only. Identify the strengths and weaknesses during your class discussions.
5. Using the tips for communicating the introduction on page 236 from the chapter as a basis for your analysis, write a peer evaluation for a classmate during his or her next speech based only on the introduction. Identify its strengths and weaknesses. What advice would you give to your classmate to increase the effectiveness of his or her introduction?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 15

Creating the Conclusion

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“My first conclusion was horrible! I’m embarrassed to even talk about it. Even though I had a plan, no one knew I was finished. I got to the end and smiled nervously like ‘OK, I’m done!’—as if the audience should just know I was finished without my letting them know. For my next speech, I practiced the conclusion more. That extra bit of preparation was all it took.”

“Some of my classmates worked on their conclusions, and others didn’t. It was pretty obvious who was who. Those who planned their conclusions kept the energy rising and seemed to know where they were going. It was easy to go there with them. The unprepared speakers got to the conclusion, seemed to take a pause, looked up in the air, and then plodded their way to the finish line. Words were coming out of their mouths, but they were unoriginal and boring. I could almost predict what they were going to say—and it wasn’t even my speech.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

Conclude your ideas.

SUPPORT

STYLE

15A

Understand the Role of the Conclusion

15B

Develop the Conclusion

1. *Use a marker that takes listeners from the body to the conclusion*
2. *Reinforce the thesis*
3. *Reinforce and review the main points*
4. *Provide other closing material*
5. *Finish with a memorable, planned clincher*

15C

Communicate the Conclusion

15D

Take Charge of the Question-and-Answer Session

1. *Understand the reason for taking questions*
2. *Preparing for the question-and-answer session*
3. *Managing typical questions*
4. *Managing potential rough spots*

Key Terms

clincher	▶ 244
conclusion	▶ 240
heckler	▶ 251
lead feet	▶ 246
paraphrase	▶ 250
Q&A	▶ 246
take-away	▶ 240

The final contact with your audience is important and should create a memorable impact. You first want to build your conclusion with strong, well-designed materials. Then, like a good tour guide, you want to create a sense of closure and help your audience comprehend what they have just experienced. This chapter identifies the role the conclusion plays in the speech structure, describes the parts of a successful conclusion, and provides guidance on communicating those parts to your listening audience. Finally, you'll learn how to manage a question-and-answer session.

15A

Understand the Role of the Conclusion

Like a good meal, a great piece of music, or a memorable family story, a speech needs a place to finish, a place where the experience culminates in a meaningful way. In speech-making, this place is called the **conclusion**. The conclusion performs several functions:

- **Provides a sense of closure.** The overall purpose of the conclusion is to help your listeners make sense of what they've just seen and heard. Making up 5 to 10 percent of the presentation, your conclusion provides the audience with a reminder of your message, allows them an opportunity to reflect on that message, and gives them time to consider what to do with your message when they leave the speaking space.
- **Fulfills listener expectations.** Listeners expect a beginning, a middle, and an end to your presentation. A presenter who stops in what appears to be the body of the speech catches the audience off guard and leaves them feeling unfulfilled. Instead of interacting with the ideas they have just heard, these listeners become distracted with questions such as *Why didn't the speaker conclude his ideas? Doesn't he know anything about conclusions?* or *So what does this all mean? What does she want me to do with these ideas?* Meet your listeners' expectations. Give them a conclusion.
- **Reinforces the thesis.** A major function of the conclusion is to focus the audience's attention on your main idea one last time. Your listeners have heard a lot of material throughout the preceding sections of your speech. Help them summarize your main idea one last time. *Tell them what you've told them.*
- **Provides a take-away to encourage future interaction with your ideas.** The conclusion is the place to provide a **take-away**. A take-away suggests how your audience can interact with your ideas after leaving your speech. If appropriate, state a specific goal:
 - Request that they take action.
 - Ask them to replace old dispositions with new ones.
 - Tell them to create something new from your ideas.
 - Encourage them to communicate your ideas to others.
 - Persuade them to consider your ideas in new ways.



Give your audience something to take home. What's your planned take-away?

Listeners are not mind readers—don't assume that they will figure out your take-away objectives on their own. Of course, people have the right to interact with your ideas in any way they see fit. They may interpret your ideas in ways you never intended, reject them outright, or even let them fade away and become meaningless. How individual listeners will eventually respond to your ideas is impossible to predict, but at a minimum you should take advantage of the conclusion to state your own preferred outcomes.

- **Answers any questions listeners may have.** Many speaking events, especially informative or persuasive presentations, allow for a post-speech question-and-answer session. Answering audience questions is both a skill and an art. See the final section of this chapter for specifics.

15B

Develop the Conclusion

Develop your conclusion, like your introduction, only after you have prepared the body of your speech. Because the introduction and the conclusion contain several of the same components and perhaps some similar ideas, creating these two parts of your speech structure in tandem makes for efficient speech preparation.

Plan to spend time developing your conclusion. Students often admit to not giving as much attention to the conclusion as they do to other parts of the speech because they assume *something will come to me while I'm up there*. But most quickly see their error. Because the chances are slim that a meaningful speech ending will fall from the sky and out of your mouth, planning is necessary.

A conclusion makes sense only in relation to the material it follows. Most informative and persuasive speeches benefit from full conclusions containing most or all of the components listed shortly. Special-occasion speeches are more flexible by nature and may contain only one or two. While there are no firm rules for all conclusions, what you say and the order in which you say it are determined by the content and formality of your presentation and your own speaking preferences. Though all conclusions should begin with a transitional marker and end with a memorable clinching statement, the material in between is open for discussion.

One way to view the conclusion is as a self-contained narrative. The conclusion is the “post-story” that you tell after the “story” of the body. Make sure that the parts of the “post-story” flow together in a coherent manner. One typical order of the speech conclusion parts looks like this, with each part covered separately and only once:

Essentials

The Role of the Conclusion

- Provides a sense of closure
- Fulfills listeners' expectations for an ending to your speech
- Reinforces the thesis
- Encourages a take-away
- Answers any questions listeners may have

- Marker to conclusion
- Summary of topic and thesis
- Review of main points
- Final connection with audience, including the take-away
- Final clinching statement

Yet another conclusion may be ordered like this, with each part blending into other parts and perhaps being returned to more than once:

- Marker to conclusion
- Connection with audience
- Summary of topic
- More connection with audience
- Summary of thesis
- Review of main points
- Take-away
- Final clinching statement

Feel free to experiment with the order of your concluding components. Try one order, and then try another. Keep playing with the order in your practice sessions until it makes sense. Here are some time-tested components of a meaningful conclusion.

1. Use a marker that takes listeners from the body to the conclusion

You can use a variety of phrases to let your audience know that the tour of the main ideas is done and about to be summarized. Audiences listen for these phrases; it puts them in the proper frame of mind to begin summarizing with you. While you want to use words natural to *your* vocabulary, here are some common phrases indicating the start of the conclusion:

- *In conclusion . . .*
- *In summary . . .*
- *To conclude my presentation . . .*
- *To recap . . .*
- *I'll finish by saying . . .*

- *To wrap things up . . .*
- *Let's review what we've discussed today . . .*

2. Reinforce the thesis

One essential component of the conclusion is a reinforcement of your thesis. Summarizing that main idea one last time increases the chances that your listeners will leave your presentation seeing the world in that one new way you intended. Here are a few examples:

- *In summary, we've looked today at the fascinating history of the machine gun.*
- *You've now seen why it's imperative that we take action to prevent the further loss of gray-wolf habitats.*
- *If you leave my presentation with one thing this afternoon, let it be this: paying now for drug treatment is a far superior option to paying later in the forms of higher crime rates and the costs of imprisonment.*

It sounds awkward to repeat the exact phrasing you used when stating the thesis in the introduction. If you rely on natural conversational speech patterns, you should have no problem communicating your thesis with similar but not identical language.

3. Reinforce and review the main points

Remind your audience again how you supported your thesis by reviewing the main points. A quick summary does the trick. Here's an example:

In summary, we've looked today at the fascinating history of the machine gun. We started with its invention in the United States in the late nineteenth century. We then looked at its adoption by the British Army, its military relevance to Germany in both world wars, and finally, its modern applications.

4. Provide other closing material

The conclusion is not the place to introduce new ideas. You may want to mention other ideas that are related or that need to be explored in connection with your topic, but this is neither the time nor place to examine them. Save those new ideas for your next speech. The conclusion *is*, however, the place to provide additional speech-specific closing material.

- **Provide a take-away.** Though you've already made your ideas relevant to listeners at several points in the speech, make a connection one more time. Tell your listeners what they can achieve with your ideas, how those ideas connect to the greater world around them, or how they can put those ideas to use.

Your understanding of the power and proliferation of the modern machine gun, I hope, gives you clearer insights into the successes many of the world's insurgent groups are having as they fight for their causes.

In many instances, the connections made in the conclusion are even more powerful and relevant because the audience now has a better understanding of your ideas.

- **Bring yourself back into the conclusion.** Tell your audience how the ideas you've shared have made an impact in *your* life. Talk about how you now see things differently and what you plan to do in the future. Audiences consider your take-away more seriously when you show that you "walk your talk."
- **Tie up any loose ends.** Depending on what you said in the introduction or body, you may need to provide resolutions to stories or mention follow-up events. You may also want to encourage further research or speeches on the topic.

5. Finish with a memorable, planned clincher

The **clincher** is the finale, the last set of words you leave with your audience. A good clincher is planned in advance and delivered with warmth and confidence. It's not necessary to plan out your clinching statement verbatim, but it's helpful to know, in general, what you want to say. There are as many ways to end a presentation as there are ways to start one; much of the content of your closing is determined by the content of the body of your presentation and your own preferences. Many of the kinds of attention-getting devices you read about in Chapter 14—stories, references to the audience or occasion, questions, images, and quotes—work equally well for clinching statements. Here are some additional suggestions:

- **Create a connection to your opening material or to something you said earlier in your presentation.** Making a reference to previously mentioned material helps listeners see your speech as a whole. Your final reference takes them back to an earlier place, helping to bring your speech full circle. For example, in a speech on business-rehabilitation efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, one student opened his speech with an anecdote about how storm damage forced the closing of the famed Café du Monde in New Orleans. For his clincher, he provided an update of the restaurant's bittersweet reopening nearly two months later and its eventual success at reestablishing its place in the French Market and in culinary history.
- **Make a provocative comment.** Another way to end your speech is to make a comment that leaves your audience thinking. For a speech on U.S. civilians killed in the Iraq conflict, one speaker ended by sharing the example of Tom Fox, a Quaker peace activist killed along with three friends. After describing a bit of what Fox had been doing abroad—visiting Iraqi detainees, escorting shipments of medicine to clinics and hospitals, and working to form the Muslim Peacemaker Team—the speaker quoted Paul Slattery, one of Fox's friends from back home in Virginia. "[Tom] actually believed in his heart that he would better them by his conviction and his beliefs and his skills, and I think largely succeeded. What he leaves behind is a tremendous challenge for the rest of us and a guiding force."¹ Following the quote, the speaker looked out at her audience and asked, "Are any of us up to the challenge?"
- **Refer to larger or universal themes.** No matter how specific and concrete your topic, nearly all speech ideas connect to broader themes. References to these themes make for good clinchers. For example, a presentation on the mammoth migration of people from China's rural areas to its cities for the purpose of finding factory work concluded with a reference to other times throughout human history when large numbers of people have moved for economic reasons. The concluding reference placed the migrating Chinese in the larger scope of universal human experience, creating additional levels of

Essentials

Components of the Conclusion

- Use a marker that takes listeners from the body to the conclusion.
- Reinforce the thesis.
- Reinforce the main points.
- Provide other relevant closing material.
- Finish with a well-planned clinching statement.

understanding and relevance among audience members. In a speech on the ecological niche of the cockroach, the speaker ended the presentation by reminding listeners that though generally despised by most people, this creature plays as important a role in the overall ecosystem as does a cute koala bear or colorful butterfly fish.

- **Make an appeal to your audience.** You can also end a speech with a direct appeal to your audience. Direct appeals are most appropriate for persuasive speeches, where the intent is to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others:
 - *Get out and vote next Tuesday!*
 - *Based on what we've discussed today, I hope you seriously reconsider the next step of your academic journey.*
 - *I think you'll agree with me that Brenda's story is an inspiration to all of us in marketing. It's one I don't think you'll soon forget.*

The following *do not* suffice as clinchers:

- *Thank you.* You may choose to add on a genuine *thank you* after your final sentence, but those two words do not replace a well-thought-out ending.
- *Are there any questions?* Nothing kills the rising energy of a conclusion like this question. Now the audience members, who no doubt want to applaud, must instead remain quiet to see whether there are indeed any questions. If you plan to have a question-and-answer session after your presentation, see  **page 246** for guidelines.
- *See ya, That's it, or Uh, I'm done.* Some new speakers feel compelled to add one of these unnecessary taglines. Your well-prepared and delivered clincher makes them unnecessary. A good clincher stands on its own.

15C

Communicate the Conclusion

The conclusion is an important part of your presentation; you want to leave your audience with a positive impression. *How* you deliver the conclusion is as important as what you say. Take your conclusion seriously during your practice sessions. The attention you give it pays off when you get to the actual speech.

Here are some tips for delivering your conclusion.

- **Smooth out the concluding components; avoid the checklist sound and feel.** As you did with your introductory components, you are essentially covering a checklist in your conclusion. But you don't want to make it sound that way to your listeners (*this sentence is my thesis review . . . check; this next one, a review of the main points . . . check*). Speak conversationally, and let your listeners hear a natural flow from one concluding component to the next.
- **Create a sense of rising action.** A listenable conclusion moves its energy in an upward, forward direction. You've just spent a good deal of time communicating valuable, meaningful ideas with your listeners. Don't lose them here! Keep the energy moving by having a plan and knowing what ideas you want to share and in what order.
- **Consider the power of your nonverbal communication.** Believe in the power of your body and voice. Rather than releasing your posture in a way that shows your relief that the conclusion has finally arrived, maintain your self-assurance. Communicate your enthusiasm, confidence, and respect for the audience with your eyes, face, hands, and tone of voice in believable ways. Let the listeners see, hear, and feel your passion for the ideas you have just expressed. When listeners sense that you care, they're more likely to care, too.
- **Don't rush the conclusion.** Even though you and your audience know you are about to conclude, don't hurry to finish and take your seat. Speak at your natural pace. If you are nearing the limit of your time allotment, speaking more quickly to cram it all in is not the answer. While you may want to summarize things a bit more concisely than originally planned, the conclusion is too important to leave out or speed through.
- **Think lead feet.** On occasion, a new public speaker, evidently anticipating the end of the presentation, starts quick-stepping it back to his or her seat while still delivering the final sentence. Audiences *want* to applaud. It's your job to stand still and graciously accept your listeners' gratitude. One trick is to think **lead feet**—your feet are made of lead so heavy that you couldn't go anywhere even if you wanted to.

15D

Take Charge of the Question-and-Answer Session

If time allows, question-and-answer sessions, often called **Q&A**, are a dynamic part of any informative or persuasive presentation. Traditionally, most Q&A sessions take place at the end of a speech. There are some occasions, however, such as informal business meetings or classroom presentations, when audiences are invited to ask questions during the presentation.

1. Understand the reason for taking questions

Question-and-answer sessions benefit listeners Listeners like Q&A sessions, which invite them to explore ideas in more detail, clarify confusing concepts, and participate in

Essentials

Delivering the Conclusion

- Avoid the checklist sound and feel.
- Create a sense of rising action.
- Understand the power of your nonverbal behaviors.
- Deliver the conclusion at a normal pace.
- Think *lead feet*.

the larger exchange of ideas. When you offer a Q&A, the audience gets two messages—you are open to new perspectives, and you value the input and intelligence of others. Listeners appreciate these signs of respect and goodwill.

Listeners ask questions for a variety of reasons. Holding a Q&A tells your audience that you respect all these motivations.

- Many people participate in Q&A because something you said raised a question to which they truly want an answer. For example, perhaps a listener wants a word defined, an answer for a current project, a connection made between two ideas, or some background on an issue you raised.
- Some listeners ask questions to take on the challenge of coming up with a question. These audience members enjoy intellectual exchange and use your speech ideas as inspiration to further their own thinking or challenge you to further yours.
- Still others ask questions because they want to practice their own public communication skills. These speakers want to see whether they can compose and confidently deliver a few sentences in front of a room full of people.
- On occasion, a listener asks a question for someone else in the audience. Perhaps that other person is not in a position to personally ask the question. Or the speaker might want to elicit information from you that he or she thinks the other person needs to hear.
- And, yes, some people ask questions because they like to hear themselves talk. See “Managing Potential Rough Spots” on  **page 250** for more on this.

Question-and-answer sessions benefit speakers The Q&A session also benefits you.

- Listeners are more likely to keep interacting with your ideas. The longer listeners interact, the better for you and your message.
- Listeners are less likely to leave your presentation with misconceptions about your ideas.
- Due to a time limit on your speech, you most likely did not have a chance to share all you wanted. Q&A sessions allow for a further exchange of ideas. When listeners realize that you know a lot more about your topic than you had time to discuss, your perceived credibility increases.



Question-and-answer sessions are a fun and often relaxing way to invite your listeners to keep interacting with your ideas.

- Questions can alert you to any ideas you missed or didn't convey with enough clarity, so you learn how to do it better next time.
- Questions and comments inform you about new things, help you make connections to ideas you had not considered, and encourage you to look at your ideas from a new angle or fresh perspective. Go into your Q&A with an open mind. Your listeners are a valuable resource.

2. Preparing for the question-and-answer session

Fielding questions from an audience is an art. The more experience you can get, the better you become. Here are some tips for preparing for your Q&A session.

- **Go into the Q&A with a positive mind-set.** Speakers who value the purpose of the Q&A look forward to the interaction. A positive mind-set goes a long way toward lending you confidence and enthusiasm as you field questions and give answers. There is no need to dread the Q&A. It's an opportunity for you to shine, show respect for your listeners, and create a richer communication experience for all in attendance.
- **Own your material.** The single best piece of advice for your Q&A session is to "know your stuff." The more you own your material, the more confidence you have in addressing listener comments, questions, and concerns, no matter the angle from which they are asked.

- **Anticipate questions, and consider potential answers.** Take some time in your final practice sessions to consider potential questions you may receive. Are you making any especially controversial points? Despite your best attempts to explain complicated points in the speech itself, are there any you might need to readdress? Are there any political conditions at play in the organization you're addressing, or in society as a whole, that might spark certain comments or questions? Though it's impossible to predict exact questions, make some educated guesses, and consider how to respond to each. Another good strategy is to have friends and family come up with questions in your practice sessions. Ask them to be tough on you; it helps you prepare for the real thing.

3. Managing typical questions

Here are some tips for handling the actual Q&A session.

- **Explain the format ahead of time.** Ground rules for the Q&A help everyone know what to expect. Tell people how long you will take questions. On occasion, the day's agenda or the speaking host dictates the amount of time allotted. Speaker preference may also play a role. Many speakers, for example, prefer a traditional format and allow ten minutes after a forty-five-minute presentation. Others, especially recognized or controversial figures, may speak for ten minutes and allow twenty for questions. If necessary, point out microphones to be used, or just say you will call on people as hands are raised. Some speakers like to alert the audience to the post-speech Q&A before beginning their presentation so that listeners can jot down questions for later and avoid interrupting. Others call for questions immediately following the conclusion.
- **Call on people in order.** Try to keep tabs on when people raise their hands for questions, and call on them in that order. Ensure fairness by calling on people in all parts of the room, not just those you know or those sitting closest to you.
- **If you know it, use the person's name.** When addressing someone, it is common courtesy to use the person's name if you know it. First names are fine in an informal atmosphere. At other times, using a person's title (*Ms. Montemayor, Secretary Cortez, Dr. Whitely*) shows respect and creates a more formal atmosphere.
- **On occasion, it's appropriate to make a positive statement about the question before answering it.** Examples include *Yes, that's a very important point* or *I'm glad you asked that* or *That's an excellent question*. Be careful of overdoing your praise. Listeners quickly recognize that some questions are better than others, and you don't want to be accused of patronizing anyone.
- **Repeat the question if you suspect other audience members could not hear it.** Questioners often use a regular speaking volume to ask their question and are unaware that people behind them or in other parts of the room can't hear them. It's the speaker's responsibility to ensure that all in attendance know the content of the question. If necessary, take the time to rephrase the question for everyone's benefit.
- **Listen attentively, and don't interrupt.** It is civil and ethical to give your full attention to the questioner. You have had your time to speak and will soon have more. Let the

audience member ask the full question without interruption, and try to hear what he or she is really saying. Perhaps you've experienced a speaker who, after hearing only a few key words of an audience member's question, stops listening, begins nodding, and interrupts with the answer. Whether the speaker correctly interpreted the question is irrelevant. Interrupting is rude. Don't assume that you know what the other person is asking. Listen carefully to show respect and ensure that you understand the question.

- **If the question has multiple parts, acknowledge the parts and answer each separately.** Acknowledging each part of a multipart question serves two purposes—it tells the questioner that you understand what is being asked, and it helps other audience members follow your answer. Explain which part of the question you'll answer first. Once you've completed that answer, alert listeners that you're now going to answer the next part. Use your tour-guiding skills to keep everyone on track.
- **Look at everyone, not just the questioner.** It's polite to give eye contact to the person asking the question. It's also natural to keep your eyes on the questioner for the first few moments of your answer. After that, however, remember that although one person asked the question, you are answering to the whole room. Be inclusive with your eye contact. It's the best way of bringing everyone into the communication event.
- **Answer briefly, specifically, and clearly.** The point of Q&A is to answer audience questions, not to spout your knowledge and opinions on anything and everything else. Answer questions concisely and succinctly. Avoid the temptation to go off on tangents. Some people like to follow a formula of sorts: provide a concise answer, support it, repeat the answer, and ask whether the question was satisfactorily answered.
- **Use humor sparingly.** The occasional witty remark can put people at ease. For example, one older speaker, after being asked a question about the Civil War, quipped about being an expert on it because he had lived through it. The audience briefly enjoyed this bit of self-deprecating humor before hearing the actual answer. Humor can work well during your Q&A. However, as always, use it carefully and sparingly. Making a joke after each question quickly wears thin. Most questioners ask a question because they want a serious answer. It is the speaker's job to deliver it.
- **Let the audience know when the Q&A session is nearing its end.** Alert the audience when, for instance, you'll be accepting just two more questions. Some speakers acknowledge still-raised hands and let people know they'll be available afterward for further discussion. After answering the final public question, thank the audience for their participation. Many speakers like to take back the floor to make a final statement, allowing them to end on a strong, memorable note.

4. Managing potential rough spots

Some questions can throw a monkey wrench into the best-laid Q&A plans. Thankfully, rough spots like these are rare, but it's good to be prepared for them nonetheless. Here are some potential trouble spots and advice for navigating them.

- **The question is long or complicated.** Should an audience member ask a question that is particularly long or complicated, don't hesitate to **paraphrase**, or to reword it in simpler terms. Paraphrasing ensures accuracy and helps other listeners follow the exchange.

- **You don't understand the question.** Don't blame the questioner or pretend that you understand the question. Instead, politely request that the person rephrase the question another way. Once you think you understand it, paraphrase it to be sure you have it right before you answer.
- **You can't think of an answer right away.** No one expects you to have all the answers on the tip of your tongue. It's perfectly acceptable to take a few moments to formulate an answer. Don't be afraid to think before you speak.
- **You don't know the answer.** Some questions may require answers beyond the scope of your knowledge or expertise. Should you get a question to which you don't know the answer, honestly say so. Examples include:
 - *That's a very good question, but I haven't come upon that answer in my research so far.*
 - *I've never had the opportunity to look at the topic from that angle. I hesitate to give you an answer that may be completely off base or not well thought out.*

Honest answers are preferable to stumbling and fumbling through an answer you are clearly not prepared to address. Audiences are quick to detect answers that are going nowhere. Don't let such rambling make a negative impact on your credibility.

Here are some other options for handling questions to which you don't know the answer.

- If appropriate, tell the audience member you will research the question and get back to him or her (or to the whole group) with an answer.
- Let someone else answer the question, such as a classmate, teacher, colleague, supervisor, or other audience member who is in a better position than you to provide an answer. Looking to another person in the room gets more people involved in the exchange.
- **You feel attacked.** On rare occasion, a member of the audience heckles the speaker. **Hecklers** typically resent another person—perhaps even specifically *you*—for being in control. They do what they can to draw attention to themselves and away from you and your ideas. One method hecklers use is to disguise a personal attack in the form of a question. Examples include: *Are you going to continue running this company into the ground?* or *I read this exact argument in an article last week. Why don't you just admit right now that you're a plagiarist?* The average speaker rarely faces these types of "questions"; they are more likely to happen if you are in a high-profile position or speaking on a highly controversial topic. In the event you do receive a question or comment that you perceive as a personal attack, here are some options:
 - Refuse to answer. You don't have to answer all questions put to you. Other audience members most likely perceive the attack for what it is, and unless they're hoping for a good fight, they don't expect you to answer. Thank the "questioner" for his or her comment, and politely call for the next question.
 - Keep to the high road. Don't stoop to the level of the attacking questioner. As the speaker, you are responsible for communicating with civility and keeping channels of communication open. If appropriate, defend yourself firmly yet politely.

Essentials

Managing Potential Rough Spots during Q&A

- Paraphrase long or complicated questions.
 - Admit it if you don't understand the question.
 - Remember that it's OK to think before speaking.
 - Admit it if you do not know the answer.
 - Keep to the high road if you feel attacked.
 - Allow people to make comments.
 - Answer irrelevant questions in private after the presentation.
 - Refocus dominating audience members.
-
- Look for areas of agreement. One way to disarm the attacker is to find an area of agreement and expand on it. Should the questioner ask you "why you're running the company into the ground," you may agree that the company is not in the best state of health. You can then take your answer toward your plans for improvement. In essence, you turn the negative into a positive.
 - **The question is actually a comment.** Some listeners choose to make comments, phrased as questions. Simply thank the participant for the comment, and let it stand as is, or respond with another comment before taking the next question.
 - **Someone asks an irrelevant question.** If someone asks an irrelevant question, thank the person, and then politely note that you don't want to take up the audience's time with an issue not pertaining to the ideas being discussed. Assure the questioner that you will be available after the presentation to address his or her particular concerns.
 - **One person begins to dominate.** In rare cases, one audience member may begin to dominate the Q&A. Examples include a person who has numerous questions, makes long-winded comments, or continues to bait the speaker with endless follow-up questions. Dominant audience members create problems because they push other listeners out of what is supposed to be a public—not just a two-person—exchange. If you must, interrupt the dominant audience member, thank him or her for the contribution, and announce your intention to get others involved.

Summary

- **Listeners expect a conclusion. It performs several functions, including providing a sense of closure, summarizing the main ideas discussed, and answering any audience questions.**

- The main components of a speech conclusion are a summary of the thesis, a summary of the main points, a take-away, and a strong and memorable clincher.
- The delivery of your conclusion is as important as its content. Practice is essential.
- Question-and-answer sessions are a dynamic part of any informative or persuasive presentation. With the proper mind-set and preparation, anyone can lead one.

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRUCTURE KEY**

Give your listeners something meaningful to take from your speech. Remind them clearly and convincingly about what you want them to know, do, or believe. A fully prepared and engagingly delivered conclusion summarizes your content and creates one final, lasting impression.

EXERCISES

1. Watch a video of a speech. As soon as you sense that the conclusion is beginning, stop the video. Wait ten minutes or so. Then go back and watch the video again, this time with the conclusion. Describe the difference in the two experiences to a classmate or to your instructor. What insights did this experience give you into the importance of a conclusion?
2. Find another speech, and again stop the video as soon as you sense the start of the conclusion. This time, develop a possible conclusion yourself.
3. If you could deliver your last speech again, how would you change the conclusion? How would these changes increase the conclusion's effectiveness?
4. Using the tips for communicating the conclusion (p. 247) as a basis for your analysis, write a peer evaluation for a classmate during his or her next speech based only on the conclusion. Identify its strengths and weaknesses. What suggestions can you provide to increase the conclusion's effectiveness?
5. Attend a speech in your community or on campus. Typically, these speeches have a question-and-answer session. Keeping the chapter information about Q&A sessions in mind (bring a cheat sheet if you must), analyze how well the speaker handled that part of the presentation. Report your findings in class.



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 16

Using Transitions

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I have to admit that I was resistant, at first, to adopt really overt markers to my introduction, body, and conclusion. Especially for someone used to writing, it seemed rather unsophisticated. But it works. One of the most important things I have learned this semester is to develop a speech to someone’s ear. In order to do this, you simply must be obvious about your intentions and very clear in your progression of ideas.”

“One day around halfway through the term, I decided to concentrate on my fellow classmates’ use of transitions to see what I could learn. Once I tuned in, picking up on the transitions was straightforward. I could hear how they were taking me along for the tour of their ideas. It was just easy to stay with them. One classmate, though, didn’t use transitions well. I thought she was still in the first main point of her body when all of a sudden she said ‘in conclusion.’ Whoa! I had obviously gotten lost. And it was her lack of transitions that lost me. I saw that.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

Use transitions throughout your message.

SUPPORT

STYLE

16A

Understand the Role of Transitions

16B

Develop Transitions

16C

Know How to Use Transitions during the Presentation

Key Terms

internal preview

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internal summary

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linking transition

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signpost

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transition

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Transitions, sometimes known as connectives, are those words and phrases speakers use to help listeners stay with them during the various stops along the idea tour. Transitions play an important role in the listenability of your presentation by minimizing the demands on audience members. If listeners are to interact with your ideas, they need to understand the relationships between them and their progression from one to another. Transitions help your audience know what idea you're discussing at each point in the speech and how it relates to the other ideas that come before and after it. This chapter looks at the role transitions play in the structure of your speech, discusses the various types of transitions, and gives some tips for using them in the actual presentation.

16A

Understand the Role of Transitions

When it comes to following the progression of ideas, readers have certain advantages over listeners. Visual clues such as indented paragraphs and subtitles tell the reader when the author is introducing a new idea. Readers can quickly scan ahead to get a sense of what they are about to read and then go back and fully read it. They can also go back to review and ensure that they fully understand what they've read before continuing on. We're therefore rightly taught in composition classes to build in subtle transitions.

In speaking, we need to be more obvious with the words and phrases that link our ideas. While presenting, *you* know exactly where you are in the overall structure of your talk. You know, for example, when you've completed the introduction and are moving into the first main point. You also know that your first main point includes a description of a three-step process. No matter how simple or complicated your structure, you understand it as a speaker. Listeners, however, need **transitions**, overt verbal clues that help them follow the progression and relationship of ideas. Your listeners don't automatically know where you're going; you have to show them the way. You are the tour guide.

Here are some primary functions of transitions:

- Transitions help your audience know where you are in the overall structure of your presentation, whether you're moving from the second main point to the third or from the final main point into the conclusion.

You've seen how yoga can help decrease your stress level and increase your flexibility. Let's look at the last benefit, how yoga can massage your internal organs, keeping them healthy and in good working order.

Let me conclude this evening's presentation by reviewing the available services here at our eye bank.

- Transitions differentiate between ideas you're introducing, ideas you're expanding on, and ideas you're reviewing. Links help listeners better understand the purpose of the ideas you're communicating.



Taking your listeners from place to place within your speech needn't be this hard. It's actually quite easy to use transitions once you believe in their purpose.

- Transitions signal to listeners the relationships between the parts of your message, such as the association between superior and subordinate ideas, or the progression of subordinate ideas within a larger idea. Understanding these relationships helps listeners prioritize information and grasp the connections between ideas.
Moving on, the second phase of my groundwater study project was implementation. The implementation was based on two underlying presumptions. The first one was . . .
- Transitions reinforce the pattern of organization you're using to support your thesis. For example, if the thesis of your speech is about the differences between nurses and nurse practitioners (relying on the contrasting pattern of organization), your transitions serve to remind the audience that you are indeed discussing *differences*. If your thesis describes the five steps needed to create a romantic Valentine's Day picnic, the transitions remind your audience of the chronological pattern you're using when they hear the term *step*.

The third difference between nurses and nurse practitioners is entry-level salary.

After choosing your location, the second step in creating a romantic Valentine's Day picnic is to select the right menu.

A transition introducing an idea:

Increasing fuel costs are just one factor behind rising airfares. Increasing costs for airline employee medical benefits are definitely another. Let me explain.

A transition expanding on an idea:

Before we discuss the timeline, I'd like to offer one more reason why I propose we stay the course on our company's refinancing plan.

A transition reviewing an idea:

We're about to look at strategies for manipulating the voice during the actual performance, but first I want to reiterate, as you've just heard, the importance of warming up the voice before the performance.

16B

Develop Transitions

Transitions are the final step in the building of your speech structure, once you've created a thesis and developed your main points, introduction, and conclusion.

There are four major types of transitions: linking transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

- **Linking transition.** A **linking transition**, sometimes known as a bridge, is a phrase that takes your listeners from one part of your structure to the next, such as from your introduction to the body or from one main point to the next. Linking transitions are the most common type used in a public presentation.

To begin, let's look at the origins of the MacArthur Foundation.

Another reason farmers and scientists are joining forces is to explore new crops that will tolerate the higher salt content found in the local water.

- **Internal preview.** An **internal preview** provides your audience a sneak peek into the next idea you are about to discuss. Internal previews are appropriately named. They take place, after all, in the body—the internal portion—of the speech. An internal preview is similar to the preview of the main points you include in your introduction. Internal previews, however, forecast only the next idea in the body rather than all the points you plan to cover throughout the whole body. You won't need an internal preview for every upcoming idea. Use them instead to help your listeners keep track of upcoming multipart, abstract, or relatively complicated ideas.

Photo radar is one solution many cities are using to stop speeding. Photo radar collects three kinds of data—the car's speed, license-plate information, and a photo of the driver. Let's talk about each of these in turn.

Now that you've learned about the IRS's plan to sell your tax-return information to marketers and data brokers, let me share with you the responses from two groups of people—consumer rights advocates and privacy advocates.

- **Internal summary.** The opposite of an internal preview, an **internal summary** helps listeners make sense of an idea they have just heard. Not every idea needs an internal summary. It's a handy device to use when wrapping up a multipart, abstract, or relatively complicated idea. Internal summaries point to the importance of an idea and help the audience remember it before moving on with you to your next idea.

We've seen how water differs from most bottled sports drinks in calorie content, "energy" delivered, and cost, but did you also know that pure water provides other benefits that bottled sports drinks can't replicate?

Before moving on, let me quickly summarize what liberal and conservative bloggers are saying about Dick Cheney's influence on the role of the vice presidency.

Some speakers like to use both an internal preview and an internal summary in one sentence. That's an appropriate option for creating a linking transition between two ideas.

Now that we've looked at the world's third tallest building, Chicago's Sears Tower, let's go higher still and tour those next in line, the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur.

So the rising costs of gasoline are clearly an issue. Let me show you how, in our city in particular, light rail can be part of the solution.

- **Signpost.** A **signpost** is a quick word or phrase alerting your listeners where you are in the speech or indicating the relationship of one idea to the next. Signposts come in the form of numbers, common transition words, short phrases, and even questions. Some speakers

Essentials

Types of Transitions

- Linking transitions take your listeners from one part of the speech to the next.
- Internal previews provide your audience a sneak peek into your next idea.
- Internal summaries help listeners make sense of an idea they have just heard.
- A signpost is a quick word or phrase telling listeners where you are in the speech.
- Signposts also indicate the relationship of one idea to the next.

get stuck in a rut with one kind of signpost, starting every new idea with an *OK*, *all right*, *so*, or *next*. Listen to yourself in practice or in your actual speeches. Being aware of a repeated (and therefore potentially distracting) signpost is the first step to eliminating it and finding new ones to use. Table 16.1 (🔍 p. 260) shows some common signposts.

As you've seen in some of the preceding examples, a transition more often than not combines two or more functions. Here are some examples:

In addition (signpost), *successful government-witness relocation requires a lot of coordination. The final major factor of success is timely communication and total secrecy between all parties involved* (linking transition).

We've just covered the psychology behind the desire to perform bizarre feats (internal summary). *Next* (signpost) *you'll hear about three individuals who perform them, starting with the famous French performer who eats glass, bicycles, and other "nonedibles"* (internal preview).

16C

Know How to Use Transitions during the Presentation

Transitions need not be fancy, formal sentences. You're already used to providing transitions during normal everyday interactions with other people. For instance:

You won't believe what happened to me yesterday. OK, the story goes like this . . .

Mom just told me the doctor said two things about Tina's status. The first one is . . .

Oh yeah, that reminds me of the next thing I wanted to tell you.

Rely on this familiar experience of using everyday conversational transitions when speaking with your audiences. While the language style of public presentation is certainly not as casual as that of everyday conversation, the *idea* of transition use is the same—you're helping listeners follow you. At the same time, use language and a tone of voice that are natural for

Table 16.1 Common Signposts

MOVING TO A NEW IDEA	EXPANDING ON AN IDEA	SHOWING HOW IDEAS RELATE TO EACH OTHER ACROSS TIME	SHOWING HOW IDEAS CONTRAST WITH ONE ANOTHER	SHOWING HOW IDEAS ARE SIMILAR TO ONE ANOTHER	SHOWING HOW ONE IDEA CAUSES OR AFFECTS ANOTHER
<i>Let's move on</i>	<i>Another reason/ problem/benefit, etc.</i>	<i>First, second, third, etc.</i>	<i>Nevertheless</i>	<i>Similarly</i>	<i>Consequently</i>
<i>After that</i>	<i>Moreover</i>	<i>Next</i>	<i>Still</i>	<i>Likewise</i>	<i>As a result</i>
<i>Following that</i>	<i>Furthermore</i>	<i>Afterward</i>	<i>Even so</i>	<i>In the same way</i>	<i>So</i>
<i>Then</i>	<i>In addition</i>	<i>Later</i>	<i>But</i>	<i>Along the same lines</i>	<i>Accordingly</i>
<i>Subsequently</i>	<i>What's more</i>	<i>Finally</i>	<i>However</i>	<i>Equally</i>	<i>Therefore</i>
	<i>Also</i>	<i>Last</i>	<i>All the same</i>	<i>As well</i>	<i>For that reason</i>
			<i>On the other hand</i>		<i>Hence</i>

you. For example, if words like *subsequently* and *heretofore* aren't part of your natural vocabulary, don't force yourself to use them. Perhaps *after that* is more typical of the words you use. Any one of the transitions is fine as long as it serves its purpose. A good transition doesn't draw attention to itself, impressing your audience with its sophisticated design. Instead, it simply and smoothly performs its function. The wording of your transitions will come naturally if your true intention is to guide and lead your listeners along the tour of your ideas.

Plan your transitions in your preparation outline, but don't attempt to memorize them during practice. As you speak, continue listening for places where a transition would be helpful. If you're practicing in front of other people, ask them for feedback about your use of transitions.

Summary

- Readers can follow a writer's structure of ideas from visual clues. Your listeners, on the other hand, need overt verbal assistance from you.
- Transitions are words and phrases used to help listeners follow the progression and relationship of ideas.
- Transitions are the final step in the development of your speech structure.
- There are four major types of transitions: linking transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.
- Use conversational patterns of language when delivering your transitions.

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRUCTURE KEY**

You're sharing a lot of ideas during your speech. Although those ideas are well organized, transitions are key to helping your listeners understand the relationships between them. Transitions are an easy—but critical—part of your speech structure.

EXERCISES

1. During one of your classes this week, pay attention to how your professor employs transitions between ideas. First, if you hear transitions, identify the method your professor uses to move from idea to idea. Do you hear internal previews or summaries? Second, analyze the effectiveness of these transitions. How did they help you as a listener? If you heard no transitions, what effect did that have on your listening?
2. With a partner or small group in class, brainstorm at least ten different transitions between the first two main points of the following example. Use combinations of linking transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts. Keep stretching your thinking for ways you can effectively take listeners from point #1 to point #2.

Thesis: Drivers can increase their fuel efficiency by following a few simple techniques.

#1—Accelerate slowly.

#2—Don't speed.

#3—Go easy on the brakes.

#4—Inflate your tires to the maximum recommended psi.

3. As a continuation of the preceding exercise, record yourself communicating the ten transitions. As you record yourself, put each transition into your own words so that it comes out sounding conversational. After recording all ten, go back and listen to them. Which ones sounded most natural coming from you? Which sounded most unlike you? Why? Report your individual findings to your partner or group during the next class period.



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 17

Choosing a Method of Delivery

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“After one speech, I was complimented for my conversational tone and for ‘knowing my stuff.’ I realized then that it was OK to not have something written out word-for-word. All along I had been apprehensive about losing my train of thought, but it’s much easier to interact with your listeners when you don’t script what you are going to say. I like the audience focus of extemporaneous speaking.”

“I definitely misjudged my public speaking class at the beginning. I had done a lot of acting in high school, and because I was good at memorizing lines, I thought memorizing a well-written speech was all I’d have to do for that A to be mine. Imagine my shock when my first speech evaluation was satisfactory but not glowing. I was told that my acting confidence would be a tremendous asset to me as a speaker but that I would have to rein myself in, not memorize, and learn to speak authentically to my audience without hiding behind a character. The next few speeches were somewhat shaky for me, but I quickly understood the need to stop purely memorizing. If anything, I ended up practicing a lot less and was appreciative of the extra time I had for other parts of the speech preparation.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

Choose an appropriate method of delivery.

17A

Extemporaneous Speaking: Talking as if in Important Conversation

1. *Use the extemporaneous method for most speaking situations*
2. *The extemporaneous method offers the most advantages*

17B

Impromptu Speaking: Delivering a Message Off the Cuff

1. *Anyone can give a good impromptu speech*
2. *Avoid common impromptu errors*

17C

Manuscript Speaking: Reading from a Prepared Text

1. *Reasons to avoid using the manuscript method*
2. *Reasons to use a manuscript*

17D

Memorized Speaking: Reciting from Recall

1. *The problems with memorization*
2. *Small bits of memorization can serve a purpose*

Key Terms

extemporaneous method	▶ 267
impromptu method	▶ 269
manuscript method	▶ 272
memorized method	▶ 276
mnemonic device	▶ 279
teleprompter	▶ 272
triggers	▶ 267
verbatim	▶ 272

Other than an impromptu presentation, when the speaker chooses to talk spontaneously or is unexpectedly asked to speak, most presenters have the luxury of deciding on the style or manner of delivery. Having this choice helps you plan, prepare, and practice accordingly. This chapter examines the four methods of delivery available to you:

- Extemporaneous—speaking conversationally
- Impromptu—speaking spontaneously with little to no preparation
- Manuscript—speaking from a prepared written text
- Memorized—speaking from recall

The extemporaneous, or conversational, method is the most listenable style when speaking in your classes, at work, in your community, or in your various organizations. But you'll also learn about a few situations when a different method of delivery may be more appropriate.

17A

Extemporaneous Speaking: Talking as if in Important Conversation

1. Use the extemporaneous method for most speaking situations

You'll want to employ a conversational—or extemporaneous—style of speaking for the majority of your public presentations. In general language use, *extemporaneous* often means “freely improvised” or “ad-libbed.” But in the world of public speaking, especially in business, law, education, and health care, the **extemporaneous method** entails speakers presenting conversationally from prepared key words and phrases in their speaking notes. Also known as **triggers**, these key words and phrases act as prompts to remind you what you want to say about a particular idea. There's no written text with every *a*, *and*, and *the* planned out.

Read the following two paragraphs. The first is a fully written text, and the second is a transcript of the same ideas as they were communicated extemporaneously, or conversationally. The extemporaneous language is not as grammatically tight and “professional” as that of the written text, but it's closer to the way most people talk. Most importantly, the language patterns are familiar to listeners. A sample of extemporaneous speaking notes, with triggers only, follows the transcript.

Fully Written Text

As people age, calcium becomes an increasingly important part of maintaining their total body health. Bodies need calcium daily to keep bones and teeth strong, to ensure proper functioning of muscles and nerves, and to facilitate the clotting of blood. Most U.S. adults assume that they get a sufficient amount of calcium in their diet, but chances are they do not. When blood-calcium levels drop markedly low, this vital mineral is “borrowed” from the bones. Studies, including one at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, have shown that in addition to a calcium-rich diet, exercises such as lat pull-downs, overhead presses, and leg squats can significantly assist in the maintenance of strong bones.

The Same Idea Communicated Extemporaneously or Conversationally

We all know that as we get older, it gets harder and harder to maintain the overall health of our bodies. Many of you already know that calcium plays an important role in this. Calcium's amazing. It keeps our bones and teeth strong. It makes sure our muscles and nerves work properly, and it even helps our blood clot—all good things. If you're like most adults in the U.S., you think you're getting enough calcium, but you're probably not. After doing my research, I'm pretty sure I don't. And it got me worried, because when we're calcium deficient—meaning we don't get enough calcium from our diet—our bodies have to get that calcium from somewhere else, and as it happens, that somewhere is often our bones. So our bones get weak and are more likely to break and then take longer to heal when they do break. I read about a study that took place at Cal State Polytech at Pomona, and it showed that exercise is effective for helping our bones stay strong. Exercises such as lat pull-downs, overhead presses, leg squats . . . those are all excellent.

Speaking Notes with Key Words and Phrases Only

- Older, harder maintain health
- Calcium plays impt. role
- = bones, teeth, muscles, nerves, clotting
- U.S. adults ≠ calcium
- When deficient, takes from bones . . . dangerous . . . weak, break, longer to heal
- Cal. St. Poly. Pomona study → exercise = strong bones
- lat pull-dns., ovrhd. press, leg sq.

2. The extemporaneous method offers the most advantages

The advantages of the extemporaneous method greatly outweigh the advantages of the other three styles of delivery (impromptu, manuscript, and memorized), the most important being conversation's appeal to the listener's ear. Other advantages of extemporaneous speaking include:

- Time to research and organize your ideas
- A greater ability to make eye contact with your audience, because you're not reading a script
- The ability to adapt and/or respond to audience feedback, because your eyes are on your audience and not stuck to a script
- A sense of security, because you have speaking notes
- Increased credibility, because when you speak conversationally, the audience senses your ownership of your material
- The ability to use practice sessions to prioritize, add, or delete material in order to meet the time constraints for the presentation

The "Speaker's Story" box shows how one presenter learned to respect the power of extemporaneous speaking.

In reality, few speeches are purely extemporaneous. Any given speech may contain elements of all four methods. For example, though you may deliver most of the speech conversationally from key words and phrases, you might partially memorize the opening statement,

A Speaker's Story

A Rebel with a Cause



Brett Hill, Assistant Professor of Archaeology at Hendrix College in Arkansas, likes to tell a story of his rebellion as a public presenter. When Dr. Hill attended a recent Society of American Archaeology conference to present some of his research on social power and expressions of identity in the late prehistoric Southwest, he made a deliberate choice to *summarize conversationally* what he wrote in his research paper rather than follow the Society's tradition of reading the paper aloud verbatim. Dr. Hill was frustrated that the dense academic language of the papers—a language he spoke well—was hiding his discipline's important ideas, and he had finally decided to do something about it.

At the end of his session, Dr. Hill knew he had made the right choice. Never in his career had so many people approached him, thanking him for his clear presentation and wanting to further interact with his ideas. He knew his ideas were no more or no less intriguing than the others presented in the conference session, but the fact that his listeners could access and follow them with ease made all the difference.



closing lines, and thesis. You'll write out expert testimony used to support an idea and read it word-for-word, and if you think of a fresh example while speaking, you'll communicate it spontaneously. Some speakers use the extemporaneous method but no notes: they commit their key words to memory and then speak conversationally from them. Your first few speeches provide an opportunity for trial and error. Consider your method of delivery as an art to be learned and practiced. Think *primarily* extemporaneous, but allow yourself room to incorporate the other methods if you need them.

17B

Impromptu Speaking: Delivering a Message Off the Cuff

The need or desire to speak in public on an **impromptu** basis—with little to no preparation—occurs more often than you may think. Also known as improvising, ad-libbing, or speaking off the cuff, impromptu speaking is common in educational, business, civic, and ceremonial contexts. Expect it to happen.

- You may want or be asked to participate in a class discussion.
- You may be called on at work to introduce a new coworker, present updates on a project, or report on last month's progress.
- You may want to share an idea you think would be of value.

Essentials

Extemporaneous Delivery

- Presents conversationally from key words and phrases only
- Is used in most everyday public speaking contexts
- Has advantages that significantly outweigh those of the other three methods of delivery, the most important being conversation's appeal to the listener's ear

- You may feel compelled to voice support or opposition to an idea or another speaker.
- You may want to participate in an open-mike session at a party or gathering.
- You may be recognized by an organization for a job well done and be asked to say a few words.

1. *Anyone can give a good impromptu speech*

The fear of sounding unprepared causes some people to dread impromptu speaking. But you need not shrink from it. Understanding what an impromptu speech is and learning some tips on how to efficiently prepare one can give you confidence to include your voice in the greater conversations taking place all around you. Your impromptu speech may not be as articulate as a speech you had time to prepare, but here's a secret: few listeners expect it to be. Your impromptu audience is not counting on you to provide profound statistics and thoroughly structured arguments. They're not expecting an exceptionally graceful delivery or enhancing visual aids. Instead, they want you to briefly make a point. That's all. Briefly . . . make a point. If you can do that, your impromptu presentation can touch your audience in a meaningful way.

Here are some tips for preparing an impromptu presentation:

- **Make a point.** Your goal in impromptu speaking is not to hear yourself speak or to impress the audience with your knowledge or experience; instead, it's to communicate an idea to the audience. Even with minimal preparation time, you can quickly assess the situation and your audience and come up with the one or few key points you want to make.
- **Jot down notes.** Keep a pen and piece of paper handy in your backpack, purse, or briefcase at all times. That way you are always prepared to quickly scratch out a few key ideas before speaking.
- **Organize your thoughts.** Once you've chosen the main idea you want to communicate, quickly decide how you want to organize your thoughts. Here are some suggestions:

Problem/Solution

- *I see two main problems with that proposal.* Briefly outline the two problems. (Then sit down.)

- *Here's my proposed solution.* Briefly offer the solution.
- A combination of problem and solution.

Cause/Effect

- *I think I know the reason why this has happened.* Briefly discuss the reason.
- *There may be a few unwanted consequences if we adopt this plan.* Briefly summarize the consequences.
- A combination of cause and effect.

Past/Present/Future

- *Though it's been done that way in the past, I think it should be done this way in the future.* Share your vision.
- *Here's how I see our present situation.* Briefly summarize the present situation.
- A combination of past, present, and future.

Pros/Cons (or Advantages/Disadvantages)

- *Let me summarize the advantages I've been hearing around the office about the relocation proposal.* Recap the pros.
- *The cons are many if we go that route.* Share them.
- A combination of pros and cons.

One Theme

- *The film's overriding theme, to me, was how large cities ultimately create a sense of loneliness.* Give one or two examples from the film to justify your interpretation.
 - *I will always remember Shirley for her offbeat sense of humor.* Briefly share a story illustrating Shirley's sense of humor.
- **Time it appropriately.** Listen attentively so that your impromptu comments are pertinent to the conversation. Raise your hand or your voice as soon as an impromptu comment comes to mind; your comments have less impact if someone else has already made them or if the group has moved beyond that particular discussion. If your comment comes to mind after the topic has shifted, wait until a review or question period has been called. Discussion leaders often ask things like "Are there any further questions or comments on this issue before we move forward?" Also, if your comment is still relevant, it may be acceptable to politely bring the conversation back by previewing it with a comment such as "I'd actually like to respond to the point Andrea made a few minutes ago." Groups often provide an opportunity for open discussion or new business at the end of a gathering; use this time for impromptu comments as well.
 - **Be brief.** Impromptu presentations are not long. One point, clearly made in a minute or so, has more impact on an audience than a long and rambling dissertation! Say what you need to say, and then sit down.

2. Avoid common impromptu errors

Knowing some of the common mistakes that impromptu speakers make can help you avoid them.

Essentials

Impromptu Speaking

- Means having to speak with little to no preparation
 - Is commonly used in education, business, civic, and ceremonial contexts
 - Makes one point, briefly, in an organized fashion
 - Doesn't include apology, rambling, or repetition of other people's ideas
 - Doesn't substitute for other speeches that require preparation
-
- **Don't apologize or keep reminding people that you are unprepared.** Listeners are more interested in your message than in the fact that you're speaking off the cuff.
 - **Don't talk just to hear yourself speak.** Be sure that you have an audience-relevant point to make.
 - **Don't ramble.** Impromptu comments quickly become diluted when you've made your point but then tack on *and then . . .* or *and another thing . . .*
 - **Don't make a point that has already been made.** On occasion, a point is important enough to be made again by another person. Just be clear that you're reiterating or supporting a previously made point.
 - **Don't use the impromptu method to wing it through your other speeches that demand more preparation time.** The impromptu method doesn't suit *all* speaking situations!

17C

Manuscript Speaking: Reading from a Prepared Text

Manuscript speaking, or reading **verbatim** (word-for-word) from a fully prepared text, is difficult to do well. It takes great skill and experience to read complete sentences and paragraphs in a way that looks and sounds spontaneous. Many public speakers, especially those less experienced, are mistaken when they rely on a manuscript. These speakers get caught up in what they think is the security of their notes, spending countless hours writing out their words only to deliver them verbatim with a lack of enthusiasm and poor eye contact. This "easy way out" usually leads to presentations with a low degree of listenability.

Make the commitment now to avoid the manuscript method for all but a few speaking situations, which we'll discuss shortly. Don't be influenced by famous speeches or the speeches of public officials or politicians who often speak from a full text on a **teleprompter**, a device that displays a prepared text on a screen at the speaker's eye level, giving the audience the impression of eye contact. This is not the way most people speak in everyday academic, business, and community contexts. Resist the safety net of a manuscript—it is false. It's better



Barack Obama (D-IL) reads from a teleprompter while giving an energy policy speech in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Teleprompters let speakers read their fully prepared manuscripts while giving the impression of direct eye contact with their audiences.

to have a few incomplete sentences, forget one minor detail, or trip over a word now and then (as may happen while you are learning to speak extemporaneously) than to numb your audience with a stilted delivery and a monotone reading voice. Remember: you have enrolled in a course about public speaking, not one called “Essays Read Aloud.”

1. Reasons to avoid using the manuscript method

The manuscript method can create significant hurdles to communication. Avoid these pitfalls by avoiding the manuscript method.

- **The patterns of written language are harder on listeners’ ears.** Audience members may not be willing to expend the energy to listen to your written text and may instead tune you out.
- **Eye contact is compromised.** Because you have to read the text, there is little opportunity to look at your audience.
- **Most readers struggle with syntax or word pronunciation somewhere during the oral reading.** These missteps, glossed over or left unnoticed in the extemporaneous method, stick out and draw attention to themselves in the manuscript method. Credibility suffers when listeners begin to question why the speaker cannot read his or her own writing. It takes practice, skill, and confidence to read aloud well.
- **The audience perceives that the speaker lacks ownership of his or her ideas.** Listeners may question whether a manuscript speaker knows or believes in what he or she is saying. Read the “Speaker’s Story” (🔍 p. 274) for an embarrassing real-life example.
- **The speaker can’t easily adapt to the audience or occasion.** It’s difficult to stray from the text to include a last-minute example, to clarify a difficult concept the audience is struggling to understand, to insert some appropriate humor, or to make a reference to a previous speaker. Should you deviate from the text to include such things, the abrupt change from written to spoken patterns draws awkward attention to itself and can shake your confidence.

2. Reasons to use a manuscript

The manuscript method is appropriate in a few specialized contexts. Use it when:

- **It’s essential that a precise message be communicated.** Speakers making presentations during legal proceedings, congressional hearings, or times of emergency,

A Speaker's Story

Missing Note Leaves Speaker Speechless



Jeanine Pirro's campaign for the United States Senate from the State of New York got off to a rough start when she got to page 10 of the manuscript speech she used to announce her candidacy.

In front of a room full of reporters, cameras, and supporters at a luxury Manhattan hotel, Pirro attempted to position herself as an aggressive, competent alternative to the incumbent senator. Her speech began well. She stressed her qualifications by outlining her thirty years of public service, stressed her moderate views, and confidently stated her stance on several controversial issues. And then, while preparing to attack the views of the incumbent, Pirro looked down at her notes only to find that what she needed next was missing. A full thirty-two seconds—long seconds—of silence followed. Pirro shuffled papers, evidently looking for the missing page. People shifted in their seats, and cameras began flashing. Pirro then turned to her staff and in a muffled voice asked, "Do you have page 10?"

After the speech, the press reaction was swift. Headlines included such embarrassing commentaries as "Vote for Me Because . . . Where's Page 10?" Chat groups and bloggers were all over the error. One writer said, "If she can't wing it with a page of missing notes, it makes me wonder just how good a [candidate] she is." Another asked, "How can she not come up with something? Anything. Is her mind glued to paper? If she just got through writing it, she should have some idea of what the subject was and should be able to speak reasonably intelligently about it. But I guess some people just can't think on the fly."

The gaffe was the beginning of the end of Jeanine Pirro's campaign. Several other mishaps occurred, and she took herself out of the race four months later.

Sources: Kristen Lombardi. "Pirro at the Podium: Does Anyone Have Page 10?" *Village Voice*, August 10, 2005, <http://villagevoice.com> (accessed March 25, 2006); Yancey Roy, "After Switching Campaign Gears, More Challenges ahead for Pirro," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, December 30, 2005, <http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com> (accessed March 25, 2006); and "Jeanine Pirro's First Speech: The 32 Second Pause," *TalkLeft*, August 11, 2005, <http://talkleft.com> (accessed March 25, 2006).



when the specificity of the words and facts is critically important, often use detailed manuscripts. When New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin unveiled the Bring Back New Orleans Commission's plan to rebuild the city after Hurricane Katrina, he knew it contained a politically risky message: if people chose to rebuild in certain vulnerable parts of the city, they did so at their own risk and could not expect city help or services. Because he needed to communicate this information precisely and could afford no equivocation, Nagin preceded his comments with the caveat "I'm going to do something I normally hate to do, and that's read from a script."¹

A Speaker's Story

Dan Souza's Memorial Service

“

Dan Souza was a beautiful man taken much too young from his family and friends by a cruel and swiftly moving pancreatic cancer. Dan was well loved and knew a lot of people; it was no surprise there was standing room only at his funeral. Toward the end of the service, people in attendance were invited to come up to the microphone to share their thoughts. Many people chose to do so. The emotions were running high for everyone in the room that day, but the difference between the speakers who used a manuscript and those who “just got up to speak” was dramatic.

The greatest difference was between two of Dan's friends. The first got up to speak with no notes, and unfortunately, that choice got the better of him. After about two minutes, he had said all he had to say; yet he wasn't ready to sit down. He began repeating himself, saying the same wonderful and loving things about Dan over and over again while beginning to make less and less sense. People in the audience were sympathetic to this speaker and listened patiently to him, but you could see them looking around and shifting a bit uncomfortably in their seats. His time at the lectern had turned into one of personal grieving in public. He had strayed from the cardinal rule of public speaking: to make a point for the *audience's* benefit.

After about eight minutes or so, this friend sat down and Dan's next friend approached the lectern. This friend took out her two typed pages of notes and began to speak eloquently from them. Her ideas were clear, her language was sophisticated, and her memories of Dan were beautifully and succinctly communicated to the audience with love, warmth, and even some humor. She had practiced with her manuscript and was therefore able to make good eye contact, speak smoothly, and sound natural. This second friend's three minutes had more impact on the audience than the rambling eight minutes of the first speaker.

”

- **The highly emotional nature of the occasion calls for a speaker to stay focused.** A prepared script allows you to organize your thoughts and choose your language in the calmer moments before a highly emotional event. Having the text with you keeps you focused and on task during the delivery, thereby decreasing the chances of emotional rambling. The experiences of two speakers at a memorial service, highlighted in the “Speaker's Story” box above, are instructive.
- **Exact timing is essential.** A few situations require adherence to an inflexible time schedule: for example, you are one of a slate of several speakers, the room is available for only a short time, or the speech is being broadcast.



Actor and activist Don Cheadle testifies before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee's Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee in Washington, DC. Using a manuscript is recommended when your message must be exact and precise.

- **The text, for some reason, is to be published or analyzed.**

It would be atypical for the president of the United States to extemporize the State of the Union address. This important speech has implications for social policies, international relations, lawmaking, and economic action that affect the whole of U.S. life. The speech needs to be conveyed accurately, without any ambiguity, using carefully scripted language that can be fairly analyzed by parties all over the world.

With the exception of ceremonial speaking, it is doubtful you will need to use the manuscript method at this

point in your speaking career. If you must, however, here are some tips to follow:

- **Give yourself plenty of time to prepare your manuscript.** You need time for research, organization of ideas, word choice, and revisions.
- **Write your manuscript using patterns of language that are relatively conversational.** As you write, read sentences and paragraphs aloud to hear how they sound.
- **Prepare a manuscript you can easily read from.** Use a large font; double- or triple-space the lines; use a slash mark to indicate a pause or a double slash to indicate a stop.
- **Practice until you can deliver the text fluidly and as conversationally as possible.** Then practice again. Practice until you can comfortably look up from the text on several occasions during the reading.
- **If applicable, practice with a teleprompter.** These are becoming increasingly popular at large-scale meetings. If you are using a teleprompter, prepare to spend a lot of time learning how to use it and practicing with it in the preparation phase.

17D

Memorized Speaking: Reciting from Recall

Memorized speaking, committing a prepared manuscript to memory, is the most difficult of all the delivery methods. Only a few people—actors who devote their careers to memorized and performed delivery—memorize well enough to get paid for it. If you're familiar with the embarrassment of watching an inexperienced actor struggle with lines, it's not hard to imagine the pain of listening to an inexperienced speaker try the memorized method!

Essentials

Manuscript Delivery

- Means speaking verbatim from a fully prepared written text
- Is not recommended for beginning speakers because of the many problems in reaching listeners
- Is appropriate in a few specialized contexts
- Requires giving yourself enough time to practice so that you can use as much of a conversational tone as possible

1. *The problems with memorization*

When a public speaker attempts memorized speaking, it is more often than not agonizingly apparent. The unnatural words, halting delivery, and obvious choreography of the speaker's face and hands quickly make it clear that a bad theatrical performance is underway. It's better to *be* a natural presenter than attempt to *act* like one. Refrain from memorization.

The problems with the memorized method are the same as those for the manuscript method. There are, however, an additional few:

- **Losing your train of thought is the greatest risk.** The slightest gap in memory can cause you to panic and your speech to fall apart. No presenter wants to force the audience to endure awkwardly long pauses while he or she mentally hunts down the next sentence.
- **You're less secure.** The high level of insecurity you will probably feel when speaking without the assistance of any notes acts as an additional psychological stressor, increasing the chances of losing your train of thought.
- **Communication is compromised.** The speech runs the risk of becoming an exercise in recitation and losing its main purpose of communicating an idea.
- **Steady eye contact is difficult.** It's a challenge to maintain direct eye contact while recalling things from memory (because eyes often tend to roll upward).

2. *Small bits of memorization can serve a purpose*

Memorization can serve a small role in the public speech. Here are some ways to incorporate it into your presentations and some tips for doing so.

- **Some speakers choose to memorize key parts of their presentations.** Opening and closing lines, transitions, and thesis statements are all good candidates. You may also memorize short quotations and anecdotes.

A Speaker's Story

The Academy Awards

“

The Academy Awards ceremony presents a striking example of those who do and those who do not memorize their speeches. Jamie Foxx's prepared words of thanks to his deceased grandmother upon accepting his Best Actor Oscar for *Ray* in 2005 were noted for their tenderness and elegance. Foxx remembered his grandmother as his “first acting teacher” and recounted how “she told me stand up straight, shoulders back. Act like you’ve got some sense.” He continued, “And she still talks to me now, only now she talks to me in my dreams. And I can’t wait to go to sleep tonight because we have a lot to talk about.” When accepting his Best Director Oscar for *A Beautiful Mind* in 2002, Ron Howard admitted to the planning most nominees do. “I’m not a good enough actor anymore,” he said, “to be able to stand up here and make you believe that I haven’t imagined this moment in my mind over the years and played it out over a thousand times.”

On the other hand, many winners who either forget their memorized speeches or drop their written acceptances in the thrill of the moment feel compelled to do the obvious and thank everyone they have ever known, including their lawyers, as did Halle Berry. And then there are the things people probably never intended to say. James Cameron’s, “I’m the king of the world! Wooo Hooooo!” and Sally Field’s, “And I can’t deny the fact that you like me. You like me!” are just two notorious examples.



Jamie Foxx accepts his Oscar for Ray at the 2005 Academy Awards ceremony. A memorized delivery is often used for these and other short special-occasion speeches.

Sources: Ellen A. Kim, “How to Make a Memorable Oscar Speech,” *MSNBC.com*, February 27, 2005, <http://www.msnbc.com> (accessed December 12, 2006); and Ryan Pearson, “Foxx Offers Most Memorable Speech,” Associated Press, as printed in the *Akron Beagle Journal*, February 25, 2005, <http://www.ohio.com> (accessed December 12, 2006).

”

- **You may want to memorize short toasts or acceptance speeches.** Winners at the Academy Awards do this to varying degrees. See the above “Speaker’s Story” box for more.
- **Many speakers choose to memorize the speaking outline.** Committing to memory key words that represent main ideas to be discussed helps keep a speaker on track.

Essentials

Memorized Delivery

- Means reciting verbatim from a fully prepared text
- Is difficult to do well and is not recommended for most speakers
- Can work on occasion for short presentations and for parts of longer ones
- Is best limited to memorizing the outline or using a mnemonic device

For example, during a speech on the highlights of the USA Patriot Act, the speaker can memorize:

I. Wiretaps

- roving
- “lone-wolf” terrorists

II. Warrants

- libraries
- businesses
- hospitals

III. Increased penalties for attacks

- on railroads
- mass-transit systems
- seaports

- **Use a mnemonic device.** Creating some sort of **mnemonic device**, a memory trick or aid like “Every good boy does fine,” familiar to all piano students, can assist in memorizing key words for your outline. Don’t worry about how inane these mnemonic devices may sound to an outsider; they need only make sense to you.
 - Use an acronym. For example, a speech about the five steps of firing a rifle might use the acronym *BRASS* to remember the main ideas (*breathe, relax, aim, sight, squeeze*).
 - Make up a clever saying. “Kings play chess on fine green silk” can help you remember the taxonomic hierarchy (*kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species*).
 - Use or create rhymes. “Divorced, beheaded, died. Divorced, beheaded, survived” recalls the fates of each of Henry VIII’s six wives in the order he married them.
 - Invent stories. “The *train* was well *equipped* to handle the *costs* of *fish*.” The story makes no sense, but it does help you remember the main ideas in your speech on scuba diving (training, proper equipment, analyzing costs, sea life you will encounter).

Summary

- Knowing the style or method of delivery well ahead of time helps you plan, prepare, and practice for the upcoming presentation.
- The extemporaneous method, or speaking conversationally from key words and phrases, is the most listenable style for the majority of speaking contexts.
- Those speaking impromptu, or off the cuff, should briefly make a point and do so in an organized fashion.
- The manuscript method, reading aloud verbatim from a fully prepared text, should be used in only a few select situations.
- A purely memorized method, in which the speaker recites a fully prepared text from memory, is rarely used. However, memorization can be helpful for limited purposes in many presentations.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STYLE KEY

While most audiences respond best to a conversational style of delivery, some occasions may require you to speak off the cuff or—rarer still—use a text that you read or memorize. Deciding on your method of delivery early in the speechmaking process helps you prepare and practice in ways to best meet your communication goals.

EXERCISES

1. Interview someone you know who gives speeches on a somewhat regular basis—a family member, neighbor, friend, or colleague. Ask questions such as:
 - What method of delivery do you typically use: conversational, impromptu, manuscript, or memorized?
 - Why do you favor this method?
 - Has your primary method changed over the years and, if so, how and why?
 - How do you practice for the actual presentation?

Present your findings to the class.

2. Have each person in your group or class write a general, well-known topic on a piece of paper, and put them all in a hat or basket. One at a time, have a speaker draw a topic. He or she then has two minutes to jot down one main idea and two to three points to support it (following one of the suggested patterns on p. 199), and present it. Afterward, discuss what you learned about impromptu speaking.
3. With a few other students, watch two memorized versions of the Gettysburg Address on YouTube:

- **Evan Sweet (search words: *Evan Sweet Gettysburg Address*)**
- **A Lincoln impersonator (*Barry Production Gettysburg Address*)**

Disregarding the obvious disparity of the performance quality of the two videos, discuss how each speaker's memorization helps or hinders the communication of the content of Abraham Lincoln's famous speech.

4. *Consider your last speech or the one you're working on now. Invent a mnemonic device for keeping track of the order of the ideas in one part of the speech body or the speech body as a whole. As a class, make a list of the devices on the board.*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 18

Creating Speaking Notes

REAL STUDENTS

REAL WORDS

“I played with my notecards like a juggler. Even though I knew my material, I was overly dependent on them. I felt so insecure without the notes that I had to constantly assure myself of their presence. I found I would be speaking just fine, but then I’d think I needed a security boost, so I’d look down at them when I didn’t even need to. It messed up the flow. That ended up not only causing a blow to my credibility but, ironically, to my security as well.”

“Instead of frantically trying to make sense of overly complicated notes, I could concentrate on communicating with my audience. The formula for me has been: fewer notes equals more conversational flow.”

KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER			
STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	SUPPORT	STYLE
			Create appropriate speaking notes.

18A

Know the Difference between Speaking Notes and Your Preparation Outline

18B

Create Your Speaking Notes to Complement Your Method of Delivery

1. *Speaking notes for an extemporaneous delivery*
2. *Speaking notes for an impromptu delivery*
3. *Speaking notes for a manuscript delivery*

18C

Follow These Additional Tips for Preparing Your Speaking Notes

1. *Prepare your speaking notes early to become familiar with them*
2. *Use the right material for your speaking notes*
3. *Make your speaking notes user-friendly*

18D

Determine Whether (or Not) to Use Your Speaking Notes for the Presentation

Key Term

speaking notes

 284

Making choices about your speaking notes is a part of every presenter's responsibility. *Do I use notes or not? If so, what should I put on them? And how should I use them during the presentation?* No hard-and-fast rules exist for choosing the design and amount of notes necessary for speaking success; there are as many ways to create and employ them as there are speakers and speaking occasions. But recognize that the choices you make about your speaking notes ultimately play a role in your delivery style, so take your notes seriously. This chapter clarifies the difference between a preparation outline and a set of speaking notes. It then offers insight and advice on preparing and using those speaking notes.

18A

Know the Difference between Speaking Notes and Your Preparation Outline

On **pages 210–223**, we looked in depth at the process of creating a preparation outline. To review, your preparation outline is where you present all your ideas in full-sentence form, and show their relationships to one another. However, despite its completeness, your preparation outline is *not* what you use to practice and deliver your presentation. If you took your preparation outline up to the speaking platform with you, you would undoubtedly get bogged down in its wordiness and complexity. Worse, you'd be tempted to read from it, hampering your ability to remain conversational. Effective practice and delivery instead require a set of speaking notes.

Your **speaking notes** consist of the words, phrases, and symbols *you* need to remind yourself of what you want to say during your presentation. Prepare them from your preparation outline a few days before the presentation as you begin your practice sessions. They act as your guide, so they need please no one but you. But their quality can make or break your speech.

18B

Create Your Speaking Notes to Complement Your Method of Delivery

The kind of speaking notes you create depends on your method of delivery. Speakers using two of the styles of delivery—conversational and manuscript—typically use notes. Impromptu speakers use notes only on occasion, and memorized delivery, as its definition implies, requires no notes. Chapter 17 discusses the methods of delivery in detail.

1. Speaking notes for an extemporaneous delivery

The most conversational—and therefore the most listenable—speeches flow from speaking notes containing only key words and phrases, abbreviated notes that trigger the ideas you plan to communicate. Your practice sessions give you the opportunity to organize your ideas, figure out what you want to say, and ensure that you can say it all within the speaking time

Essentials

Preparation Outline versus Speaking Notes

Preparation Outline

- Lets you build and rework your speaking ideas
- Organizes and visualizes your ideas according to their relationships
- Uses full sentences
- Presents all your detailed ideas in one place
- Can be shared with another person (teacher or supervisor) if necessary

Speaking Notes

- Are created from the preparation outline a few days in advance of the presentation
- Consist of the words, phrases, and symbols that will guide you and remind you what to say
- Are designed to suit you and the purpose of your presentation
- May or may not be used during the speech

frame. You know your message. You own it. The trigger words and phrases are all you need to activate those ideas, speak naturally, and keep yourself on track. Trigger words and phrases allow you to focus your eye contact on your audience instead of on your notes. See Figure 18.1 (◀ p. 286) for an example.

2. Speaking notes for an *impromptu delivery*

Impromptu speeches allow little if any time for note preparation. If there *is* time, some quick notes on a piece of scratch paper are sufficient to keep you on track. Remember: in impromptu speaking, no one expects you to have a fully researched presentation, organized in a complex fashion. Listeners are, however, expecting you to make a point and to make it briefly. Some quick notes can help you meet those goals. If you're attending a city planning meeting, for example, and the topic is the future of the city's freeway system, you may be inspired to offer some input from an article you read recently about the many benefits of rubberized asphalt. The set of notes in Figure 18.2 (◀ p. 287) could be made in well under a minute and would be sufficient to keep you focused.

3. Speaking notes for a *manuscript delivery*

Full manuscripts are appropriate in only a few contexts, including instances when you must communicate a precise message, when there is a high emotional content, or when the text is to be published or analyzed.

If your manuscript will be published, hand in a clean, formally structured copy. But, similar to notes for extemporaneous and impromptu situations, manuscripts used during delivery are for your eyes only; you may prepare them any way you like. In the following excerpted manuscript, for example, note that author Matthew Grayczyk, a sophomore biochemistry major, used nonstandard punctuation and format, allowing him, as he said, “to keep the speech

Introduction
• (Visual) \$5 → original name. Answer: Lib Enlghtng the World. • (Aud. conn.) Nation of immigrants. Meaning for most → U.S. citizens . . . people here. National icon. Really know? • (Thesis) St of Lib . . . rich and fascinating history for U.S. citizens & people throughout the world . . . value U.S. ideals. • (Cred) Book—<i>Story of the St of Lib</i> by Betsy Maestro; official web—NPS; NYC last summer. • (Preview) 1 - construction 2 - artist's intended symb 3 - U.S. symb past and present
Body
I. Construction
A. Joint effort → France/U.S. → recognize friendship & celebrate U.S. 100.
B. Shared in design and construction.

Figure 18.1 Trigger words and Phrases for *The Story of the Statue of Liberty*.

For comparison purposes, see the full-sentence preparation outline on pages 219–220.

flowing freely without pause.” The punctuation and the rhythm of the writing, he felt, also created “a bit of a doppelganger for the general feeling of the relationship” with his friend Michael.

Excerpt from a Fully Prepared Text: *Howling at the Moon*

He called me from the asylum and assured me they couldn't hold him for long because he wasn't actually insane—

He told the doctors in the dark tomb of his actual telepathic ability and they nodded and he knew they agreed and they gave him a pill to enhance his abilities—

★ rub asph	(rubberized asphalt is a great option)
• ↑ viz in H ₂ O	(increases visibility in wet weather)
• ↓ frwy nz	(decreases freeway noise)
• ↓ air pol	(decreases air pollution)
• ↓ waste to landfilz	(reduces waste to landfills)
• afx temps	(affects city temperatures)

Figure 18.2 Impromptu Notes on the Benefits of Rubberized Asphalt.

He watched his own death and I watched and felt his death too and he emerged with a new mind grappled to reality but freedom lost in chemical shackles——

I hoped beyond hope to see the smile or a signature flash of lightning behind those eyes and my hope was vain and now I am left partially broken too.

I can say it is better to have run the race and lost.

The world was not ready for Michael and he was not ready for the world. To howl at the moon is a dangerous game and he did it without fear. There is no man I have ever met, and I sincerely doubt I ever will, who holds the passions and genuine intensity Michael held and I tell everyone here that if you ever happen upon such a man clasp him to your heart and do not let him go because you never know when insanity will again rob the world of our best and brightest minds.

Reprinted with permission of Matthew Grayczyk

18C

Follow These Additional Tips for Preparing Your Speaking Notes

1. Prepare your speaking notes early to become familiar with them

Prepare your first set of speaking notes as you begin your practice sessions, but expect those notes to undergo changes. As you practice, you're bound to find that you're trying to

accomplish too much or that an idea would be better placed somewhere else or needs more support. Keep a pen handy, and remember that being flexible about your notes in the early stages of practice is a good thing.

As your actual speaking day approaches, stop making drastic changes to your notes. Adding a key word here and there is fine, but by this time in the process, despite additions, deletions, circles, arrows, and underlines, you should be familiar with the location of the ideas and the overall look of your speaking notes. Resist the temptation to clean them up for speaking day. Those new notes may look good to an outsider, but that's irrelevant. The only person your notes need to make sense to is *you*. Read the "Speaker's Story" box (🔗 p. 289) for one speaker's observations.

2. Use the right material for your speaking notes

There are any number of note-making materials to choose from. For classroom speaking, always check with your instructor for any unique note requirements he or she may have.

Notecards Notecards are a sound choice. Speakers of all kinds use them in classroom, workplace, and community presentations.

- Notecards are inexpensive to purchase and easy to write on.
- Notecards are easy to hold. Use notecards measuring three-by-five or four-by-six inches.
- Notecards come in different colors and can add an element of visual organization. For example, you can use a green card for your introduction, yellow for your first main point, lilac for your second, and so on.
- If no lectern is available or you choose not to use one, notecards are a smart choice. They're small and don't create a visual barrier between you and your audience.
- One drawback of notecards, because they're small, is legibility. Use careful penmanship. Don't tarnish your credibility by stumbling over your own handwriting!
- A second drawback is bulkiness. A huge stack of notecards is hard to handle and can easily slip from your hands. Aim for two to ten cards maximum. If you're using key words and phrases only, you should need no more than that anyway.

Computer-generated notes Many speakers like the convenience of creating notes with one click of the print button.

- Use computer-generated notes only if you're sure you can place your notes on a lectern or table, in a notebook, or somewhere else out of the audience's view. Holding sheets of paper can be awkward and can create a visual barrier between you and your listeners.
- You can still add some handwritten notes (*bring out graph here, eye contact*) or other visual marks like arrows, dashes, or stars if needed.

Notebook paper Notebook paper can be tricky. Use it with caution.

- Most notebook paper is relatively thin and transparent. Frayed edges and pen marks bleeding through to the other side look unprofessional.
- Notebook paper is flimsy, folds over easily, and makes crinkly noises when you shuffle it.
- Use notebook paper if—and only if—you are absolutely sure the notes will remain out of the audience's view.

A Speaker's Story

Stick with the Notes You KNOW!

“

Sebastian, a criminal-justice major, recalls his experience with his speaking notes:

I had been working with my speaking notes for about two days. My notes had lots of scribbles, arrows, eraser marks, and even a big coffee stain on them, but I had gotten to the point where my practices were working fluidly. I had some extra time the morning of my presentation, so I sat down and rewrote my notes so they'd be clean. I tucked them in my bag and went off to school. Big mistake. When I walked up to the front of the room with those new notes, it was as if I was working with an alien. My new notes had my ideas all in order, but that order was not the same order I had been practicing with. I did OK on my presentation, probably because my practice sessions had given me a strong feel for what I wanted to say. But working with those new notes unnecessarily messed with my mind.

”

Slideware Use presentational slideware such as PowerPoint or Keynote only for the visual representation of ideas, not for sharing your outline or speaking notes with your audience. If you choose presentational software, show the audience only slides of visual importance. Put speaking notes in a sidebar or window visible only to you. See  **pages 387–392** for a full discussion on slideware.

Other technological devices PDAs, iPods (Notes feature), phones, and other handheld devices can now store notes. Use them with caution for your speaking notes.

- Most screens are small, and you may need to hold yours relatively close to your face and/or at the proper angle to see it well.
- Batteries die when you least expect it.
- Listeners may become distracted by the device and start wondering what it is, how it works, where you got it, or how much it costs.

3. Make your speaking notes user-friendly

Experiment with your speaking notes for the first few presentations until you find the method that works for you. Even though they need not please anyone but you, you still should create your notes purposefully and treat them with care. Here are some other tips and suggestions.

- **Use one side of the notecard or paper only.** It's confusing to turn cards and sheets of paper over and over as you try to keep track of where you're going.

print, do you need to wear your glasses? Don't substitute vanity for credibility—it's better to see clearly than to hesitate, squint, and bend over your speaking notes.

- **Keep the notes simple.** Don't cram too many notes on one page or notecard (Figure 18.3). It's better to have more pieces of note material than to hunt around because the key word or phrase you need is buried on a given page.
- **Use visual organizational clues.** Many speakers find a variety of visual organizational clues—such as shapes, colors, and contrasting sizes—helpful when preparing their speaking notes. Consider the earlier tip about using different-colored notecards. Another idea is to draw a red circle around the thesis, highlight research notations in bright green, put transitions in all blue capitals, or draw arrows to connect certain ideas to others. One student created a note-preparation system in which she listed her organizational components (attention device, thesis, main point preview, and so on) down the left side of the paper in red ink and then lined up her detailed trigger words on the right side in black ink (Figure 18.4). Get creative. Visual organizational clues for your speaking notes are limited only by your imagination.
- **Number the notes.** A rubber band holding a set of notecards together can break, sheets of paper can get stuck in the back of a book, and speaking notes can tumble out of your hands on the way to the podium. These things happen to speakers more often than you would like to think. Number your notes to ensure that all are present and in the right order.
- **Add personal notations and images.** Your speaking notes can act as personal reminders during the presentation. Little bubbles off to the side saying *breathe*,

INTRODUCTION	
<i>Attn material</i>	• Navy Brat
<i>Credibility</i>	• father in Navy • part of family life • web = Chief of Nav Ops Sub Warfare Div; sub history • book = <i>Book of Subs</i>, Brayton Harris
<i>Picture</i>	• photo of dad in his sub
<i>Aud. connection</i>	• non-Navy? amusement parks is your experience • stuff of imagination—movies, intrigue
<i>Thesis</i>	• history of subs 16th to 20th C
<i>Preview</i>	• early designs—late 16th to mid-19th C • new tech—mid-19th to early 20th C • continued impvmt—20th to end of WWII • modern era—end of WWII to now

Figure 18.4 Some speakers create their own visual formats for their notes. This speaker identified the structural components in the left column and put her corresponding notes in the right column. Can you think of another visual format that might work for you?

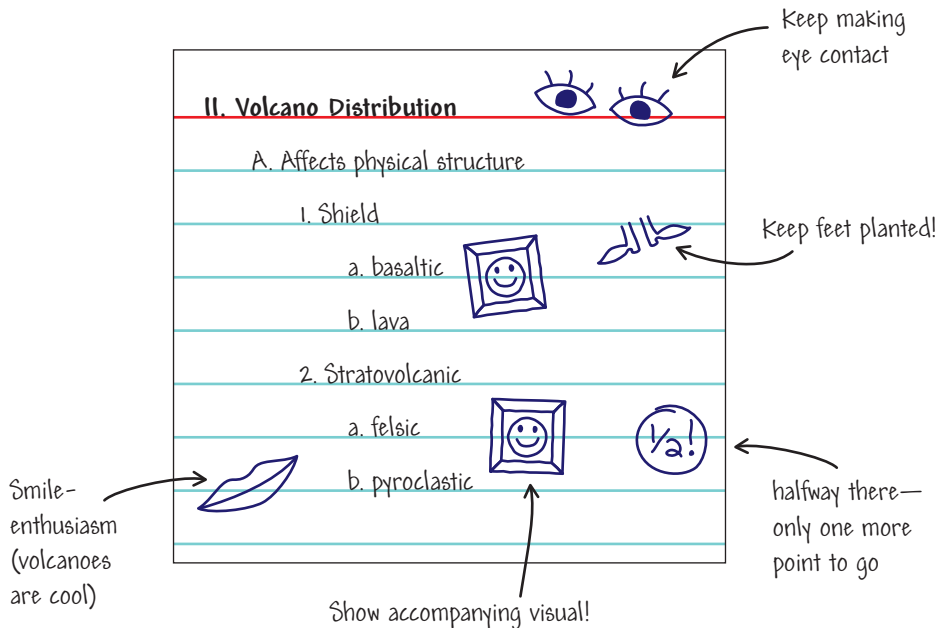


Figure 18.5 Are there any personal notations and images you can use to help you during your speech?

smile, *don't shift feet*, and *almost done!* can support you in beneficial ways. Draw some eyes on your notes to remind yourself to make more eye contact, or draw a picture frame to cue yourself that it's time to incorporate your visual support into your presentation (Figure 18.5).

18D

Determine Whether (or Not) to Use Your Speaking Notes for the Presentation

At some point, you'll want to decide whether or not to use speaking notes. It's perfectly acceptable to use notes; novice and experienced speakers alike use them. A lot is going on with your mind and body when you're speaking, and notes provide a desirable sense of direction and measure of security. As you become a more experienced speaker, your relationship with your notes will probably change. Despite the complexity of the ideas you're communicating, experience allows you to rely on your notes less and less. While going noteless isn't necessarily a goal, many speakers reach the point of speaking without any notes at all. Speaking without notes is about trusting yourself. You have to believe in your ideas, own them, and want to communicate them. The "Speaker's Story" box (p. 294) profiles one speaker's changing relationship with his notes.

If you decide to use notes, here are a few guidelines:

- **Use the same set of speaking notes you used during practice.** As mentioned earlier in the chapter, you want your speaking notes to look familiar to you during the actual presentation. Resist the temptation to "clean up" your notes.

Essentials

Tips for Preparing Speaking Notes

Prepare your speaking notes several days before the presentation

- Keep a pen handy during practice sessions to make changes.
- Resist the temptation to clean up your notes for speaking day.

Use the right material for your speaking notes

- Notecards are a sound choice.
- Computer-generated notes also work well.
- Slideware is for visual information, not for speaking notes.
- Use note-holding technological devices with caution.

Make the speaking notes user-friendly

- Use one side of the notecard or paper only.
- Use legible print.
- Use large print.
- Keep notes simple.
- Use visual organizational clues.
- Number your notes.
- Add personal notations and images to keep yourself on track.

Essentials

Using Your Speaking Notes

First, decide whether or not to use notes. If you decide to use them:

- Use the same set of speaking notes you used during practice.
- Look down to get a key word; look up to communicate the idea.
- Consider the notes a guide.
- Use them as discreetly as possible.

- **Look down, look up.** The greatest temptation for beginning speakers is to look down at their notes more than they need to. But it's easy to use speaking notes as a reference to keep you on track rather than as a document to be followed verbatim. You'll soon find it natural to look down briefly at your notes, find the next key word or trigger phrase, and then lift your eyes up again to continue communicating with your listeners, just as you did during practice.

A Speaker's Story

I Came to Own My Material



Jerry Vego, a volunteer for the arts, makes presentations about the color wheel to elementary school children grades K–4. When he began his speaking, Vego, a nonartist, had just been trained in color theory himself.

I was highly dependent upon detailed notes my first few sessions in the classroom. I constantly referred to them to see what color I was to discuss next, how that color interacted with other colors, what examples I could use to get my point across, and what I was to ask the children to do. Once I had been through the presentations a few times, I loosened up and started weaning myself from my notes. I now knew the steps. I began to have fun with new examples and ideas and realized I could communicate just as effectively if I didn't follow my notes exactly. After ten or so presentations, I was no longer referring to my notes. I still had them with me, though . . . just in case!



- **Consider the notes as a guide.** Looking at your audience instead of your speaking notes allows you to know whether and when you should deviate from your notes. On occasion, you'll need to enhance an idea, repeat a point, or go off on a brief tangent. The greater your familiarity with your notes, the more you can leave them yet get right back on track when you need to.
- **Use notes as discreetly as possible.** Move from one note to another as discreetly and smoothly as possible. Speakers who shuffle loudly and obviously from one piece of paper to the next, noticeably in search of a particular note or reference, create a distraction and suffer a drop in credibility.

Summary

- **Your preparation outline contains all the ideas you build and eventually decide to communicate. Speaking notes, on the other hand, are created from the preparation outline and contain only the material you need to guide you through your presentation.**
- **Although the form of your speaking notes depends on your individual preference, prepare them early and make them user-friendly.**

- Guidelines for using your speaking notes include using the same set you practiced with and using them as discreetly as possible.

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STYLE KEY**

Your speaking notes are tied to your personal habits and preferences. No matter what yours ultimately look like, take care while preparing them. Your notes are your friend and guide during practice and delivery, helping you stay on track while you share your ideas with your listeners.

EXERCISES

1. A few days before your next speech is due, create a set of extemporaneous speaking notes from your full preparation outline. Turn them both in to your instructor for feedback.
2. As a class, right before (or right after) your next round of speeches, bring in your individualized speaking notes—no matter what they look like to others! Place all the notes (no names attached) on a table in front of the classroom, and tour the whole set. What did the tour tell you about the individual nature of notes? Did you pick up any tips you can apply next time?
3. You have one minute to create a set of speaking notes (thesis and main points) for the following impromptu speaking situations. Compare your notes with those from some of your classmates. Can you learn anything from each other?
 - Your neighborhood association is meeting. One neighbor suggests speed bumps. You disagree. State your reasons why.
 - During the staff meeting, your boss asks for someone to train the new employees on the latest upgrade to the office computer system. Make your case that you're the best "someone" for the job.
 - Your class is discussing the end-of-the-year party. Present your three ideas.
4. Many of Winston Churchill's original speaking notes are archived on the Library of Congress's website (<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/churchill/wc-hour.html>). After examining some of these notes, share your insights with your classmates. Can you make any connections to modern-day public speaking?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 19

Practicing Your Presentation

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Practicing helps me become more familiar with my topic and the information I’ve gathered. When I practice, I don’t bother memorizing every single word, because I can’t, and I don’t want to either. A speech is not a test where I have to memorize every single thing if I want to earn an A. I’m still interested in the A, of course, but I practice with a different goal. I practice so that I can come to own the material.”

“Preparation is important to me, because if my speech isn’t organized, then I feel like a mess. If I feel like a mess, then there is a very good chance I am a mess, and that is how my speech is going to come out. Practice. It pays off.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

Practice wisely.

19A**Believe That Practice Is Critical to Your Speaking Success**

1. *Practice helps you attain ownership of your material*
2. *Practice lowers speaking anxiety and increases your positive speaker's energy*
3. *Practice prepares you for your time limit*

19B**Use These Tips for Effective Practice**

1. *Start early*
2. *Practice aloud*
3. *Practice everything*
4. *Practice the presentation in parts*
5. *Practice in front of a trusted listener or two*
6. *Evaluate your progress during and after each practice session*
7. *Give practice your undivided attention*

19C**Find the Right Amount of Practice**

1. *Pitfalls of too little practice*
2. *Pitfalls of too much practice*

Key Terms

muscle memory	▶ 298
ownership	▶ 298
practice	▶ 298
speaking logistics	▶ 300
time limit	▶ 300
time management	▶ 303

The Basketball Hall of Fame player and coach John Wooden once said, “Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.” His point is relevant to endeavors of all sorts—public speaking included. And one of the most important ways a public speaker prepares is through the exercise and art of practice. Whether your presentation is a two-minute personal introduction or a forty-five-minute keynote address, practice serves to familiarize you with your ideas, reinforce technique, build confidence, and help you meet your goal of communicating your ideas to your specific audience in a listenable fashion. This chapter demonstrates why practice is essential for a listenable presentation. It also provides tips for effective practice and suggestions for gauging the amount of practice you need.

19A

Believe That Practice Is Critical to Your Speaking Success

Practice is an essential ingredient in the success of the style of your presentation. You’ve spent a good deal of time choosing and researching a topic, organizing your ideas, and preparing support for them. Your speech is working on paper. But your language, voice, and body must all be in sync with the content on paper for the actual presentation to be effective. **Practice** is the key to achieving this familiarity.

The term *practice* is intentional. Adopt and use it as part of your public speaking vocabulary. Avoid the term *rehearse*, with its connotations of choreographed performance. Actors, directors, and technicians, for example, must rehearse together to block out action, memorize lines, and hit light and sound cues. Night after night, the stage production must look and sound relatively the same.

But *practice* is the verb of choice for public speakers. Athletes practice to familiarize themselves with skills, plays, theory, equipment, strategies, and other teams. It’s impossible to predict exactly what will happen during any given athletic event, but the practice remains invaluable because it gives the athlete experience from which to draw as he or she makes critical decisions during the competition.

Your speech practice does the same for you. Though you cannot foresee exactly what will happen during your presentation, practice gives you a solid plan. Familiarizing yourself with the structure and organization of your ideas, your visual support, your audience, your notes, and your examples gives you experience and confidence from which to draw as you make critical decisions during your presentation. Practice can also create **muscle memory**, an ability to carry out a well-practiced motion. The saying “speech act, body fact” illustrates that practice binds the material to your body, helping you remember what you want to say and do while presenting.

1. Practice helps you attain ownership of your material

Public speakers are expected to own their ideas. In order to be informed, persuaded, or in some other way moved, listeners need to perceive you as genuinely knowing or believing the ideas you’re expressing. Practice creates **ownership**, or an intimacy between you and your ideas, establishing familiarity and confidence for the upcoming presentation. If your speak-

Did You Know?

Alcohol's Effect on Learning

Research at Duke University and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center examined the relationship between alcohol consumption and learning. The study found that small amounts of alcohol—even two drinks—may have “profound effects” on college students, especially on people ages 21 to 24. According to Scott Swartzwelder, a clinical professor of medical psychology and the lead author of the study, “There’s no time when a person is called on to learn more than in college, but this is exactly the time when alcohol has its greatest negative effects on learning.”

It’s all about alcohol’s physical interaction with the brain. Wilkie Wilson, professor of pharmacology and a second author of the study, says the receptors in your brain that are impaired through alcohol use—leading to the buzzed feeling—are the same receptors that are critical for storing long-term memories in the brain’s hippocampus. When you learn something (material for a speech, for example), the idea is for the material to anchor itself in your brain so that it’s available for later use. But if you study or practice a speech and then go drinking, the anchoring process is negatively affected.

A second problem is alcohol’s detrimental effect on sleep. Professor Wilson points out, “The brain acts like a spring compressed by alcohol—when you release the alcohol, the spring bounds back again and overshoots to a period of hyper-excitability which wakes you up and disrupts your sleep cycle. And impairing the quality of your sleep impairs the quality of your ability for remembering things. The message is don’t drink on the night you want to consolidate information in your brain.”

Heavy drinking has even worse effects. Swartzwelder states that alcohol can remain in the body for up to twenty-four hours, leaving the drinker tired, distracted, and unable to concentrate. The withdrawal effects create an adverse physical state for learning. And regular drinking, he says, “will do permanent damage to how well you can learn. If you get into a pattern of drinking, you have to think: How are you compromising your brain? Whip-sawing your brain back and forth puts a load on the brain—it’s going to at least make it harder for the brain to do what you want it to do.”

Source: Mike Miller, “Alcohol May Disrupt Memory Ability,” *The Chronicle Online*, October 9, 2001, <http://www.dukechronicle.edu> (accessed September 14, 2006).

ing notes somehow vanished a few minutes into your presentation, your ownership of the ideas, realized through practice, would allow you to keep speaking. When President Bill Clinton’s teleprompter crashed near the start of his second State of the Union address, he still went on to deliver an organized and coherent 7,502-word address!¹ That’s ownership.

Practicing to attain ownership is a form of learning, and learning requires our best physical and mental state and effort. The “Did You Know?” box above looks at some recent research linking learning with alcohol consumption, an issue on many college campuses.

2. Practice lowers speaking anxiety and increases your positive speaker's energy

Practice that leads to a sense of ownership provides an additional reward—a sense of control over any excess adrenaline created by the upcoming presentation. Though you want *some* adrenaline to give you speaker's energy, fear of the unknown is one of the greatest contributors to excess adrenaline. Practice reduces those unknowns. Practice ensures that you know what you're doing and why and for whom you're doing it. Should the unexpected happen, you have the self-assurance to decide how to respond. Approaching the presentation with confidence goes a long way toward combating the fear-inducing unknowns.

3. Practice prepares you for your time limit

Practice sessions ensure that your material fits within your **time limit**, or your allotted window of time to present. Few speakers are able to get away with lengthy and seemingly interminable speeches (Cuba's Fidel Castro is one infamous example). The rest of us, despite our compelling ideas and engaging delivery styles, can expect a time limit to be put on us by our teacher, our supervisor, or the speaking host. Don't take this time limit personally! But respect it. There are practical and civil reasons for time constraints.

Why you must abide by the time limit

- **Logistical reasons.** The person who has asked you to speak or who is managing the **speaking logistics**, or the details of the event, has a schedule to adhere to. If you've been given seven to ten minutes to speak, it means the other fifty to fifty-three minutes of the hour are accounted for. Show respect for the speaking host by helping to make his or her job an easier one; stay within your time limit.
- **Audience reasons.** Most audiences know in advance about how long a speaker plans to present. This announced time frame creates an expectation. Your audience members are willing to give you their listening energy for that expected time frame, but rarely will they give you more.

U.S. audiences are especially time conscious. (Read the "Speaking of Culture" box for some intercultural perspectives on how time operates in the United States.) These audiences want to hear you speak, but they've most likely fit your presentation into what is otherwise a full day. Speaking for a little less than your allotted time usually pleases an audience because it allows extra time for questions, discussion, and bathroom breaks, but once you've gone over the expected time limit with no indication of wrapping things up, all sorts of internal messages begin to play. Listeners start thinking, *When is the conclusion going to start?* or *Doesn't this person realize there are three others waiting to speak?* Once these distracting messages begin, the audience isn't fully listening to you. And what a pity that is, because you worked so hard on your speech! Evidently, however, you did not work hard enough in your practice sessions.

How practice helps you meet the time limit. Like nearly all speakers, you're bound to experience time in a new way during your public presentation. Just as time seems to slow down while you're waiting for a huge software application to download, so it speeds by before you know it when speaking. Timing your practice sessions is therefore essential.



Speaking of Culture

Time in the U.S. Context

Ayumi (Japan)

"Time is valuable in the United States, and speeches clearly follow suit. I found that when speaking, I had to quickly get to the point I was trying to make."

Chol (Sudan)

"In Dinka culture, we don't wear watches. Time to us is important only in a historic sense; we must remember the events and history of our people. But in daily life, there's enough time to do anything

we need or want. The American sense of time was restrictive for me. I struggled to complete the amount of work needed for my speeches in the amount of time I was given. And for the speech itself, I at first had trouble understanding why I was being limited on my time. I've since learned to accept the importance of time here."

Marleny (Panama)

"Time has been a real struggle for me. In Panama, everyone is late. Things start and end whenever. No one cares. Americans view time very differently. To prioritize my ideas to stay within a time limit was so difficult. I went over on nearly all my speeches."

Though you're not aiming for a time that's exact down to the second, you do need to present your material within a general time frame.

It may take a speech or two to figure out whether your actual presentations run shorter, longer, or roughly equal to your practice sessions. Sometimes speaker's energy causes a presenter to speak more quickly than usual. Other speakers have a tendency to go off on tangents and speak too long, forcing themselves to panic and rush at the end. Experience soon tells

you what kind of speaker you are. You can take this knowledge into account during the timing of your practice sessions.

What to do if you're running long during practice Running long during your practice sessions is more common than running short. Alyssa's experience is typical:

The first time I clocked a practice session for my six- to eight-minute informative speech, I came in at thirteen minutes. It hurt, but I had to cut a lot of information. The next time I timed it, I was down to ten. I cut some more. I finally got it down to a little more than eight minutes. I knew from experience that I tended to speak more quickly during my presentations than I did during my practice sessions, so I thought I would be OK, and I was. My actual speech time was just under eight. The practice helped me get a feel for the real thing.

How do you know what material to cut? Here are some tips:

- **Prioritize your ideas.** Some speakers, because they are so interested in their topics and know so much about them, have trouble making choices about what is more important and what is less so. Students, especially those who significantly exceed their time limits, repeatedly report a failure (or an unwillingness) to prioritize. You can't share everything you know! It's not uncommon for speakers to share only 5 to 20 percent of their knowledge about a topic.
- **Look for areas of repetition.** Are you planning to discuss diesel engines in point one and then again in point three? Cut point three.
- **Consider combining two separate ideas into one.** If you're discussing "grizzly bear habitat" and "black bear habitat" separately, combine the two ideas into one larger category of "bear habitat in general."
- **Provide a sense of your idea rather than sharing all the intricacies.** In your speech on "couples in trouble," you may not have enough time to discuss all the "problematic emotions" you learned about. Instead, mention that there are fifteen identified problematic emotions, quickly list the top five, and discuss only the most significant one or two. Your audience still gets the general idea that "the display of certain emotions tends to create problems for couples."
- **Give one example instead of two or more.** In your speech on "Native American cliff ruins," share only your photos of Mesa Verde, and cut your planned examples of Canyon de Chelly and Butler Wash (no matter how interesting and beautiful they are).
- **Cut details from a story.** Most stories are intelligible from their essentials—character description, setup, conflict, climax, and resolution. Ask yourself what story details are relevant to the point you're trying to make, and then cut the extraneous ones.

- **Cut unnecessary background material.** In your discussion of “the most recently discovered Egyptian mummy,” cut the details about who discovered it and how. The when and where may have to suffice.

What to do if you’re running short during practice It’s less common for speakers to run short during practice, but it does happen. It’s fine to run somewhat shorter than your given time limit, but if you’re running significantly shorter during practice, consider adding material. But be careful—honestly ask yourself why you are doing it. If you’ve said all that you need to say and are adding simply to pad the speech, don’t. Shorter is fine. In general, though, speakers who truly come up short have not explained, enhanced, or supported their ideas well enough.

Here are some tips for adding. Many of them are the opposite of the tips for cutting that you just read about.

- **Add another example.** Multiple examples help listeners understand ideas, especially if those ideas are abstract or complex.
- **Add some more details to a story.** Good storytelling provides imagery that attracts and holds listeners’ interest.
- **Incorporate another visual.** If one picture is worth one thousand words, two or more only add to the impact.
- **Provide definitions and descriptions.** Could the audience benefit from enhanced definitions or descriptions of some words, people, places, or concepts? Don’t assume that all listeners know who Richard Avedon was, what *enigmatic* means, or why the Chinese city of Xi’an is famous. Take the time to tell them.
- **Give a quick demonstration.** A quick demonstration helps your audience visualize and better understand an idea. Show an example of how to use the FOIL trick for multiplying binomials. Go ahead and demonstrate a proper theatrical curtsy, the correct stance for a free throw, or the way to wrap a sari.
- **Get the audience involved.** Asking the audience to answer some questions or practice applying a new theory is an excellent way for them to better understand your material. For example, after an explanation of how the Golden Rectangle functions in architecture, put up an aerial view of the Parthenon, and ask the audience to apply it for themselves. Many more ideas on involving the audience are provided on 📖 **pages 407–411.**

19B

Use These Tips for Effective Practice

1. Start early

Making effective use of your time, or employing good **time management**, is key for speakers. You need time to gain ownership of your material, build speaking confidence, and ensure

Essentials

Why Practice Is Critical

- Practice helps you attain ownership of your material.
- Practice lowers speaking anxiety.
- Practice prepares you for your time limit.

that time constraints are met. Don't wait until the last minute to begin your practice. Even if your schedule is busy, start *somewhere*. Practice even if you have only five minutes one day and ten minutes the next. Once you start, you should be motivated to continue and make room for bigger slices of practice time.

2. Practice aloud

You may be able to work silently with your ideas at first, but as your presentation nears, you *must* practice your material aloud. This rule can't be stressed enough. Practicing aloud lets you hear your ideas and decide whether they make sense to human ears. Practicing aloud helps your presentation evolve, because you learn new things each time you go over it. Practicing aloud creates muscle memory for difficult-to-pronounce words. The "Speaker's Story" box (🔍 p. 305) highlights one student's new insights about the importance of such practice.

Some speakers say they don't practice aloud because they're embarrassed to be seen or heard talking to themselves. Don't let this stop you. If you must, go into your room, pull the shades, and close the door. You can also find an empty classroom or an individual study room at the library. Better still, use the actual speaking space if it's available. On campuses around the country, students practice aloud to walls or shrubbery one last time before they go into class. You won't stick out when you do the same! Besides, should you be "caught" practicing aloud, most people quickly realize and accept what you are doing.



Practicing aloud in front of someone—or something—is highly recommended.

3. Practice everything

Besides practicing aloud, be sure to practice everything you plan to do. It can be tempting to save time during your practice sessions by saying to yourself:

- *I'll just come up with an example or two at this point to show what I mean.*
- *I'll tell the story that supports that point here.*
- *I'll show how to use the device right after talking about it.*
- *And then I'll find a way to wrap up the speech when I get to the conclusion.*

A Speaker's Story

Always Practice Aloud



Dayna, a biology major, will never forget the day she learned the power of practicing aloud:

My speech was on the genetic engineering of bacteria. We were talking a lot about the topic in my classes, and I was fascinated to learn how bacteria were being genetically manipulated to help break down things like oil slicks and industrial waste products. I read up on the topic and really felt like I had a good grasp of the information. I organized my ideas, did some additional research, structured my speech, prepared some visuals, and was ready to get started on my practice session. The speech was the next morning, and I honestly thought I was giving myself plenty of practice time.

My roommate agreed to listen to me. I couldn't believe what happened! Even though I was really interested in the topic and knew the ideas were working on paper, what came out of my mouth was embarrassing. I tripped over words, stumbled over ideas, went off on irrelevant tangents, and forgot to define technical terms. I had hardly gotten through the introduction when I realized I had a lot of work to do. My brain knew my material, but the connection to my mouth had not yet been made. How was my audience ever going to understand me if I couldn't express myself? I let my roommate go, and I buckled down to practice.

For the next two hours, I practiced aloud to one of my plants. The "aloud" part was the missing ingredient. I definitely needed that oral practice to fully organize my ideas and have them really make sense to me. The more I worked with the ideas, the more I genuinely knew them. My roommate agreed to give me one more chance the next morning before class, and because I now got it, so did she. Things were still a bit too close for comfort—I wish I had had even more practice time—but I went confidently to class and gave a pretty good presentation.



Having a plan and practicing that plan are quite different. It's difficult to "come up with an example" and make it a meaningful one when you are under pressure during the actual presentation. Stories don't always come out the way you want them to on the first telling. Visuals require more psychological energy and take up more presentation time than you may think. Brilliant speech endings rarely fall from the sky. Practice everything you plan to do.

4. Practice the presentation in parts

Practice can seem daunting when a task looms large. It's less intimidating if you break a larger task into smaller, more manageable parts. You need not practice the whole speech

right away. Spend your first practice session on just the introduction, the next one on just one of the main points in the body, and so on. Save time in some of the final practice sessions to put all the parts together.

5. Practice in front of a trusted listener or two

Practice in front of a trusted friend, classmate, or family member at some point. The advantages are many. Most importantly, practicing in front of others allows you to test your goal of successfully communicating an idea. Your practice-session listeners can be an excellent source of feedback. Ask them to paraphrase your ideas back to you. Ask whether it's clear when you're moving from one main idea to the next. Ask whether a particular idea, example, or story makes sense or is confusing. Ask whether your visuals enhance your ideas. Ask for comments on your delivery style. The answers tell you whether you have more work to do.

Practicing in front of family and friends, however, can also be tricky. Here are some tips to help create a meaningful practice experience:

- Find people who can be honest with you and provide constructive criticism. It's not as helpful to practice in front of listeners, like your grandma or your little brother, who love anything and everything you do. Conversely, people who are exceptionally critical are of little benefit.
- Listeners unschooled in the details of the specific public speaking concepts you're studying may not be able to provide the relevant feedback you need. Know what kind of feedback you seek, and don't hesitate to get it through precise questioning.
- Beware of self-proclaimed experts. The kind of public speaking your Uncle Joe learned in that workshop thirty years ago may not mesh with the modern theory and skills you're learning in your course. The assignment for the informative speech your roommate gave last year may be different from the project your teacher is assigning this term. Accept feedback and advice from these listeners, but ultimately attend to the specifics of your assignment and to what your teacher is asking you to do.

6. Evaluate your progress during and after each practice session

Learn from each practice session. Stop, regroup, and start again if you are confusing yourself or your listeners while giving an example or describing a certain concept. Listen to the tone you're using to ensure that it's conversational. One student said, "When I was practicing my informative speech, I was telling myself, 'Stop sounding like you're reading an essay!' I thought if I sounded like that when I was by myself, I was going to sound worse on the day of my speech."

Some students like to capture their practice sessions on audio- or videotape for further self-evaluation. These recordings can uncover things you were unaware of, helping you focus on needed skills and concepts during subsequent practices.

International students have a few additional challenges while practicing. The "Speaking of Culture" box (📖 p. 307) provides some insights and tips from those who have successfully passed the course.

7. Give practice your undivided attention

Practicing your material takes full concentration. Please make sure that you are in a good, safe space. Don't practice while driving. One student rear-ended someone at a stoplight on



Speaking of Culture

Here's My Best Practice Advice

Hasan (Turkey)

"First, international students should find native English speakers to practice with. Sad but true, I realized that your English does not improve if you continue to speak your native language often or if you talk mainly with other international students—both of you make similar mistakes and lack deep information about English. Also, examine U.S. culture and try to attend other public speaking events so you can have models."

Alex (Russia)

"We have a saying in my part of Russia. The English translation would be, 'It's easier to act yourself in a new way of thinking than to think yourself in a new way of acting.' In other words, don't think too long about trying something new. Jump right in! It surprised me that I took to American-styled public speaking so easily."

Arelí (Mexico)

"Be persistent in your practice, even if you get frustrated—which you will. Give your best, and learn from your mistakes. The United States is a safe place to make mistakes. I love making them, because it's the only way I learn."

his way to class and later admitted that he had been practicing aloud to himself in his car. He was so distracted by his practice that he failed to see the red light, much less the other car. Don't practice while your child is in the tub in the other room. Don't practice while operating heavy machinery!

Essentials

Practice Tips

- Start practicing early.
- Practice aloud, not just silently to yourself.
- Practice everything—every example, demonstration, story, visual, and so on.
- Practice the presentation in parts at first, rather than as a whole.
- Practice in front of a trusted listener or two.
- Evaluate during and after each practice session.
- Give practice your undivided attention.

19C

Find the Right Amount of Practice

How much practice is enough? There's no magic formula. Manage your time to get in a *minimum* of three to five practices; through trial and error, you'll see what amount of practice is ultimately good for *you*. Ask your instructor or a trusted classmate whether he or she thinks your last speech sounded unprepared, over-rehearsed, or just about right. If your last speech was recorded, listen objectively for yourself. For the next speech, find the amount of practice that is neither too much nor too little, but just right.

1. Pitfalls of too little practice

Whether due to procrastination, an overly busy schedule, distraction, overconfidence, or a combination thereof, many speakers, especially college students, don't practice enough. The "Speaker's Story" box (🔍 p. 309) profiles Jordan, one such speaker. A speaker who does not sufficiently practice, especially on a researched presentation, pays for it with an increased stress level, lower grade, and more importantly, a failure in speech purpose.

2. Pitfalls of too much practice

Conversational-styled presentations may contain a mispronounced word, a repetition or two, or an idea not fully explained, but they are preferable to presentations that sound canned and robotic. The feel of these over-rehearsed talks (the word *rehearsed* is intentional here) creates communication barriers by distancing the speaker from the audience, leading to an overall less listenable speech.

Speakers who procrastinate or tend to be relatively lazy (and you know who you are) sometimes misinterpret the warning against "over-rehearsing" as an excuse to not practice at all. Don't make that mistake. You *must* practice, at least some. On the other hand, warnings against excessive practice make some overachieving students (and you know who you are, as well) feel threatened. It's disconcerting for these speakers to hear what they think is some-

A Speaker's Story

The Overconfident Procrastinator

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On the first day of the term, Jordan strutted into his class, sat in the back, and when asked what he expected from the class, confidently answered, “An A. I took this course in high school, and I’m only here for some easy credits.”

Jordan was a good student. He showed up to class and participated willingly. He was an easygoing guy and was well liked by his classmates and professor. But Jordan’s speeches were not that great. He would fly in at the last minute on speech day, madly scribbling things on his speaking notes and digging in his backpack for his required outline. When he stepped to the front of the room, he needed time to arrange all his things, tuck in his shirt, remove his hat, and smooth his hair. He got the gist of each assignment, but inevitably, something significant was missing. He failed to produce a required visual for one speech, had no identifiable thesis for another, and lacked some essential background material on yet another. He used a conversational tone of voice, but it was often too informal, containing distracting obscenities and inappropriate slang. Clearly, Jordan was not practicing enough, and his grades reflected it.

With a few weeks of the term remaining, Jordan got concerned. He went to his professor’s office to see what he needed to score on the remaining assignments in order to earn the best final grade possible. With that answer in hand, he set to work. Now, Jordan no longer procrastinated. He chose his speech topic at least a week early, sought help from his professor, and most importantly, left himself at least a full day ahead of time to practice. On his final speech day, he arrived early, handed in his neatly typed—and stapled!—outline, signed up to go first, and enjoyed a few minutes of calm and camaraderie before class began.

In his final self-evaluation paper, Jordan wrote about how the course humbled him. He confessed to practicing minimally or not at all for the first several presentations; he thought he could get by on his high school speaking experience and his quick mind. Though the course was more challenging than he expected, the work was within his capabilities. But his procrastination and overconfidence acted as counterforces. Jordan wrote that he was glad to have taken the class even though an A was out of reach by the time he got serious.

”

one telling them not to prepare as well as they can. That’s not the message either. Though you must practice, believe that less can be more. Over-rehearsal can quash the freshness and spontaneity you need and want during your presentation. Patricia, whose experience is highlighted in the “Speaker’s Story” box, (◀ p. 310) is one speaker who needed to learn that lesson. Trust yourself that a few practices, maybe only three to five, are sufficient for you to learn your material and know what it is you want to say.

A Speaker's Story

The Overachiever



Patricia, a mother of three returning to school in her late 30s, struggled with over-rehearsal for a good part of the term. Though her topics were compelling, her speech structure perfect, and her support well thought out, her delivery on her first few speeches was exceedingly over-rehearsed. Every gesture appeared stiff and planned, every sentence sounded memorized, and every pause seemed choreographed. This delivery style was in deep contrast to the everyday style she used outside her presentations, so it was evident she was capable of being more natural.

An admitted over-achiever, Patricia realized that she was sounding and looking canned, but she just could not bring herself to practice any less. After many pleas from her instructor, she finally decided to take the risk. They struck an agreement that Patricia would prepare as usual but would practice aloud *only twice*. And what a different speaker she was! Most significantly, her relaxed style in turn relaxed her audience. Rather than sitting back, watching “The Patricia Show” and then politely applauding, they actually listened and asked questions at the end. It was by far Patricia’s best presentation; she felt it and knew it.

Patricia later reported that it was the first time she found herself being “mindful and present” during a presentation. She liked looking at the audience, seeing them, and actually thinking about what she wanted to tell them. She liked the challenge of knowing her material yet getting to think on her feet a bit. She could now see that her over-rehearsed “speeches” had become exercises in checking off a list of planned activities and phrases; they were not exercises in communication. Patricia vowed never to go back to her old practice formula again.



Summary

- Adopt the term *practice* (as opposed to *rehearse*) in your public speaking vocabulary.
- Practice is essential, because it provides you ownership of your material, decreases your speaking anxiety, and ensures that you can communicate all your ideas in the time you have been given to speak.
- Start your practice well before your presentation, practice everything aloud, practice the presentation in parts, practice in front of others, and practice safely.
- Each speaker must determine for himself or herself how much practice is necessary for a given presentation, but all speakers should practice some.

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STYLE KEY**

Practice builds your confidence while working out the kinks in your speech content and delivery. You'll ultimately find the appropriate style and amount of practice *you* need. Your aim is not to practice until "perfect" but rather to practice to make your speech as listenable as possible.

EXERCISES

1. Interview someone who regularly gives presentations to find out about his or her practice habits. (Your teacher or boss may be able to recommend someone to interview.) Afterward, share what you learned with your classmates. Questions to ask may include:
 - Can you walk me through one of your practice sessions?
 - What are your best practice tips?
 - Can you provide an example of a time you wished you had practiced more?
 - How has your practice changed since you were a novice speaker?
2. For your next speech, record your very first practice—warts and all. Then record one of your final practices. Write a short report on the differences.
3. Get together with a few classmates before your next speech, and take turns practicing in front of each other. As each speaker practices, each listener must give a minimum of three pieces of feedback, pointing out a combination of strengths and weaknesses. After each speaker has run through a practice session, take a break and repeat the process.



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 20

Communicating with Language

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I never considered that my language could have such influence. I had to learn the hard way. In one of my speeches, I made what I now see as an unfortunate comment about homosexuality. Honestly, I intended no disrespect to anyone. However, my wording not only had the potential to exclude some members of my audience, but it also could have been interpreted as offensive. I just wasn’t thinking. But thinking before I speak is something I am now doing. You can count on that. Our words have impact. Don’t let anyone tell you differently.”

“I can remember the semi-shock I felt when one of my classmates used the f-word as an adjective in a speech. It’s not like I’ve never heard the word before, but it was so out of place within the context of the classroom that it just stood out and diminished the speaker’s credibility, at least in my eyes.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

Use language inclusively and accurately.

20A**Be Inclusive with Your Language**

1. *“-isms”*
2. *Slang*
3. *Jargon*
4. *Obscenities*
5. *Big or cultural vocabulary words*

20B**Be Accurate with Your Language**

1. *Be grammatically correct*
2. *Pronounce words correctly*

20C**Let the Personality of Your Language Emerge**

Key Terms

dialect	▶ 324
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Language has tremendous power. It not only determines our perception of the world and shapes relationships, but it also influences our ability to communicate with our listening audience. Know that the words and phrases you use while speaking mean real things to other people. Your public language affects the listenability of your presentation because of its capacity to include or exclude audience members and to attract them to or distract them from your message. It also profoundly affects your credibility. This chapter looks at the style, accuracy, and personality of your language.

20A

Be Inclusive with Your Language

Public speakers want to invite their audiences into their presentations to interact with the ideas they're discussing. An *inclusive* language style helps meet this goal. **Inclusive language** acts as a bridge to an audience, increasing the speaker's chances of making a connection. It tells an audience that all potential listeners are welcomed and respected. Conversely, *noninclusive* language acts as a barrier, pushing the audience away. **Noninclusive language** relies on negative stereotypes, derogatory remarks, or offensive terms that make listeners feel inferior.

Your style of language *is* a message. What you say speaks volumes about your thinking, your integrity, and your esteem for the audience. Effective speakers are mindful of their language choices and aim for inclusiveness. Few people use noninclusive language intentionally; fewer still want to antagonize or alienate an audience. Some people, however, purposefully use language in public contexts to shock and gain attention, typically for political purposes. Malcolm X used "bitter eloquence"¹ in the 1960s during his call for political empowerment for Blacks. Some people in the gay community have reclaimed *queer*, a word once used against them, in the journey toward political and social equality. The popular television programs *Queer as Folk* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* show how far the word has come from its former use to offend.

The next few pages discuss several styles of language: some with the ability to draw an audience in, some with the ability to push an audience away, and some—depending on the speaker, the audience, and the occasion—with the ability to do both.

1. "-isms"

As you scan the next few pages and see words like *sexism*, *racism*, and *heterosexism*, images of the political-correctness police may come to mind. This section, however, is not about political correctness; it's about consequences. True, some people neither notice nor care what gender pronoun, racial descriptor, or sexist or homophobic comment you use, but many do. Don't let stereotypical comments or inappropriate words draw needless attention, creating a barrier between you and your audience and diminishing your communication effectiveness.

Sexism Language is considered **sexist** when a listener perceives that a speaker organizes his or her world according to sex or gender, most often in reference to occupation, ability, or behavior.

- Everyone knows that not all doctors and executives are *hes* and not all teachers and nurses are *shes*, yet some speakers still use these gender-specific third-person pronouns. Instead, you can say, *When you see your doctor about these symptoms, he or she should be able to make a quick diagnosis.* It's easy to say *he* or *she* once you get in the habit. The other option is to pluralize the noun: *When you see your doctors about these symptoms, they should . . .*
- Females play basketball, and males cook and go grocery shopping. Use gender-neutral terminology when making references to occupations and activities. Describe him as a *nurse* (just as you would do for a female in the occupation), not a *male nurse*. Refer to her as a *business owner* (just as you would do for a male), not a *woman business owner*.
- When referring to people 18 years of age and older, use the terms *women* and *men*. *Girls* and *boys* typically refer to people 17 or younger.

Racist Language is considered **racist** when a listener perceives that a speaker organizes his or her world according to race, most often in reference to ability, occupation, behavior, and preferences. Unless it's essential to the idea, why label the student *Latina* or the lawyer *Korean*?

- If a person's race is crucial to the point you're communicating, find and use the most accepted term. The evolving nature of language can make it difficult to know all the preferred terms, but clearly some are more acceptable than others (for example, *Asian* is more acceptable than *Oriental*). You, your audience, and the occasion may all influence the appropriateness of a certain term (*African American* or *Black*? *Indian* or *Native American*?). Check with the speaking host, a teacher, or trusted friend prior to the speech to talk out your ideas and find the most audience-acceptable words to use.
- Be careful of the phrase *those people*. Although few intend it, speakers using this phrase immediately erect a barrier between *us* and *them*, inferring that the *we* are superior to whoever *those people* might be.
- English contains phrases whose roots are found in ethnic or racial stereotypes. Although they may be in common use, they reflect poorly on the speaker. Avoid phrases such as:
 - to *get gyped* (the term is related to *gypsy*)
 - to *jew someone down*
 - *Indian giver*
 - *Mexican standoff*
 - *Too many chiefs and not enough Indians*

Heterosexism Language is considered **heterosexist** when a listener perceives that a speaker organizes his or her world according to the premise that all people are heterosexual. In addition, **homophobic language**, or words that use homosexuality as a target of humor or disgust, only reflects poorly on the speaker.

- Not *all* women are looking to marry men, and not *all* men are always checking out women. Avoid using sweeping statements about male-female attraction; consider discussing person-to-person attraction instead.

Actress Jada Pinkett Smith created a mini controversy while speaking at Harvard's Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations when she said, "Women, you can have it all—a loving man, devoted husband, loving children, and a fabulous career."²

Several members of Harvard's Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, and Supporters Alliance (BGLTSA), angered by her remarks, called them "heteronormative" and demanded an apology from the Foundation. One BGLTSA member said that Pinkett Smith's comments "had a very strong focus for an extended period of time on how to effectively be in a relationship—a heterosexual relationship." The member added, however, "I don't think she meant to be offensive but I just don't think she was that thoughtful."³

- When speaking in general terms about relationships, use *partner* or *significant other*. Save terms like *wife* and *boyfriend* for examples about specific people who may have exactly those significant others.
- If the idea you are communicating necessitates a reference to a person's sexual identity, use the generally preferred terms *gay* (for men), *lesbian* or *gay* (for women), *bisexual man* or *bisexual woman*, and *transgendered person*. *Same-sex couple* is typically used to refer to two people in a same-sex relationship.
- Be careful about making stereotypical comments about sexual orientation. Obviously, only a small percentage of lesbians ride motorcycles (as do only a small percentage of heterosexual women).

Other barriers Some speakers create other kinds of linguistic barriers, which we'll discuss shortly. The bottom line is this: consider the consequences of your language. Use language to create bonds between you and your audience, and avoid language that creates barriers and has the potential to offend any segment of your audience.

- **Religion.** Beware of language that stereotypes or comments on religious beliefs. Obviously, some Catholics have small families or no children at all, and certainly, only the tiniest fraction of Muslims support acts of terrorism. Keep in mind that not everyone celebrates Christmas. Also, be careful of bringing your own religious beliefs into your public speaking. If your speech is advertised as religious in nature and the audience has voluntarily shown up to hear it, that's a different story. However, most mainstream or mixed audiences don't respond well to hearing about your god or your specific beliefs, especially if you deliver your points in a lecturing or proselytizing tone.
- **Age.** Not all teenagers are wild and experimental (while some older people are). Not all middle-aged people go through a midlife crisis. Making jokes about older people (the term preferred to *elderly*, *aged*, or *gramps*) being weak and feeble-minded only reflects poorly on you.
- **Occupation.** Lawyer jokes usually fall flat, modern-day librarians are not mousy, and *geek* is not descriptive of most computer experts! Avoid such stereotypes.
- **Weight and height.** Obesity is a severe problem and not something to stereotype or laugh at. Not all fat people eat a lot and fail to exercise, and certainly, a person's weight has nothing to do with his or her intelligence or ability to accomplish most tasks. A person's height rarely determines his or her occupation (*she's tall—must be a basketball player*). And mimicking short people by talking in a squeaky voice only makes you look bad.

2. Slang

Slang is best described as words used and immediately understood within a specific group. That specific group can be a small collection of friends, a city, a region, a co-culture, or a country. There is skateboard slang, military slang, California slang, Puerto Rican slang, and Australian slang. The television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* even spawned Slayer Slang.⁴ Within a slang community, words can fly fast and freely, but when slang is used between communities, the consequences can range from a quaint perplexity to a serious misunderstanding. Is slang an appropriate language style for public speakers? The short answer: it depends.

- **The occasion.** Your audience analysis helps you decide whether slang is the right choice for your particular presentation. It's rarely suitable for formal presentations at work or school. Less formal situations, however, sometimes benefit from the use of slang, because it can encourage the audience to relax, participate, and have fun.
- **The audience.** Slang can serve as either a bonding tool or a wedge between you and your audience. A speaker who uses the right slang terms (*cell yell* or *schizophonia*) in front of the right audience (cell-phone salespeople) immediately communicates commonalities and a shared outlook. But slang that's inappropriate, misunderstood, or not understood at all only draws needless attention to itself, creating a barrier and reducing listenability.
- **The speaker.** Not everyone can pull off the use of slang. Your audience must believe that you're a genuine user of a slang term for it to have a positive communicative effect. Are you the right age (or hip enough) to use the term? Are you a member of the group or culture that uses it? Do you know the term's correct pronunciation and intonation? Take such questions into consideration; you want your slang to reflect your status as an insider, not an outsider.
- **The slang.** Your decision to use slang inevitably depends on the slang itself. Certain categories of slang, such as toilet slang, sex slang, or cultural slurs, are rarely appropriate in any sort of public speaking context; they hurt your credibility and risk offense. Other slang terms are short-lived (*rents* for parents, *bug out* for leave the premises) or so specific to a particular co-culture (*puppy feet* for a poker hand consisting of a flush of clubs) that they only confuse most listeners. On the other hand, some slang terms are so common and innocuous (such as *cool*, *wired*, or *funky*) that most people don't even regard them as slang anymore; these are safer to use. The "Did You Know?" box (🔍 p. 318) shares the interesting history of one of the most resilient slang terms. Check it out.

3. Jargon

Jargon is language of a technical nature, specific to a profession or hobby. People working in the medical field have jargon (*bagging*, *DNR*, *MVA*), as do those who breed Bengal cats (*homozygous*, *back crossing*, *whisker pads*). When you choose an academic major, part of what you are learning is the jargon of the discipline. For example, by the time communication majors earn their degrees, terms such as *immediacy*, *org com*, and *proxemics* are a regular part of their vocabularies.

Did You Know?

History of *Cool*

Unlike most slang terms that come and go, *cool* has had remarkable staying power. First recorded in written English in the early 1930s, *cool* came from Black English and was popularized in the 1940s by jazz musicians. Used as a generally positive interjection or adjective, *cool* seems to have universal appeal and has even been borrowed by other languages, including French and German. Synonyms for *cool*, including *bully*, *capital*, *groovy*, *hep*, *crazy*, *nervous*, *far-out*, *cherry*, *rad*, *tubular*, *def*, and *phat*, have each had their moments, but *cool*, in defiance of the transitory nature of slang, is alive and well more than seventy-five years after its introduction. Today's synonyms for *cool*, including *tight*, *dope*, *sweet*, and *sick*, are most likely ready to join the linguistic scrap heap soon, if they haven't done so already!

Thanks to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Houghton Mifflin, 2000); and <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/cool>.

Jargon has a place in public speaking, but as with slang, you must analyze the occasion, the audience, and the jargon itself before deciding whether or not to use it.

- **The context or occasion.** Conferences, business meetings, academic presentations, and organization meetings are ripe for the use of jargon. In these situations, the speaker and the listeners share a common knowledge base that makes the jargon immediately understood. However, if your audience analysis tells you that some people may not understand your jargon, be sure to provide a quick definition.
- **The audience.** Jargon can boost your credibility with some audiences yet baffle others. People working in a particular occupation or trade are expected to know the jargon of their field, so using it with others in your profession not only provides a shortcut to communication but also bonds you and your listeners through shared language. If you are speaking before a mainstream audience, jargon can quickly enhance your perceived professional status, but you must take the time to define and explain such terms to ensure that everyone in your audience understands them.
- **The speaker.** Speakers must know the meaning of jargon to genuinely communicate it to an audience. Listeners are quick to pick up on any hesitation that reveals a lack of knowledge, and the plan to impress them usually backfires. Increase your credibility by using only jargon that's comfortably yours.
- **The jargon.** Some jargon is so obscure that even for a knowledgeable audience you may need to provide an explanation. Everyone who knows HTML- and XML-speak (the language of webpage designers) understands the meaning of *GIF*, but does everyone know what a *favicon* is?

4. Obscenities

Curse words are prevalent in many forms of media and may be a part of many people's daily or occasional vocabulary, but they're still pretty much off-limits in public speeches. Even though only a few obscenities still carry the power to shock, anger, or incite, obscene words and phrases have a way of unnecessarily drawing attention to themselves in formal or even informal presentations. Why create a linguistic red flag and jeopardize your credibility when you would rather have your audience focus on your ideas?

Obscenities range from hard to mild. Most public speakers have little trouble avoiding hard-core obscenities. Milder obscenities, however, such as *screwed up*, *that sucks*, and *pissed off* must still be questioned. These terms have a negative impact on many listeners, and it's not worth risking your audience's goodwill with unnecessary profanity. If you must use obscenities, do so for valid reasons. For example, one speaker, discussing discriminatory behaviors toward racial minorities, quoted obscene remarks others had made toward him over the years. The obscenities were hard and shocking, but they supported his point that such discriminatory behavior exists.

Obscenities may serve a purpose in specific speaking contexts. Some athletes say their coaches give curse-laden talks, and military personnel report hearing the same from their superiors. Hollywood reflects the tendency. The film *Crimson Tide* features Gene Hackman as Frank Ramsey, the captain of a U.S. nuclear ballistic submarine. Ramsey addresses his men at the start of their dangerous mission. The speech, given at night beneath a torrential downpour, is meant to fire up the sailors, bonding them to each other and uniting them against their common enemy. It's quite effective—and it's littered with nearly every obscenity in the English language!

Examine your context and audience carefully before choosing to use an obscenity in your public presentation. Be aware of the word's power to distract and its potentially negative effect on your credibility. At the same time, acknowledge that when spoken by the right speaker before the right audience on the right occasion, obscenities can effectively release aggression, evoke emotion, bond groups, and incite behavior. Perhaps these are exactly your desired speaking outcomes.

5. Big or cultural vocabulary words

Different people have different vocabularies. While your vocabulary may contain words like *guile*, *platitudes*, and *catapledaphobia*, the next person's might include *gewgaw*, *unctuous*, and *commensurate*. Terms like these are often referred to as "big" or "fancy" vocabulary words. Other words are specific to a particular culture or language. Many have worked or are working their way into U.S. English. Film, theatre, and television (especially *Seinfeld*), for instance, have popularized the Yiddish word *shlep*, meaning to pull or carry. Most cultural words, however, remain unknown to those outside the cultural community.

Both big and cultural vocabulary words are acceptable in a public speech—as long as they're used for the right reason, defined when necessary, and used with sensitivity to the audience. A speaker with a rich vocabulary should never shy away from using it, but he or she should not use it just to show off. Instead, let your vocabulary words lend you credibility and allow you to communicate precise thought. The "Speaker's Story" box (p. 320) shares the experience of one speaker who did exactly that.

Speakers with a limited vocabulary should work to increase their stock of words. They should not, however, use words that are not theirs to use. Pronouncing *incorrigible* as

A Speaker's Story

Precise Language = Precise Communication



In a presentation on the advances of stem-cell technology, Trina, a college sophomore, wanted to discuss the situation families sometimes face when religious views conflict with medical needs. She used the example of one couple whose 14-year-old son had heart disease. According to the doctors, a pilot treatment program using embryonic stem cells might help the boy, but the parents' religious beliefs made them deeply opposed to any research, much less any treatment that relied on stem cells.

Trina knew that the words *predicament*, *plight*, *dilemma*, and *quandary* all conveyed "an unpleasantly difficult, perplexing, or dangerous situation for which there is no clear or obvious way out." But which should she use when discussing this family's situation? A person with a rich vocabulary knows to use *predicament* to stress the unpleasant or embarrassing nature of the situation, *plight* to emphasize its danger, *dilemma* to highlight the difficulty of a choice between alternatives, and *quandary* to characterize the puzzling nature of the case. Trina, owner of an impressive vocabulary, knew the word *plight* would best describe the son's situation and *dilemma* the parents'. Because she knew the slight difference between the two words, she neatly communicated the point she was trying to make.



"in-ko-RIDGE-i-ble," for example, is a clear sign the speaker has lifted a word from somewhere without mastering its use. Speakers who use words that have no personal meaning create communication problems and commit a breach of ethics. If you come across a new word in your research, look up its definition and pronunciation and begin to practice with it. The word quickly becomes part of your vocabulary, and then it's yours to freely use.

Increasing your vocabulary is a lifelong task, but the payoff is considerable. A strong vocabulary is an asset in your roles as both a public speaker and a public listener. A large menu of words from which to choose allows you to express yourself more clearly and more precisely. A considerable vocabulary also provides you with a greater framework for interpreting the messages you receive. For example, you can more easily understand the concept of *Zeitgeist* (the ideas or trends characteristic of a time and place) when you have a word for it.

Speakers who use English as a second or third language face additional vocabulary challenges. Read about some of their struggles and strategies in the "Speaking of Culture" box.

20B

Be Accurate with Your Language

English is a complicated language, and using it accurately is difficult. But fair or not, your accuracy affects how audiences perceive your competence. One successful software sales rep-



Speaking of Culture

Expressing Myself

Ayumi (Japan)

"Because I'm still learning English, it was so frustrating that I couldn't always say what I wanted to say. The earlier, more personal speeches were easier than the researched speeches, but I sometimes felt that my audience thought I was a simple thinker. I'm obviously capable of complex expression in Japanese!"

Marleny (Panama)

"My English vocabulary is not that good yet, so my speeches sounded elementary. I don't know a lot of big words, and if I do, I'm afraid of mispronouncing them. I work hard to increase my vocabulary daily. I study and prepare to find the right words. I use them in my presentations, but because they are not yet natural for me to use, my speech doesn't always flow well."

Alex (Russia)

"I had spoken English for only four years when I took my public speaking class. I love the language, but unlike a native speaker, I can forget an English word at any minute. It added additional stress to my speeches."

representative who often speaks to large groups understands the importance of accurate grammar and pronunciation. He says, "We are talking large sums of money, and I cannot afford to look the least bit amateurish. The way I talk is a significant part of the whole sales package."

Don't stress over the need to be perfect. Most people make errors while speaking; we're human. The key is in how you manage them. Should you catch an error during your presentation, simply go back and correct the mistake, much as you would do in normal everyday

Essentials

Staying Inclusive with Your Language

- Recognize the ability of “-isms” to exclude and offend.
- Use slang only in certain circumstances. Be sure to define if necessary.
- Jargon can increase your credibility with others who use the same terminology. Define terms for nonusers.
- Avoid obscenities in most presentations. They can be used sparingly for certain effects.
- Define any big or cultural vocabulary words that listeners may not know.

conversation. Your audience will understand and accept without judging you. Missing your error or pretending it didn't happen, however, may lead your listeners to question your competence. Like good spelling, precision in speech must be something you value and practice. Commit to consciously monitoring your own language style on a daily basis. Accuracy in your everyday interactions translates to accuracy during your public presentations.

1. *Be grammatically correct*

English, like most other languages, is constantly evolving. Words and phrases once considered grammatically incorrect are today often uttered without making others wince. While “proper” grammar is still expected in most business and academic contexts, grammar rules may be more relaxed in other settings, such as informal community events. What's ultimately most important is that your language communicate to your intended audience.

Still, your perceived competence is an issue. The conversational patterns you rely on as a public speaker allow you to be a little bit looser with your grammar than you are in your writing. Few listeners, for example, would pick up on the occasional dangling modifier or incomplete sentence, but other instances of incorrect grammar stand out. You may want to check with your teacher, a mentor, or a supervisor for guidance on your grammatical accuracy. Knowing some of the common mistakes may help you avoid making them in contexts where accuracy is valued.

Remember to include *have* when needed

Correct

She had better contact me
I've seen it

Incorrect

She better contact me
I seen it

Use adjectives and adverbs correctly When pressed, most people know that adjectives, like *bright* and *fast*, modify nouns and pronouns, as in *bright morning* and *fast car*, and that adverbs, like *happily* and *quickly*, modify verbs (and adjectives and other adverbs), as in *laugh happily* and *run quickly*. Yet many speakers confuse the two.

- **Know the difference between *good* and *well*.** *Good* is an adjective (“the *good* dog,” “the licorice tastes *good*”). *Well* is an adverb (“she was eating *well* soon after the

surgery," "he skates really *well*"). Learn to juggle your adjectives and adverbs *well*; be a *good* juggler!

- **Use *bad* only as an adjective.** *Bad* should not describe an action; it is an adjective and can describe a noun: "that *bad* toupee." Rather than say "the car performed *bad* in the test drive," say "the car performed *poorly*" or "the car didn't perform *well*."
- **Know that the majority of adverbs end in *-ly*.** When teaching your audience the easy steps in that new dance, tell your listeners "they will learn these steps *easily*" (*easily* modifies just how simple the learning is), not that "they will learn them *easy*."

Beware of incorrect word choice Speakers who use the wrong word or use nonexistent words risk distracting or confusing their listeners.

- **Be careful with words that sound like other words but have different meanings.** If you say *illusion* instead of *allusion* or *effect* instead of *affect*, it may not have much consequence. But you should know the difference between them, and between *sympathy* and *empathy*, *antidote* and *anecdote*, *legislator* and *legislature*, *predominate* and *predominant*, and *afflict* and *inflict*, just to name a few. Imagine the credibility lost by the psychology student who kept referring to the *human conscious* (those awake?) instead of the *human conscience*. Dictionaries and websites are among the many sources for double-checking the meanings of your words. Go to them if you are the least bit unsure about the accuracy or pronunciation of any word.
- **Know the difference between *fewer* and *less*.** Use *fewer* when referring to specific amounts and *less* when referring to proportions or degrees. For example, "This test tube has *fewer* (countable) drops of solution, leaving it with *less* fluid (proportionally) than the others nearby" and "She likes you *less* (in regard to degree) because you have *fewer* attributes (countable) than her last date!"
- **Don't use words that don't exist.** There is no such thing as a person's *heighth*. The correct and only word is *height*. There are no such words as *drownded* or *asterick*; the words are *drowned* and *asterisk*. One speaker repeatedly used the term *virtualisticism*. Perhaps he thought it was a fancier term for *virtuality*, but it only created a distraction and decreased his credibility.
- **Don't be pretentious.** *Use* is a perfectly good verb. Is *utilize* necessary? *Try* is much clearer than *endeavor*. *Do* is more obvious than *effectuate*. Phrases, too, can make a speaker sound affected and self-important. Your audience may consider you wordy when you say *in view of the fact that* rather than the simpler *since*. And isn't it easier to *ask* than to *make an inquiry regarding*?

2. Pronounce words correctly

I was admiring her volumptuous shape from acrost the room when she obviously misinterpreted my glance and went totally nucular! She then called me the spit and image of an orangatang. I guess that's her prerogative.

This sentence humorously highlights poor pronunciation (or as some people mistakenly say, *pronounciation*), but correct pronunciation is a serious matter for public speakers. **Pronunciation** is the way you form the sound of a word—where the stress is and how many syllables there are. Like incorrect grammar, incorrect or sloppy pronunciation draws undue attention, creates a distraction, and diminishes your credibility, affecting the overall listenability of your presentation.

Habit is often the cause of poor pronunciation. Just because you say *ax* today doesn't mean you can't correctly say *ask* tomorrow. *Athalete* is properly *athlete*; delete the second syllable. *Ex cetera* becomes *et cetera* when the *x* is corrected to a *t*. For most people, correcting mispronunciations is just a matter of realizing their mistakes.

Unfamiliar words and proper nouns are other major sources of pronunciation trouble. If you come upon an unfamiliar word like *inchoate*, *archipelago*, or *equivocal* in your research and want to incorporate it into your speech, learn and practice its correct pronunciation. Names for specific people such as *Mahmoud Ahmadinejad* and *Moqtada al-Sadr* and locations including *Nasiriyah* and *Kirkuk* have unique pronunciations. If you were giving a biographical speech about the late Pope John Paul II, would you know how to pronounce his given name, *Karol Wojtyła*? How would you pronounce the Welsh region of *Bwlch*?

Whether your incorrect pronunciation comes from habit or unfamiliarity, assistance awaits. Ask trusted friends, mentors, or teachers to point out any pronunciation errors you make (and don't get defensive when they do). Pay attention to the way respected media figures pronounce their words. Numerous websites feature commonly mispronounced words and their correct pronunciations. Dictionaries contain a preferred pronunciation for each entry. Use these resources freely.

20C

Let the Personality of Your Language Emerge

While inclusive and accurate language is critical to your speaking effectiveness, there's room for the personality of your language to emerge and play a positive role in your public presentations. One way to add individual vibrancy is to incorporate figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, and alliteration. These are defined and discussed on [pages 480–481](#). Another way is to lend your cultural and personal style to your speeches. Part of the United States' national richness comes from the wide range of ways its people use language. Not only are most of the world's languages spoken here among families and communities, but the styles of English, our common language, vary as well.

Waiting dinner, the Mon, yunz, slippy, all the further—if these words and phrases mean anything to you, chances are good you speak Pittsburghese, a subdialect of English unique to residents of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Technically, each of us speaks a dialect of English. Sometimes mistakenly referred to as an accent, a **dialect** is a version of a language made up of variations in syntax (sentence structure), pronunciation, grammar rules, pacing, rhythm, word choice, and expressions. Some common English dialects include Boston Urban, Hudson Valley, Upper Midwestern, Chicago Urban, Coastal Southern, and Gulf Southern. Subdialects include Hip Hop, Surfer, Spanglish, and Bawlamerese (from Baltimore).⁵

The dialect you speak derives from a complex combination of your geography, social class, culture, and family influences. Some people speak one dialect throughout their lives,

A Speaker's Story

Bill Clinton's Dialect Switching

“

U.S. presidents are often studied for their ability to change their language style when needed for strategic or symbolic purposes. Here are some excerpts from two speeches given by Bill Clinton, one an inaugural address to the nation and the other a campaign speech in the South. Italicized words indicate Clinton's switch from a more formal, “standard” speaking style to a more casual, “Southern” style. Note the amount of them in each example.



Many speakers have the ability to alter the style of their English. Can you? Is dialect switching an effective or disingenuous public communication tool?

Inaugural Address

- “*Ma* fellow citizens.”
- “Today we celebrate the mystery of American renewal.”
- “This ceremony is held in the depth of winter. But, by the words we speak and the faces we show the world, we force the spring.”

Campaign Speech in the South

- “You have to *disayd* [decide] *wheder* we’re *gonna* build a bridge to the future *ar* [or] try to build a bridge to the *payst*.”
- “You have to *disayd wheder* we’re *gonna* say to *folks* ‘you’re on your own’ or *wheder* we’re *gonna* say ‘yes it does *tayke* a village to raise our children and build our future.’”
- “Four years ago *ah* [I] came to Daytona Beach amid a *tam* [time] of *ha* [high] unemployment, rising frustration, and increasing division.”

In your opinion, was Clinton's dialect switching smart speaking?

Source: “Do You Speak Presidential?” from *Do You Speak American?* <http://www.pbs.org/speak/seatosea/standardamerican/presidential> (accessed August 9, 2005).

”

while others change their dominant dialect or adopt a new one after moving to a new place, entering a different social network, or joining an occupational field. Many people are bi- or multidialectal, able to switch between dialects depending on the occasion or audience. The “Speaker's Story” box above shares some examples of one famous speaker's ability to change dialects.

Did You Know?

Dialect Notes for the Public Speaker

- Standard American English is the preferred dialect for many mainstream presentations.
- Other dialects, even nonstandard ones, can be used successfully by the right person in a particular context. A person's ability to use a dialect brands him or her as an insider, in tune with the people in the audience and the ideas they care about.
- Context and audience analysis are essential when choosing which dialect to use.
- Never fake a dialect. Your ability to communicate and your credibility suffer when you are perceived to be trying too hard. You also run the risk of offending true speakers of the dialect.
- Each person using a dialect also speaks an **idiolect**, a way of speaking that makes one stand out among other speakers of the dialect. Idiolects are linguistic fingerprints, consisting of the unique word choices, groupings of words, pronunciation, intonations, rhythm, and pacing that one incorporates when speaking a given dialect. Do not hesitate to use special vocabularies you know and to display personal flair or cultural or ethnic linguistic qualities while speaking in public. Your expressed individuality helps an audience connect to you. It also helps them remember you and your ideas.
- Because dialects and idiolects are directly tied to identity, emotions can run high when others make subjective judgments about the way we speak. Understand that if instructors or supervisors give you feedback, they are usually sharing with you an impression of how well you are meeting "correct" Standard American English; it is not a personal attack.

From a linguistics perspective, all dialects are equal—none is inferior or superior to another. Still, listeners make social judgments about speakers of certain dialects. Speakers of Received Standard (the British dialect spoken by the BBC and the royal family) enjoy high prestige (in both Britain and the United States), whereas speakers of some U.S. southern and mountain dialects do not. Standard American English is the dialect considered the "correct" form of English in the United States and is the one taught in most schools, used by mainstream media figures, and valued in the business world. A speaker who said *she put she hat on she head* would probably be viewed with doubt or suspicion in a context where Standard American English was valued; the same speaker, however, would be well within the rules of the West Indian dialect spoken in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The "Did You Know?" box above shares further insights about dialects and provides some relevant guidelines for public speakers.

Summary

- Monitor your use of “-isms,” slang, jargon, obscenities, and big or cultural vocabulary words to ensure the inclusiveness of your language. Inclusive language tells all potential listeners that they are respected and welcomed equally.
- Accurate grammar and pronunciation increase your perceived credibility and help an audience take your message more seriously.
- There is room for the personality of your language, in the form of dialects and idiolects, to play a role in the effective public speech.



L I S T E N A B I L I T Y : R E M E M B E R T H I S S T Y L E K E Y

Your listeners hear more than just what you say. The words you choose also cause them to draw conclusions about your values, attitudes, and beliefs. Use language that shows your respect for others and for yourself. It's more likely to invite listeners in and keep them interacting with your message.

EXERCISES

1. *It was a story that made headlines. Michael Richards (Kramer of Seinfeld fame) was in the middle of a comedy act in late 2006 when he began using extremely racist language. After watching the video (find it on YouTube with the search words racist kramer), discuss as a class. While stand-up comedy is a different medium than public speaking, it's still a form of public communication. Begin your discussion with the following questions:*
 - What could Richards have been thinking when he began his tirade?
 - Why did some people in the audience laugh at first?
 - The reaction of the audience quickly changed. Discuss. What would you have done if you were in the audience that night?
 - Richards finally leaves the stage muttering, “You see, there’s still those words, those words . . .” What do you think he meant?
 - The media reaction to Richards was swift and negative. Many people thought he had lost his right to be an entertainer. What do you think?
 - Although Richards’s tirade was also filled with hard-core obscenities, the racist comments got the majority of the attention. What does this say, if anything, about obscenities?
2. *Spend some time with a thesaurus before your next speech. See whether you can learn any new words that more precisely communicate your ideas. Leave room for practice to attain ownership of your new vocabulary. Do you think you’ll have to define the words for your audience?*

3. *California Congressman Bob Filner used profanity during a news briefing that criticized the Department of Veterans Affairs for not acting quickly enough after a burglary in which the personal information of about 26.5 million military personnel was stolen. Read the article in USA Today (http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-06-13-va-data-theft_x.htm). Was Filner justified in using the profanity? Was it appropriate? Why do you think he used it?*
4. *Make a list of the dialects spoken by those in the class. Note and give examples of the differences in word choice, syntax, rhythm, and pace. If the group speaks mainly one dialect, dissect it to understand its unique characteristics.*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 21

Communicating with Your Voice

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Public speaking was a challenge for me in the beginning. As an only child and a quiet person overall, I’ve never had to speak loudly to get attention. I thought I was speaking at a normal volume during my first few speeches, but my instructor and even a few classmates told me that they struggled to hear me. I didn’t want to give anyone an excuse to not listen to me, so I really made a point of increasing my volume. On my later speeches, I felt as if I was practically yelling, but the feedback I got contained positive comments about how it was much better that I could now be heard.”

“When I first heard myself talking on the video, I wanted to crawl into the nearest cave! My speech was absolutely littered with verbal junk. Uh, like, OK, y’know, like, like, like! I guess that’s the way I talk, and when I was finally forced to pay attention to it, I was so embarrassed by the impression I was giving. My instructor encouraged me to start paying attention to the way I talked during my daily interactions and to consciously work at eliminating this junk. It really wasn’t hard once I put my mind to it. And although I still had a few uhs in my final speeches, no one really notices those.



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

Use your vocal qualities to support and complement your verbal messages.

21A**Understand the Role of Your Voice****21B****Know the Ways Listeners Interpret Meaning from Your Vocal Qualities**

1. *Emotional tone*
2. *Volume*
3. *Fluency*
4. *Articulation*
5. *Pace*
6. *Pitch and inflection*

Key Terms

articulation	▶ 335
disfluency	▶ 332
emotional tone	▶ 332
fluency	▶ 334
inflection	▶ 337
monopitch, or monotone	▶ 337
pace	▶ 336
paralanguage	▶ 331
pitch	▶ 337
uptalk	▶ 338
verbal junk	▶ 332
volume	▶ 333

Though audiences listen to *what* you are saying, the truth is they decode much of your message from the *way* you talk. Every time you speak, whether in daily conversation or in a public setting, vocal qualities such as tone, volume, and inflection interact with your words and create meaning. Human listeners are extremely skilled in detecting these nonverbal qualities in the voices of others. Be aware of your vocal qualities and learn, if necessary, to modify them. This chapter explores the influence your vocal qualities have on your ability to deliver a listener-friendly speech that supports the message you want to give.

21A

Understand the Role of Your Voice

Some aspects of the public speaker's voice are purely functional. You need to speak at an appropriate volume, for example, because if listeners can't hear you, they can't interact with your ideas. An understandable pace is also important, because your audience members, especially nonnative speakers of the language, need to first identify the words you are using before they can interpret them and actively listen.

The qualities of your voice also play a communicative role. They're considered a type of nonverbal communication because they themselves (in addition to the words) create meaning. Vocal qualities make up a nonverbal category called **paralanguage**. The prefix *para* here means "to assist." Much like a paralegal assists lawyers, paralanguage assists in the creation of meaning in your language. To see paralanguage at work, take the sentence *I really believe it*. By changing only the qualities of your voice, try to create the meanings given in the parentheses.

- *I really believe it.* ("You may not believe it, but I certainly do.")
- *I really believe it.* ("I truly, truly do!")
- *I really believe it.* ("I don't just think it. I believe it.")
- *I really believe it.* ("Yeah, right! Do you think I'm stupid?")
- *I really believe it.* ("It's going to happen . . . it's going to happen . . . I just know it is.")

As your audience listens to the ways you vocalize your messages, they interpret things about you, your ideas, and the way you feel about them as an audience. Ideally, your vocal qualities support and complement the words in your presentation:

- An animated tone and upbeat pace confirm your enthusiasm as you discuss your passion and interest in your given topic.
- A confident tone and healthy volume help your audience perceive you as credible and secure as you list your credentials and cite your research sources.
- Are you genuinely angry about the injustice you are revealing? Communicating that emotion in your voice increases the chance that your listeners will sense it too.
- Do you sound authentically listener-centered when you explain the relevance of your ideas?

Just as vocal qualities can complement and enhance, they can also contradict your words, leading to incorrect interpretations and unintended consequences. Obviously, unintended vocal contradictions don't help you reach your intended communicative goals.

- You may intend sincerity, but if sarcasm creeps into your voice, listeners make an entirely different interpretation than you planned.
- If your speech includes many **disfluencies**—disruptions in the flow of words—listeners often infer a lack of confidence or preparation. Disfluencies include stumblings, hesitations, and **verbal junk** such as *uh*, *like*, and *um*.
- A timid delivery, even of passionate words, won't go far in rousing an audience to action.

Every word you speak during your public presentation is wrapped in vocal qualities. Though you don't want to choreograph the vocal delivery of your speech, be mindful of the influence your voice has on your audience and, ultimately, on the success of your speech.

Your instructor can point out the qualities of your voice that enhance your listenability and those that distract or give out contradictory messages. Your own post-speech self-evaluation is also beneficial. You need to first be aware of any distracting vocal tendencies before you can make the right adjustments. In the end, *you're* the one who has control over the way you sound to others.

21B

Know the Ways Listeners Interpret Meaning from Your Vocal Qualities

Most listeners are in tune with and skilled at decoding human vocal qualities, even if they aren't always doing it at a fully conscious level. The most listenable vocal qualities for public presentations are those you use naturally in conversations you consider important. Though every individual communicator is different, chances are you speak up with confidence, articulate clearly, and vary your inflection when speaking to someone you respect. These are the qualities you want in your speeches.

The human voice is shaded by emotional tone, volume, fluency, articulation, pace, pitch, and inflection. This section looks at each vocal quality separately and helps you solve some common vocal problems.

1. Emotional tone

Presentational speakers must be mindful of their **emotional tone**, that quality of the voice that communicates emotions. Your voice has powerful and wide-ranging emotive capabilities, and you should not hold back on them. Employ a tone of confidence, friendliness, openness, and respect while speaking. Your audience should respond positively. If you're discussing something that frustrates, saddens, or exhilarates you, let that frustration, sadness, or exhilaration be heard. Of course, you don't want to choreograph or overact your emotions; that makes audiences cringe. But don't purposely dampen your emotions for the sake of some assumed public speaking propriety. It's natural to communicate emotions vocally. Feel free to do so in your presentations.

While your emotional tone can enhance your message, it can also contradict it, and this can be problematic. One speaker found this to be true. Read about her experience in the "Speaker's Story" box (🔍 p. 334).

Your practice sessions are the place to get in tune with the emotional rhythms of your ideas. Identify the varying emotions in the different passages of your speech, and let those emotions be communicated honestly during delivery. Overall, you want your vocal tone to appropriately complement and support the emotional content of your ideas.

2. Volume

Volume refers to how loud or how soft your voice is. It's one of the most important qualities of your voice. Due to the way sound reverberates in your head, it's not always easy to monitor your own volume; you can sound different to yourself than you do to others.

For a variety of biological or cultural reasons, some people have soft voices and must consciously work at increasing their volume. Listeners may be willing initially to work at hearing a quiet speaker, but after a while, many will give up trying. On the other hand, some voices boom out and make listeners uneasy. That's why it's so helpful to get feedback about your volume from a teacher or trusted friend. Most speakers and listeners in public conversation find loudness in the medium range to be most effective.

Here are some common volume issues to remember:

- **Consider the speaking space.** Find a volume loud enough to be heard but not so intense that your audience shrinks back in their seats. What works in a small conference room may not work in a larger lecture hall and vice versa.
- **Watch the ends of your sentences.** Maintain your volume as you near the ends of your sentences. Some speakers begin their sentences in a nice strong voice, only to finish them weakly or even inaudibly.



Get in tune with the emotional rhythms of your message, and let that emotion surface naturally in your voice. What do you think the speaker's emotional tone sounds like in each of these images?

A Speaker's Story

My Vocal Contradiction



Paulette was concerned when her speech on one polygamist sect's tendency to marry off underage girls to older men didn't get the response she had anticipated. The applause was light, and the lack of comments or questions indicated that her audience didn't see this situation with the same gravity she did. She hoped her post-speech evaluation would unveil the problem. It did. Paulette quickly identified her contradictory emotional tone as the culprit. She tells the rest.

While I was organized and talked knowledgeably about the illegality of these marriages under state law and about how the young women involved were often unwilling partners, which is pretty serious stuff, my relatively happy-go-lucky, light emotional tone created a disconnect. I think what happened was that I was personally relating to the material in an intellectual way only. I had not authentically made a personal emotional connection to the perpetrators, the victims, or the injustice I perceived. So I can see how my listeners tuned in more to my (inappropriate) emotional tone than they did to my message. After all, if I wasn't expressing concern, why should they?



- **Consider using a microphone.** Many speakers like using microphones. They allow for normal intonation and expression; without them, many speakers have to exert extra energy just to be heard. Microphones, however, can be tricky; each kind behaves differently depending on the technology and the speaking space. If you're using a microphone, get to the room early enough to test out your voice on that particular device. Bring along a trusted friend, or ask the technician to help you find the proper distance from the microphone to achieve an appropriate speaking volume.

3. Fluency

Fluency refers to the smoothness of your language delivery, how the words and sentences flow together. Most people have some natural pauses and hesitations in their speech, but an excessively uneven and jerky delivery leads to an awkward, choppy-sounding presentation. When your words come out in chunks . . . a few at a time . . . with lots of verbal trips and . . . delays in between, your listeners may wonder whether you gave any prior thought to what you wanted to say. They may question your degree of ownership.

Most speakers aim for as fluent a delivery as possible. Try to avoid choppiness and excessive verbal interruptions such as *um*, *uh*, and *OK*. You sound more credible when your words

flow easily and effortlessly from your mouth. Your practice sessions go a long way toward smoothing your delivery. Familiarizing yourself with your ideas through practice helps them flow gracefully during your actual presentation.

Here are some common fluency issues to consider:

- **The silent pause.** Novelist Margaret Halsey once said, “Some people talk simply because they think sound is more manageable than silence.” Public speakers, however, should not fear the silent pause. Most communicators pause momentarily while thinking of a word or deliberating how to phrase an idea—nearly all of us do this. In fact, pauses can add drama to a presentation. Your listeners may even appreciate a pause, as it gives them time to catch up, think about your ideas, add an internal comment, or jot down notes. Of course, too many long and extended pauses throughout a speech can be interpreted as a lack of preparation, but a silent pause now and then is a natural part of communicating.
- **Verbal junk.** Overcoming a reliance on verbal junk is a struggle for many speakers. Every *um*, *uh*, *like*, *OK*, and *y’know* seems to be magnified, audible for miles around. Have you ever been so distracted by a speaker’s loud and excessive *OKs* that you focused on them instead of interacting with his or her ideas? Do you think the speaker wanted you to do this?

Your instructor and your own self-evaluations are helpful in pointing out any use of verbal junk. A few *uhs* and an occasional *like* are rarely noticed—many communicators commonly use them—but if you suffer from intensely pronounced *ums* or a disproportionate amount of *y’knows*, then you want to work on decreasing, if not eliminating, them. Be mindful of your use of verbal junk during your daily interactions. Once you begin noticing a particular disfluency, aim to replace it with silence. You should be pleasantly surprised to see how quickly the junk decreases once you put your mind to it.

4. Articulation

Articulation refers to how clearly you produce individual speech sounds. Some common examples of poor articulation are:

- *didja* instead of *did you*
- *wanna* instead of *want to*
- *gonna* instead of *going to*

Some poor articulation is biologically related, and when these speakers present to an audience, most listeners are highly understanding and accepting. But most poor articulation is heard from those who *can* articulate but, through habit or laziness, choose not to. Poor or sloppy articulation can make listening a struggle for your audience. Unlike a conversational partner who can interrupt to clarify what you said, your listening audience has only one opportunity to hear your words. And you want them to hear what you intend. If you’re a communicator who does not always take care with the production of speech sounds in everyday interactions, avoid this tendency in your public presentations. You don’t want to risk losing your audience.

Here are some common articulation problems:

- **Mumbling.** Mumbling happens when you speak quietly or indistinctly, without using your teeth, lips, and tongue as much as is necessary to produce the correct speech sounds. Some speakers say *Pleazholonasecon, yer gonna need ta goda da liberry an ass fer Brannen* rather than *Please hold on a second, you're going to need to go to the library and ask for Brandon*.
- **Saying the wrong word.** Some speakers say *baste* instead of *paste*; *pitcher* instead of *picture*; *bays* instead of *beige*; *tick* rather than *thick*.
- **Losing word endings.** Some speakers tend to drop the final *d*, *t*, or *ing*. They say *tole* rather than *told*; *wah* instead of *what*; *doin* instead of *doing*.

Here are some tips for improving your articulation. Paying attention to your articulation during your everyday interactions translates into better articulation for your presentations.

- Ask a trusted friend to privately point out sloppy articulation habits—and then do your best not to get defensive when it happens!
- Pay attention to the speech habits of radio news reporters and announcers. They rely on clear articulation for their livelihood and make great role models for this purpose. Stage actors and narrators who do advertising voice-overs offer other good examples to listen to.
- Check the way you position the speech-producing parts of your body. Are you opening your mouth wide enough to get that *ow* sound out to make *our* sound different from *are*? Are your lips rounded forward enough to make a nice *sh*? Is your tongue coming off the top of your mouth forcefully enough to produce a crisp *t*?
- Overarticulated speech is distracting. Be careful of going to extremes. You want to sound like yourself, not like a robot.

5. Pace

Pace is the speed at which you produce language. Most people naturally alter their pace, depending on the topic and the listener. Pay attention to your rate of speech during the next twenty-four hours and notice, for example, if you speak more quickly with good friends and more slowly with customers at work. The average speaker in normal conversation uses roughly 125 to 150 words per minute. This is a good pace for presentations, too, because listeners are used to it.

Speakers whose pace is too slow or too fast risk losing their audiences. Here's why.

- **Overly slow pace.** An overly slow pace invites your listeners to mentally check out. Rather than put forth the energy to listen to you, they think about their to-do list or a personal problem. Or they feel patronized. You don't want listeners thinking, *Why is she speaking to me as if I were a child?*
- **Overly fast pace.** You don't want your audience distracted by your tongue gymnastics! A speaker who races through his or her speech is typically manifesting a high degree of speaker's energy or relying on habit. If your instructor, a friend, or your own self-evaluation makes you aware of an overly rapid pace, work to slow it down. Remember: your listeners are hearing your speech for the first time. You know the material; they don't. Effective communicators take note of the degree of difficulty of their material and use a pace appropriate to helping the audience understand it.

Essentials

The Qualities of Your Voice

- Emotional tone—the aspect of your voice that communicates emotions
- Volume—how loud or how soft your voice is
- Fluency—the smoothness of your language delivery
- Articulation—the way you produce speech sounds
- Pace—the speed at which you produce your language
- Pitch—how high or how low your voice is, as on a musical scale
- Inflection—the manipulation of pitch to communicate a specific meaning

6. Pitch and inflection

Your **pitch** refers to how high or how low your voice is, as on a musical scale, whereas **inflection** refers to the manipulation of that pitch to communicate a specific meaning. To get a better understanding of the power of inflection, manipulate the word *so* in a way that communicates the following messages in parentheses:

- So. (“That’s where you’ve been all this time!”)
- So. (“Who cares?”)
- So. (“I guess it’s going to happen whether we like it or not.”)
- So. (“And what comes after that? Go ahead, I want to know.”)
- So. (“I’m embarrassed to say what I did, but I’ll tell you anyway.”)

Most speakers in everyday conversation use a comfortable, medium pitch and vary their inflection in appropriately communicative ways. Public speakers should naturally do the same. Here are some common pitch and inflection issues to consider:

- **A narrow pitch range.** A **monopitch**, or **monotone**, is a voice with little to no variety of inflection, in which every . . . word . . . sounds . . . the . . . same. A speaker with a narrow pitch range is a challenge to listen to no matter how interesting his or her message is. Find your internal energy, and let the natural communicative lilt of your voice come through during your public presentations.
- **A high and squeaky voice.** On occasion, an increased level of speaker’s energy may cause your throat muscles to tense, resulting in a high and squeaky pitch. Medium to medium-low voices are the most credible and the easiest for most people to listen to. If need be, you can learn to lower your pitch. Before speaking, take some deep breaths and picture your throat muscles relaxed, wide, and open.
- **Repeated inflections.** One distracting inflection is choppiness, when a speaker ends every sentence curtly, as if chopping off the end of every idea with a sharp ax.

Did You Know?

Uptalk

Once the mark of Texas sorority women and San Fernando Valley girls, uptalk is everywhere, from teenagers at the mall to managers in the boardroom, from Australia to the UK.

Diane DiResta, a communications training coach, notes that uptalk is used for several reasons. Habit is one. Many people have been uptalking for so long that they don't even hear themselves doing it. A second reason, especially for young people, is the need to identify with peers. Uptalk provides a way to sound like cool people in the media or like one's peers instead of one's family. Finally, feelings of insecurity may spur uptalk. Says DiResta, "In our politically correct environment people are becoming less willing to take a stand. By using 'safe words' and a rising inflection, the speaker can easily back-pedal or soften the real intent of the message. A fear of rejection may show up in the form of uptalk."

Deborah Tannen, a linguistics professor at Georgetown University, sees little harm in uptalk. "I think teenagers tend to pick this up simply because other teens talk like that and it's catchy and makes them feel good that they're talking like their friends," she says. "Most give it up when they get older and don't want to sound like teenagers anymore."

But others do see harm. DiResta is blunt. "Uptalk renders the speaker weak, tentative, lacking conviction and authority. How can a person influence, lead, or command respect if they can't take a stand and sound like they mean it?" Uptalk, she continues, suggests to the listener that there are other options. Mary-Ellen Drummond, another communications consultant, agrees. Women, especially when operating in the business world, make themselves vulnerable when using uptalk. Drummond says, "If women always sound like they're asking for approval or agreement, they seem less sure of themselves."

Educators, linguists, and consultants seem to agree that though uptalk is harmless while hanging out with friends, there is little value in using it when you want to be taken seriously. If you want to sound more authoritative and confident, as you do during a public speech, bring your voice down at the end of a declarative sentence. Know what you stand for, believe what you believe, and communicate those convictions in your voice!

Sources: Matt Seaton, "Word Up," *The Guardian*, September 21, 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk> (accessed November 6, 2007); Diane DiResta, "Does Uptalk Make You Upchuck?" http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Diane_DiResta (accessed November 6, 2007).

Uptalk, in which speakers end statements with an upward inflection as if it were a question—*you know, like this?*—is another such problem. See the "Did You Know?" box above for an expanded discussion.

Summary

- The qualities of your voice—emotional tone, volume, fluency, articulation, pace, pitch, and inflection—support the words you use. They are known collectively as paralanguage and are considered nonverbal communication because the vocal qualities themselves create meaning.
- The most effective presentations, on average, are those in which speakers use vocal qualities to support and complement their words.
- Speakers can learn to monitor the effectiveness of their vocal qualities and, if necessary, shape and alter them for added value.



L I S T E N A B I L I T Y : R E M E M B E R T H I S S T Y L E K E Y

You know that your listeners make meaning from *how* you say what you say. Speak up, vary your inflection, and authentically communicate your emotions. An engaging use of your vocal qualities helps you reach your audience and effectively get your point across.

EXERCISES

1. During the next round of speeches, choose one speaker and focus specifically on his or her use of emotional tone. Take notes on the speaker's ability to communicate his or her natural emotions as they relate to the ideas being shared. Were the emotions apparent? Appropriate? Genuinely communicated? Effective? Write up a brief post-speech analysis, and give it to the speaker.
2. Sit back-to-back with another student in order to communicate with each other using only your voice. Take turns reading paragraphs from any source while focusing on your articulation. Create a code (a beep, a knock, a tap) for the listener to use when he or she detects an articulation problem. The speaker must then go back and repeat the word or sentence until the listener is satisfied that the articulation problem has cleared up.
3. Take any paragraph in this chapter, and read it aloud three times, using a different pitch each time. Was it easy to manipulate your pitch? Which pitch is the most comfortable for you? Which do you think listeners would prefer?
4. Pair up with another student. Create a fifteen- to twenty-second skit in which the only words are the names of the two characters. The challenge is to convey your plot through vocal qualities and body movements only. Here's an example:

Bert (in an increasingly louder whisper to a sleeping Ernie): Ernie. Ernie! ERNIE!

Ernie (wondering why he's being woken): Bert?

Bert (still whispering while pointing to the window, indicating a burglar in the backyard): Errrrrnieeeee!

Ernie (now awake and frightened): Berrrrrt!!!

Bert (attempting to calm Ernie, but still whispering): Ernie. Ernie.

Ernie (feeling less frightened, but questioning as if what to do): Bert?

Bert (counting to three on his fingers, then running out the door while dramatically beckoning Ernie to follow): ERNIE!!!

Ernie (while running out the door in the same direction): BERT!!!!!!



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 22

Communicating with Your Body

REAL STUDENTS

REAL WORDS

“I struggled with eye contact the first half of the term. I don’t know why, but it was much easier to stare off in the distance rather than look at all those eyes staring back at me. As the speeches continue, I’m getting better at it, though I’m not where I know I eventually want to be. I still can’t say what I had been afraid of, but I’m going to keep working on this business of eye contact.”

“The saying about your actions speaking louder than your words pretty much sums up the role of your body during the public speech.”

KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER			
STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	SUPPORT	STYLE Let your body help communicate your message.

22A

Understand the Role of Nonverbal Communication

1. *Defining nonverbal communication*
2. *Adapting to cultural differences*

22B

Know the Ways Listeners Interpret Meaning from Your Body Movements

1. *Eye contact*
2. *Facial expressions*
3. *Posture*
4. *Gestures*

22C

Know the Ways Listeners Interpret Meaning from Your Body Placement

1. *Physical distance*
2. *Body orientation*

22D

Adapt for Speakers with Disabilities

1. *Notes for the speaker with a disability*
2. *Notes for audience members*
3. *Notes for the speech host*

Key Terms

body orientation	▶ 353
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Audience members listen with their ears *and* their eyes. Their ears pick up your language, tone of voice, and any sound support used. Their eyes, however, take in everything your body is doing—and you communicate with your body more than you may realize. This chapter examines the many ways public speakers communicate with their bodies and the influence these nonverbal behaviors have on listenability. Effective speakers let their bodies move naturally, much as they do during everyday important conversations. You'll also read about the value of mindfulness and of analyzing the impact your body has on your audience and, ultimately, on the effectiveness of your speech.

22A

Understand the Role of Nonverbal Communication

1. *Defining nonverbal communication*

Nonverbal communication is communication without words. You want to study nonverbal communication because of the large role it plays in your presentations. Though *what* you say when presenting is obviously important, listeners interpret as much, if not more, meaning from *how* you say what you say with your body and with your voice. In fact, studies show that anywhere from 65 to 93 percent of a sender's message is conveyed and interpreted through nonverbal channels.¹

Listeners attach meaning to how you move your body, whether those movements are intentional or unintentional. It's easy to envision the difference between two speakers, both with the exact same verbal message. One keeps her eyes stuck to her notes, shifts her weight from foot to foot, plays with her hair, and exhibits a variety of bewildered facial expressions. The other looks at her audience while speaking, stands comfortably, gestures naturally, and smiles. Common sense says that most listeners prefer the second presenter. Yet speakers, especially those new to the art, frequently display one or more of the distracting actions of the first speaker. These behaviors are often the result of inexperience and unmanaged speaker's energy.

The good news is that even beginning speakers can hold their bodies comfortably, naturally, and effectively. And studying a long list of nonverbal dos and don'ts is not required. Instead, rely on what you already do well. You've been using your body during the countless communication interactions you've had throughout your life, and most likely a good number of effective nonverbal behaviors are already ingrained in your muscle memory. For example, you know how to look others in the eye, you know how to move your hands for emphasis, and you know how to freely express emotions on your face. Actors have to plan, remember, and execute specific body movements while on stage, but public speakers do not. Concentrate on communicating your important message. Your body should naturally follow along.

Nonetheless, speakers find it helpful in their post-speech evaluations to analyze what their bodies say and do. Sometimes, excessive speaker's energy causes you to do things—like repeatedly scratch your arm, tap your notes on the lectern, or swing your foot—that you are unaware of but that send contradictory messages or distract your audience. A visual recording is tremendously helpful for reminding you what you were doing—and not doing—during

your presentation. Your instructor may point out these behaviors, too. Once you are aware of the messages your body is sending, you can make adjustments if necessary.

2. Adapting to cultural differences

People from different cultures use and interpret nonverbal behaviors differently. From hand gestures to eye contact to the distance we stand from others, our own culture provides us with a vocabulary of silent behaviors that speak loudly during our communication interactions. Other than a few facial expressions that appear to be interpreted the same around the world (including happiness, grief, and anger),² most nonverbal behaviors make immediate sense to cultural insiders but can mean something else, or absolutely nothing, to outsiders. For example, George H. W. Bush learned this lesson the hard way during his presidency when he flashed the “peace” sign to an Australian audience. Instead of keeping the front of his hand toward the audience, he unwittingly turned his hand back and forth a few times. Unfortunately, the backwards version of this gesture is an obscenity in Australia!³

Most speakers present before audiences who share their culture; you shouldn’t have too many problems with nonverbal misinterpretations. If you find yourself before an audience from a different culture, however, you may need to adjust. For instance, Mimi, a student from Ethiopia studying in the United States, struggled with eye contact nearly the entire term. In her home culture, eye contact between men and women is considered inappropriate. Intellectually, she knew that her U.S. audience of men and women expected eye contact, yet making it happen required a conscious leap, one she worked hard to achieve. The “Speaking of Culture” box (◀ p. 345) shares some nonverbal challenges faced by students from other cultures.

If you need to present in front of an audience from a culture or co-culture different from your own, research appropriate nonverbal behaviors beforehand. You not only want to increase the chance of your message reaching your listeners as you intend it, but you want to save yourself and your audience from potential confusion or embarrassment. Many books, websites, consultants, and other resources exist for researching the nonverbal behaviors of other cultures.⁴

22B

Know the Ways Listeners Interpret Meaning from Your Body Movements

The category of nonverbal communication encompassing body movements is called **kinesics**, and it includes subcategories of eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and gestures.

1. Eye contact

Eye contact communicates several messages The human eye possesses great communicative power, and indeed, your audience interprets things about you and your message by what you do and say with your eyes.

- **Eye contact says that you want to communicate.** Most importantly, direct eye contact with your mainstream U.S. audience conveys your desire to communicate your ideas and your degree of ownership of the material.



Speaking of Culture

Nonverbal Differences

Marleny (Panama)

"The stress on eye contact made me nervous. At home, students look at the teachers, but an instructor who gives you too much eye contact wants something from you! Here, I initially thought people were looking at me to try to see my errors. That was hard to get used to, and I'm still not comfortable with it. The encouragement to use gestures was also hard to deal with. Panamanians are generally reserved people; we only gesture when we're upset."

Arelí (Mexico)

"We don't use as much eye contact in Mexico, but I've learned to value it here. You can actually feel more secure, like you're giving a sincere opinion. It hasn't been easy, but I realize I make a much better audience connection when I look people in the eye."

Reem (Syria)

"I found myself relying more than usual on gestures, because I didn't always have the words I needed to fully express myself. And there are still a lot of American gestures I don't understand. Those 'quote' movements people make with their fingers on both hands . . . I still don't get that."

- **Eye contact says that you are prepared.** Simply put, the more you prepare during your practice, the more likely you are to keep your eyes on your listeners during the actual presentation. Audience members notice the degree of your eye contact and are more inclined to stay with you if you look at them. Don't give your listeners an easy excuse to check out by allowing them to assume that you're not prepared.

- **Eye contact conveys sincerity, honesty, and confidence.** Mainstream U.S. culture teaches us to look one another in the eye when being sincere and truthful. Direct eye contact increases the chances of your audience judging you as sincere and trustworthy, two qualities important to your credibility. Eye contact also speaks to your degree of confidence. A speaker who has trouble getting his or her eye contact to land on the audience may be perceived as shifty or having something to hide.
- **Eye contact helps build rapport.** Eye contact acts as a bonding device between speaker and audience, conveying the degree of **immediacy**, or liking, you feel toward your listeners. Your direct eye contact tells your audience that you're interested in them and respect them. This increases the chance they'll be interested in you and your ideas in return.

Eye contact provides additional benefits

- **Eye contact allows you to read your audience for feedback.** You have a better chance of reading feedback when your eyes are on your audience. An increased level of speaker's energy may make it difficult for you to see—much less actively monitor—your listeners' feedback during your first few speeches, but nearly all speakers soon reach the point of being able to comfortably see and react to what their audiences are telling them.
- **Eye contact can reduce excess speaker's energy.** Owning your material well enough to make eye contact with your listeners is a great way to boost your confidence. Melissa, a first-year student, sums it up well:

Better eye contact was my personal goal for my second speech, so I made a conscious effort to make eye contact with the members of my practice audience, making it feel natural for me to do so in front of my real audience. I was surprised that the eye contact actually helped to reduce my excess speaker's energy.

I found that looking into the eyes of interested audience members made me think, Maybe these people do care about what I have to say. I have newfound self-confidence.

Common problems with eye contact and ways to overcome them Some newer public speakers often struggle with eye contact, but with conscious intent most people acquire this skill. To improve your own eye contact, be aware of some frequent eye-contact problems. Once these common errors are on your radar, you can more easily detect them in your own speaking and make any necessary adjustments.

- **Getting lost in your notes or your visual support.** Finding comfort in your notes or your visual support and avoiding your audience is probably the most frequent eye-contact problem. Use your practice sessions to familiarize yourself with your notes and your visuals so that they support you, not suck you in during the presentation. Your audience *wants* your eye contact. Indulge them.
- **Looking at only one person.** Speakers often give their full eye contact to the one or two faces in the crowd looking back at them with intense interest. Imagine how

left out other audience members must feel. Spread your eye contact around, much as you do while talking to a group of friends during everyday conversation.

- **Looking at your evaluator.** A novice public speaking student sometimes feels compelled to give his or her full eye contact to that one person in the room who is grading the speech. The eye contact seems to be asking, *Do you hear me? Do you like what I'm saying? Am I getting an A yet?* Remember: you have a room full of people who want to hear your ideas. Treat your evaluator as a regular member of the audience; there is no need to pay him or her special attention.
- **Favoring a particular section of the room.** It's unfortunate when a listener ends up feeling unimportant because he or she sat in a section of the room you chose to ignore. Audience members are typically seated to your left *and* your right. Some are in the center directly beneath your nose. There may even be a straggler or two sitting in the back. Respect all listeners, know where they are, and distribute your eye contact accordingly.
- **Moving your eyes too quickly around the room.** Some speakers feel they must make eye contact with absolutely everyone in the room, so they speed their eyes around as if they were at a tennis match. Let your eyes move naturally and normally. You don't have to look at every single person, but as long as your eyes connect with at least someone nearby, individual audience members feel included.
- **Looking above the heads of your listeners or at the floor.** Some speakers think that as long as their eye contact falls somewhere in the general vicinity of audience members' faces, listeners will think that they are being looked at. This is not true, especially in a smaller room. Audience members can tell when your eyes are fixed six inches above their heads or two feet below them on the floor. Let your gaze fall naturally on the faces of your listeners. Human connections are made there.

2. Facial expressions

During everyday interactions, our faces are outward canvases for our feelings and attitudes. Because most people are comfortable around others whose faces they feel they can read, and tend to be suspicious or uncomfortable around those they have trouble reading, you should feel free to expressively use your face during your presentations.

Don't try to choreograph your facial expressions ahead of time. Use your practice sessions to familiarize yourself with the emotional rhythms of your presentation so that by the time the actual speaking day arrives, your face moves in ways that naturally complement the words you are saying. Public speakers need not appear grave and austere to be taken seriously. Showing concern on your face when discussing a somber and serious issue is natural, but it's also natural, for example, to reenact the sudden surprise you felt when you learned something unexpected or the euphoria you felt when you experienced something wonderful. Your facial expressions get your listeners' attention and enrich your ideas.

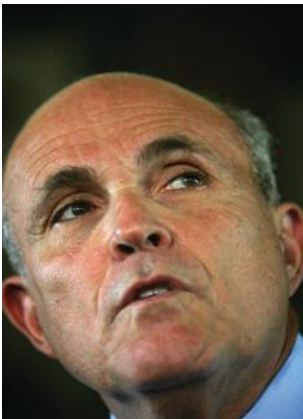
One facial expression is appealing to nearly all listeners—the smile. When appropriate to the topic being discussed, your smile helps you connect with your audience in an appealing way. An authentic smile is preferable to a corny, exaggerated, or stiff one. Connect with genuine positive feelings toward those people who have taken time out of their day to come hear what you have to say, and express those sentiments on your face.

Did You Know?

What's That Smile Really Saying?

Dan Hill, president of Sensory Logic, a company that specializes in facial-muscle analysis, provided some feedback on the smiles of some of the 2008 presidential candidates. He and other facial analysts note that early in campaigns, voters pay as much (or more) attention to the candidates' nonverbal cues as they do to their messages. These expressions may help voters decide which candidates they like and trust. Here are just some of Hill's observations:

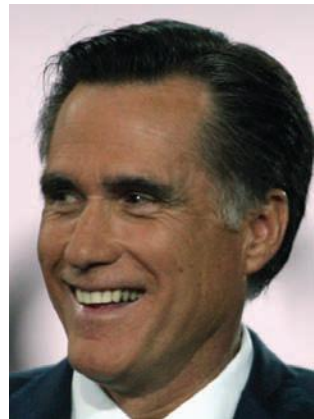
- Mike Huckabee and Barack Obama seem to have genuine smiles. These smiles last 1.5 to 3 seconds and are noted by natural puffs of skin beneath the eyes.
- Hillary Clinton and Mitt Romney are masters of the "social" smile, which tends to be unbalanced on the face and appears abruptly. Most of us learn these



Rudy Giuliani



Hillary Clinton



Mitt Romney



Barack Obama

John Edwards

Mike Huckabee

Did You Know? (continued)

smiles as children and continue to use them as we discover how effective they are at eliciting a positive response from others.

- The side of Rudy Giuliani's mouth often has an upward curl, perhaps expressing disgust.
- In hopes of having voters take him seriously, John Edwards often displays a "grim look," perhaps to counterbalance his "dazzlingly optimistic" smile.

If Hill were to analyze your smile during your public speeches, what might he say about you?

Source: Dana Wilkie, "Experts Fluent in Candidates' Nonverbal Cues," Copley News Service, as printed in *SignOnSanDiego.com*, September 3, 2007, http://cfx.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20070903/news_1n3facecue.html (accessed September 5, 2007).

Speaking of smiles—some people make a living studying them in order to decode people's true intentions. Read about one such researcher in the "Did You Know?" box above.

3. Posture

One question public speaking students often ask is "What do I do with my body?" Once in front of an audience, the back, hips, arms, and legs you have been using comfortably your entire life can suddenly feel like unruly objects in need of discipline. Chances are, because you are not choreographing and are instead putting your best face forward, your body will move naturally and support your message just fine. Nonetheless, it can be helpful to analyze your posture in your post-speech evaluation and make any needed modifications for next time. Audiences interpret meaning from the way you hold and move your body. Following is a list of common posture issues and ways to effectively handle them.

- **Stand or sit?** Standing shows respect for the audience and your ideas, so if you are physically able to stand, you should. Standing allows you freedom to gesture and use visual support, and it lets all members of the audience comfortably see you. Your clothing also typically hangs more appealingly on your body when you stand.
Stances that are too rigid or too relaxed draw negative attention. Audiences respond better to a naturally upright yet loose standing posture. If physical or medical reasons prevent you from standing or if the informality of the event lends itself better to sitting in a chair or on the edge of a desk, sit up as tall as possible and position yourself in such a way that all audience members can see you. If you're wearing a skirt, cross your legs or ankles.
- **Standing at a lectern.** Speakers use lecterns for all sorts of reasons. They lend an atmosphere of formality and provide a place to put your notes. They can, however, be a source of distraction. Speakers who lean on the lectern, stand too close to

or too far from it, or give it the death grip send out messages that audiences notice and interpret negatively. If you're going to use a lectern, stand comfortably behind or next to it. Many speakers enjoy the freedom they feel once the lectern is removed. You may feel naked and vulnerable at first, but you'll probably come to like the closer proximity to your audience and the freedom to move around.

- **Arms, hands, legs, and feet.** Some common arm and hand positions that don't read well include arms and hands clasped behind your back, hanging straight down at your sides, and crossed in front of your chest. One or both hands on your hips can suggest boredom or sarcasm, whereas hands in your pockets can make you look uncomfortable or a little *too* relaxed. Distracting hand movements include playing with your hair, hat, jewelry, pen, pointer, or notes. Jangling coins or keys in your pockets is downright annoying. Some speakers unconsciously scratch their arms, necks, or heads repeatedly.

Distracting leg and foot movements include swaying your body back and forth or side-to-side, tapping one foot, curling one foot around the other leg, and swinging one foot back and forth in the air.

Strong yet loose, natural body posturing is least distracting to listeners. Keep your hands available for holding notes and gesturing. Keep your lower half strong to support yourself confidently. Your personality ultimately determines the placement and movement of your arms, hands, legs, and feet, but if you aim to do what you naturally do during important personal conversations, you should be fine.

4. Gestures

Human gestures fall into two main categories. **Illustrators** are those movements of the hands, head, and other body parts that accompany speech. When we say that "Jonathan likes to talk with his hands," for example, we are referring to the many illustrators he uses. Illustrators have no inherent meaning. Instead they clarify, complement, or reinforce a verbalized message.

Emblems are movements or positions of the body that have precise meaning and are immediately understood by others in the communicator's culture or co-culture. Among the most commonly used U.S. emblems are hand gestures for *OK*, *thumbs up*, and *stop*; a shoulder shrug for *I don't know*; and a head nod for *yes*. Recall, however, that these are not universal gestures and may mean something completely different or nothing at all in other cultures. Other emblems, including hand gestures for *hang loose*, *I love you*, and *live long and prosper*, are less common though still popular in many U.S. regions and groups. Still others are used and understood only in specific co-cultures such as street, school, prison, sexual, or dance communities.

Most communicators use illustrators and emblems to some degree during everyday conversations. Pay attention to your use of these gestures for the rest of the day. You may be surprised at how frequently you use them. In your public speaking, illustrators and emblems should appear naturally, if you let them. Nonetheless, evaluate your use of gestures and fine-tune them as necessary.

- **Gestures are often influenced by personality.** Our individual personalities—ranging from shy and reserved to gregarious and bubbly—play a significant role in the way we use gestures while speaking. If you are physically expressive



during everyday conversation, then by all means be expressive during your important conversations. Your instructor, a trusted friend, or your own self-evaluations should tell you whether your gestures are too wild, repetitive, or distracting in some other way, but chances are, they aren't. On the other hand, if you are typically reserved with your gestures, you may want to experiment. Practice using some during your everyday conversations so that you're more likely to use them naturally during your public speeches. You don't want to be someone you're not, but most audiences respond positively to animated speakers, and your gestures go a long way toward helping you appear animated.

- **Gestures are often influenced by the message.** The ideas and emotions expressed during a speech also influence the amount and appropriateness of the gestures.
 - Some *topics* naturally inspire gestures more than others. Most people naturally limit their gestures when discussing something serious or somber but gesture more when the topic is lighter.
 - Some *explanations* are better conveyed through gestures. Imagine not using your hands when trying to describe the size and shape of a particular object, such as a tightly wound spiral; a long, skinny rectangular pool; or a three-tiered birthday cake.
 - Gestures also frequently accompany the description of certain *actions*, such as climbing a ladder or running in a darting fashion.



22C

Know the Ways Listeners Interpret Meaning from Your Body Placement

Another general category of nonverbal communication has to do with body placement. This section looks at two additional ways your body sends messages and influences the overall listenability of your presentation—the physical distance between you and your audience and your body's orientation to your audience.



Let your body move as it naturally does during your interactions with others. Your authentic, physical animation helps keep listeners' attention on you and your message.



The distance you maintain between yourself and your audience sends a message. What messages are being sent by these two speakers?

1. Physical distance

In a memorable *Seinfeld* episode, Elaine's new boyfriend, Aaron, is ridiculed for his habit of getting uncomfortably close to people while talking to them. Viewers immediately understand the joke, because though we may not consciously think about it, we recognize that there *are* appropriate and inappropriate distances from which we relate to other people. The concept of interpersonal distance is a specific category of nonverbal communication called **proxemics**. Your culture plays a significant role in interpreting the messages that interpersonal space sends; the meaning of these distances is not universal. As a public speaker, consciously consider how much space you maintain between yourself and your audience; you want to send the right message.

- **Proxemics as determined by the room.** Typically, the room in which you are speaking determines the distance you stand from your audience. There are times—such as when chairs are bolted to the floor, an official speaker's platform is established, or you are

tied to a fixed microphone or laptop—when you have little to no control over the distance between yourself and your listeners.

When you do have a choice, take control of the situation and create a distance you feel is best for your occasion, topic, and purpose. If 90 percent of your audience is sitting in the back of the room, as people tend to do, ask them to move closer to the front (most are happy to oblige). Another option is to walk closer to them to establish a more comfortable, intimate atmosphere. If you get to the speaking site—early, of course—and find the chairs set up in neat, perfect rows yet you would prefer a horseshoe shape, ask permission from the speaking host to do some rearranging. The bottom line is that you can often change things around to better work with your speech goals.

- **Proxemics as accentuated by a physical barrier such as a table or lectern.** The primary purpose of the speaking table or lectern is to provide a surface for your

notes. But the speaking table or lectern can also function—intentionally or unintentionally—as a barrier between you and the audience, exaggerating the actual distance. If you are a speaker who needs to nonverbally establish your status or create emotional distance from your audience, then the speaking table or lectern helps you do that, especially if the table has a long skirt or the lectern is a tall rectangular box. However, if you want to create a more intimate atmosphere, consider using a music-stand-style lectern, stepping to the side of the lectern or table, or standing in front of the lectern or table. All these choices tell your audience that you want to communicate with them on an up-close-and-personal level.

- **Proxemics as accentuated by elevation.** Speakers are sometimes placed at an elevation higher than the audience, thereby exaggerating the actual distance between them. In larger rooms, elevating the speaker is essential for achieving unobstructed views. If you're speaking in a smaller space, however, place yourself at the same level as your audience. Even if a small stage or a raised platform is available, consider not using it. Your audience notices and appreciates your preference to communicate on a literally equal level.
- **Proxemics as affected by movement during the presentation.** Some speakers believe that they should move about the room in order to maintain audience interest. No rule requires a speaker to be glued to one spot, but if you move a lot around the room, you risk not only distracting your audience but also making them uncomfortable if you get too close. That said, every speech is a unique communication event, and you must analyze the topic, the audience, and the occasion when deciding whether to alter the proxemics during the presentation. Watching you pace about the room for no apparent reason is not interesting for your audience; watching you move purposefully over to the easel to use your visuals is. Watching you move back and forth repeatedly is distracting; watching you move a step or two naturally toward the audience as you make an essential point is intriguing. Don't choreograph your movements; they should come naturally to support your message, and ideally, they should have meaning.

2. Body orientation

Body orientation, another category of nonverbal communication, is best described as your stance in relation to others. Consider how you position your body relative to another person during a one-on-one interaction. Most people, for example, face others straight-on when discussing pleasant or important topics but shift away when talking about more unpleasant or difficult issues.

The same concept of relative body positions exists in the public speaking interaction. Imagine how your audience would react if you were to cross your arms tightly across your chest, turn 90 degrees to your left, and speak out to them over your right shoulder. The most effective body orientation while speaking is an open body position with your shoulders square with the audience. This is the body orientation most people naturally adopt during important conversations. If you must turn your back to write something on a whiteboard, for example, do so as briefly as possible and then turn back out to your audience for further interaction.

Essentials

Tips for the Best Proxemics

- Tell the speaking host in advance how you want the room set up.
- Get to the speaking site early to make sure the room is arranged to your liking.
- Check with the speaking host before making any changes.
- If using a lectern, choose a music-stand style over a tall-box style if at all possible.
- Stay at the same elevation as the audience if at all possible.
- Move closer to or farther away from the audience in ways that support, rather than distract from, your message.

22D

Adapt for Speakers with Disabilities

People with all sorts of physical disabilities speak in public for the same reasons all people do—to inform, persuade, entertain, motivate, inspire, and relate to others. However, a few extra issues arise in such speaking circumstances.

1. Notes for the speaker with a disability

Though every speaker must engage in pre-speech planning, speakers with a disability may have additional work, especially in regard to equipment availability and room setup. Don't hesitate to request any sort of extra assistance or accommodation you may need, such as a ramp to a stage, an interpreter, an adjustable lectern, a reconfiguration of the seats for better sightlines, or someone to assist you with visuals. Communicate with the speech host early enough for your needs to be met.

The "Speaker's Story" box profiles one speaker's unique perceptions about speaking in public with his disability.

2. Notes for audience members

Though you may be naturally inquisitive about a speaker with a visible physical disability, move quickly beyond your questions and mentally and physically interact with the speaker in the same ways you would with a speaker without a physical disability.

- Give eye contact to the speaker who is blind.
- If a speaker is communicating in American Sign Language, look at that speaker's face rather than at his or her hands or at the interpreter who is voicing.
- If possible, arrange your seat so that you can comfortably see the face of a speaker who uses a wheelchair.
- Don't patronize a speaker who has a physical disability. For example, one speaker who had had one of her arms amputated at the elbow received an extra long and

A Speaker's Story

My Best Calling Card



“When I roll out in front of an audience,” says Michael Slesesman, “everyone is immediately aware of and curious as to why I have this attachment to my body. But like all speakers, I have one chance to create a good first impression. And I think I’ve learned how to do it.”

A car accident in 1993 left Slesesman, then 22, in a wheelchair. After years of difficult therapy, Slesesman began volunteering with Phoenix Sister Cities, a nonprofit organization committed to creating exchange opportunities for citizens in Phoenix and its ten sister cities, which include Taipei, Taiwan; Ennis, Ireland; and Hermosillo, Mexico. Slesesman’s outgoing personality soon led him to speaking engagements on behalf of the organization’s Disability Awareness Committee. Slesesman says,

I’m OK with who I am, and I realize it’s my responsibility to let my audience be OK with it, too. Because I use a wheelchair, I can’t communicate wholly with my body as can an able-bodied speaker. I’ve therefore become especially conscientious about using my face and hands. I find the more relaxed and open I am, especially with a warm smile, an expressive face, and lots of direct eye contact, the more my audience relaxes, too. I work hard at projecting confidence and friendliness, even on those days I have to fake it! Sometimes I’ll work in reasons or make inferences as to why I use a wheelchair; I know it satisfies people’s curiosity. And sometimes I don’t. Overall, I find I don’t need to make a big deal of it.

Ironically, my wheelchair has become my best calling card. It demands attention. And once I have their attention, I can get down to the business of communicating. Good public speaking is about creating a relationship with your audience, and to do that, you have to know who you are, be confident with it, and be willing to share yourself. I intentionally use my body language to convey my confidence and composure. My disability has given me a unique arena to play in, and I’ve learned to enjoy the attention and uniqueness of being me.

Source: Michael Slesesman, personal interview with author, March 2006.



loud applause from her classmates for what was obviously a mediocre speech. In her post-speech evaluation, she mentioned her embarrassment not only for her speech but also for the special treatment she received—but did not earn—from her audience.

3. Notes for the speech host

Should you find yourself hosting a speaker or a slate of speakers, get in the habit of asking every speaker early on whether any extra assistance or accommodation is required. Even if you know that a speaker has a disability, don't assume that you know what he or she needs—always ask. The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates certain accommodations, but because each speaker is an individual, your personal attention to his or her needs is appreciated.

If you are hosting a slate of speakers, be sure to treat each equally. If all speakers will sit in the front row and come up to the stage for their presentations, then make sure every speaker can comfortably go back and forth along the same route. If all speakers will use a lectern or microphone, make sure it's adjustable. If all speakers will sit at a table in the front of the room, make sure the table can accommodate each person equally well.

Summary

- Be aware of the large role nonverbal communication plays in your presentations.
- People from different cultures use and interpret nonverbal behaviors differently. A gesture that means one thing to you can mean something else or absolutely nothing to others.
- Learn to analyze the influence of your body movements, including eye contact, posture, gestures, and facial expressions, and make modifications if necessary.
- You must also analyze the influence of your body placement, including your physical distance and physical orientation in relationship to the audience.
- Speakers, listeners, and speech hosts should be familiar with the few extra issues that arise when a speaker with disabilities is presenting.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STYLE KEY

You know that your actions can and often do speak louder than your words. Have a sense of how your nonverbal communication creates meaning for your listeners. Use your body confidently and naturally, letting it support the message you want to give.

EXERCISES

1. Since he was 4 years old(!), Prem Rawat has spoken to millions of people around the world, inspiring them to find inner peace. His speaking style is highly formalized. Watch a short video of a speech he gave in Sweden in 2006, and analyze the effectiveness of his body movements, especially his eye contact, posture, gestures, and facial expressions. Find the speech on YouTube by typing in the key words Prem Rawat Sweden 2006.

2. *If applicable, watch a video of your last speech with the sound off. During the first viewing, pay attention only to your facial expressions and eye contact. Watch only your posture and gestures the second time. Looking at just these body movements, what message do you think you're giving your listeners? Share your insights with classmates or your teacher.*
3. *Using the people in your class as resources, prepare a list of international gestures they may know from personal experience, research, or hearsay. How many items are on your list? What does this say about your group? What does this say about people who would speak to your group?*
4. *Put the lectern off to the side for your next speech. Write a brief response paper about how it felt and whether you plan to do it again in the future.*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 23

Using Narrative

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I was happily surprised to learn that telling stories was an accepted, if not encouraged, part of public presentation. I’m a pretty good storyteller, so it was a natural transition for me to incorporate stories into my speaking. I could always see the audience perk up a bit more when I began a narrative.”

“As a listener, I have always responded positively to speakers who use narrative. I want to know more about who my speakers are as people, and I feel their personal narratives, whether shining a positive or not-so-positive light on themselves, give me an insight into their worlds, widening my scope of understanding as to who they are, making them more interesting, multilayered people. I think there is a direct correlation between the use of narrative and increased listenability.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

Use narrative.

STYLE

23A**Understand the Role of Narrative**

1. *Narratives create images that connect with listeners*
2. *Narratives evoke emotions*
3. *Narratives instruct and inspire*
4. *Narratives entertain*
5. *Narratives put a human face on a general concept*
6. *Narratives benefit the speaker*

23B**Know How to Use the Narrative**

1. *Composing the narrative*
2. *Incorporating the narrative*

Key Terms

action	▶ 367
anecdotal evidence	▶ 366
character	▶ 367
climax	▶ 368
conflict	▶ 367
hypothetical narrative	▶ 368
narrative	▶ 360
resolution	▶ 368
scene	▶ 367
setup	▶ 367
urban legend	▶ 368

The narrative, also known as an anecdote or story, is a popular device in presentations. Speakers often tell snippets of stories to support an idea they are trying to make, or they tell longer stories to communicate ideas in full. Narratives work because listeners are familiar with their composition (characters, action, conflict, resolution) and structure (beginning, middle, and end). Listeners also like narratives for their action and the images they create. Speakers like narratives because they're easy to relate and have the ability to draw an audience in, evoke emotion, instruct, or inspire. This chapter examines the narrative as a form of support in the public presentation.

23A

Understand the Role of Narrative

Stories surround us. We read them in books, hear them from a favorite aunt, and watch them on videos, in movie theaters, and on the stage. When you reflect on your life, you begin to see it as a collection of stories—the story of your birth, the many stories of your early childhood (the time you broke your arm, how you learned to swim), all the stories about your teenage years (your first kiss, the struggles with your parents about your ever-growing need for independence), the story about your first job, and so on. We experience life and crystallize specific incidents and encounters into stories we recount to friends, family, and acquaintances.

People like stories. We are attracted to them for the images and emotions they evoke. We remember them for their characters, action, and resolutions. Stories ground us in our culture, values, and beliefs and help us make sense of the complexity of human existence; they help us construct realities. Storytelling is so ingrained in the human experience that Walter Fisher, a professor of communication at the University of Southern California, has dubbed humans *Homo narrans*, or storytelling creatures.¹ Fisher argues that a story that sounds probable and rings true with listeners' experiences may be a more effective means of communicating reason and values than "piling up evidence or constructing a tight argument."² Anyone armed with common sense, he says, "can see the point of a good story and judge its merits as the basis for belief and action."³

The "Did You Know?" box (◀ p. 362) delves more into the rich history and present status of storytelling in general. The "Speaking of Culture" box (▶ p. 363) shares some insights on public storytelling in other cultures.

The **narrative**, or story, is also a valuable public speaking tool, one used with increasing frequency and success.⁴ Because people are so used to thinking in narrative patterns, stories are an engaging and efficient way for speakers to support an idea they're communicating to an audience. Whether running for president, presenting to clients, or speaking to fellow parents at the local school meeting, speakers opt to use narratives for several reasons.

1. Narratives create images that connect with listeners

Narratives are a powerful way to connect to your listeners and keep their attention on you and your message. No matter how far removed the story is from listeners' current reality, the story encourages them to interact, creating images from the words you use and bringing in



Storytelling is a nearly universal part of the human experience. Tap into listeners' deeply held roots by incorporating narratives into your public communication.

their own experience as they mentally insert themselves in the story. One audience will never forget the narrative about an escape from Communist Romania. The speaker's words quickly took the listeners back to an important time in history:

At age 22, my life was at a dead end. My country was under the iron hand of our president, Nicolae Ceausescu, an egotistical man who turned our once relatively prosperous country into a place of disaster. Medicines, food, and energy were in extremely short supply, and secret police were cracking down on any kind of opposition or dissent from citizens or the media. Churches and the beautiful historic buildings of Bucharest were being demolished so this crazy man and his wife could rebuild the city in their own image. Ceausescu refused to acknowledge the presence of AIDS in Romania, so the blood supply was never tested. HIV infection was skyrocketing and the government clinics were reusing needles. Poverty rates were so high that state-run orphanages were overflowing with unwanted children. My country was in financial ruin, and on top of everything else, my family and I suffered food rationing, electrical blackouts, and fear. My future held nothing. I had to get out.

With wide eyes, audience members listened intently as the speaker told about the night he jumped into a river while being chased by guards. He related how he struggled to swim against the current and finally made his way to the riverbanks of Yugoslavia and from there traveled by land to Hungary, Austria, Germany, and finally the United States. All listeners that day were fully engaged as they created personal images in their minds of a frightened young man literally swimming for his life in the darkness. They wondered what it would be like to face such desperation and whether they would have had the strength and courage to do as he did.

The stories you tell need not be as dramatic as this one, but the point is the same: narratives help synthesize the complexities of life while inviting your audience to connect to your message through the creation of images.

Did You Know?

Storytelling

Storytelling has a rich history. Long before the invention of written languages, humans learned, taught, and entertained themselves through narratives. They told stories to explain their origins, the weather, seasons, natural phenomena, and the rhythms of the life cycle. Cultures throughout the world have myths, legends, and folktales that have been passed down through generations, many surviving even today. Stories of heroes and gods have served as the foundation of many belief systems and the basis for unity and cooperation within societies.

Storytelling never disappeared, but today it's enjoying a renaissance. Perhaps because of our having to interact with machines all day, many of us are craving a connection to our ancient, oral-narrative roots. Here are just some of the storytelling activities to check out in the United States:

- Oral-history projects of all kinds are maintained by numerous government and nonprofit organizations, including those on veterans of wars (Veterans History Project), suffragists (Suffragists Oral History Project), and immigrants (Ellis Island Oral History Project).
- Storytelling festivals, including the Jonesborough National Storytelling Festival in Tennessee and the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival in Utah, draw thousands to their annual events.
- Spoken-word performances by local and national artists including Henry Rollins, Miranda July, Talib Kweli, David Sedaris, and Laurie Anderson are seen on stages across the country.
- Storytelling courses are offered at an increasing number of colleges, universities, and community centers around the country.
- Digital storytelling, the recording of narratives told through images, music, and voice, is the most recent step in the tradition of sharing personal journeys and observations.

Thanks to The Call of the Story, <http://www.callofstory.org/en/storytelling> (accessed September 23, 2007).

2. Narratives evoke emotions

Good stories have strong emotional content, including the universal feelings of hope, fear, love, envy, or joy. Stories infused with emotion can grip an audience, keeping them with the speaker, establishing a mood, and creating memories. A child-development major was speaking on the psychological damage suffered by children who see other children harmed or killed. She knew that few people in her audience had children of their own and would probably relate to her message from a somewhat removed, adult point of view. So she began with the story of the Oklahoma City bombing to evoke emotion and gain their attention.



Speaking of Culture

Public Storytelling in My Culture

Chii (Zimbabwe)

"People who speak the Shona language love storytelling. Speakers begin their stories with the word paivapo, which roughly means "a long time ago." We start all our stories that way. The audience then answers in unison, dzepfunde, loosely translated as "we're ready for you." Stories end with the same call and response, too. You would need to do this if telling a story in Zimbabwe."

Alex (Russia)

"Russians tell many of the same stories all people do. The details may be a bit different, but the point is the same. People are people. We're all concerned about the same things, like how to live a good life and how to understand life's experiences."

Chol (Sudan)

"We have no written language in Dinka culture, so stories are central to our knowledge of ourselves. We'll all sit in a circle beneath a tree while the elders in our community teach us about our past, our ancestors, our fighting sticks and spears. We also learn about life through the stories, many of which involve the animals—hyenas, elephants, and monkeys. To be respected in my culture, you have to tell stories."

Her words created strong images as she recounted what happened at the daycare center in the Murrah Federal Building in April 1995. But her best decision was telling the story from the point of view of an 8-year-old boy. The audience was hooked by the emotions of fear, grief, and confusion the boy's story evoked. They were now identifying with the children

who witnessed the damage and were with the speaker as she moved to the main idea of her talk—psychological damage to those children and others like them who have witnessed the harming or killing of other children. The emotions in her story played a significant role in getting the audience's attention and helping them remember her message long afterward.

Evoking emotion can also be a successful persuasive strategy. People with something to sell (a product, a service, a belief, a place) are increasingly relying on stories to help potential “customers” see a lack in their lives or community that only their goods can fill. Narratives that bring listeners to a point of pain, embarrassment, horror, annoyance, or a need for justice, to name a few, can successfully hook audiences and create a perceived need for fulfillment. One sales representative tells his story.

I speak to business owners, trying to raise interest in my spyware packages. I start out my pitch with a story about a business owner who was paying for 120 hours of nonexistent work per week among her fifty or so employees. I build it up slowly . . . how at first she didn't notice it, then she did, then all the hours and wasted money spent investigating, finding the root cause, figuring out what to do, and finally making a solution happen. I talk about her wasted energy, her wasted time, her stress, her resentment toward her employees, and her lost money. I get these business owners to identify with her. I tell them chances are good that they, too, are paying for nonexistent work. I finally identify the perpetrator—spam. Once I have created the need, I can provide my spyware solution. They are now ready to listen.”

3. Narratives instruct and inspire

Fables and legends are often told for the morals they hold. Just as Goldilocks's inevitable trouble with the Three Bears serves to warn children about invading another person's privacy, so, too, presentation narratives serve to instruct or inspire. Many speakers use narrative to help others in their communities. Ellen Jaramillo-Lambert, in her work for Street Soldiers, Inc., a gang- and drug-prevention program, tells true stories about her life of crime and violence when she talks to young people in her community. From her stories of carrying drugs in her diapers as a 2-year-old to her tales of losing her four brothers to gang-related violence, Ellen's narratives, complete with grisly details, serve the purpose of shocking and then inspiring kids to stay out of gangs.⁵

One college campus, like many around the country, hosts a series of workshops each year that focuses on awareness and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. One of the workshop's highlights is the segment when students tell stories about how they came to take responsibility for their sexual choices. One new couple told about how they sat down and talked about STD prevention before becoming physically involved. Another participant recounted how one night's unprotected sex resulted in painful urination a few mornings later, leading to a doctor's visit, a diagnosis of gonorrhea, and unpleasant injections. Another told of being infected with HIV and passing it on to her child before learning that it was her husband who had brought the virus home. All these compelling narratives share the purpose of instructing those in the audience to be aware of the risks and to engage in responsible behavior.

Read the “Speaker's Story” box for another example of the power of narrative.

A Speaker's Story

Philanthropy through Stories



According to Bill Gates Sr., cochair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, it's no longer enough for today's philanthropists to write checks. Along with giving money, he says, people who want to help others and solve social problems must advance knowledge, encourage others, and be effective storytellers. When Gates, father of Microsoft's founder, speaks to other philanthropic groups, he tells his own story of meeting Nancy, a mentally ill woman who had begun to turn her life around. Nancy, and others like her, inspired him to come out of retirement and go to work for his famous son. A self-described student of philanthropy, Gates says, "It's what we learn from the Nancys of this world that keeps us headed in the right direction." He encourages other philanthropists to start with a simple fact, such as a statistic on mortality rates or on the shortage of immunizations in developing countries, and create their stories from there. These stories then need to be told and in turn inspire the people who hear them.

Source: Susie Steckner, "Writing Checks Not Enough, Gates' Dad Says," *Arizona Republic*, October 29, 2005, D1



4. Narratives entertain

Many listeners enjoy speeches for their entertainment value. Whether an entire speech or just a section of it is meant to entertain, listeners like to laugh and enjoy themselves. One speaker, who presents on behalf of a local animal shelter, starts out each presentation with a story about an orange cat. She tells how the feral animal kept coming uninvited into her home, leaving his spray behind as a marker. The tale culminates with the description of one evening, when the speaker, her partner, and two neighbors make several failed attempts to catch the fourteen-pound feline. The account includes a broken vase, spilled birthday flowers, a scratched back, blankets, a chimney, and a bucket of water. It ends with a wet, angry, soot-covered kitty being taken away in a laundry basket to the animal shelter, and four exhausted adults tending to wounds, broken glass, blackened walls, and feelings of guilt.

The speaker's story, delivered well and with lots of funny details, always gets laughs—until listeners realize her very unfunny point. Upon the narrative's conclusion, the speaker launches into her main message—encouraging people to spay and neuter their pets to keep undomesticated animal populations at bay. She knows that people have heard this message before but finds that her entertaining story is a unique way of getting their attention. The anecdote, she feels, evokes empathy for both unwanted animals and the citizens in whose neighborhoods they live. Because people always stick around after her presentations to share stories of their own, she knows they're listening.

5. Narratives put a human face on a general concept

A speaker can encourage listeners to create a connection with an abstract or complex idea by relating the topic to one person's experience. A politician who wants to drive home a point may tell the story of a specific citizen helped or harmed by certain policy decisions. A speaker discussing a disease may use a specific patient as a case study. Listeners can latch on to these personal stories and better see the larger issues. One listener shares his experience.

In my nutrition class, we each had to make a presentation on how a nutritionist would treat patients with certain medical conditions. I was presenting later in the week but was interested to hear how the students presenting on the first day would handle the assignment. Four of those first five students spoke about their assigned medical condition in very general terms. Their research was thorough, and they shared a lot of worthwhile information. But by the middle of their speeches, I was working extra hard to keep everything straight. Do you do this before the patient gets that treatment or after? Does this result mean you do X but not Y? It all sounded so clinical and general.

The final speaker gave his presentation on Crohn's disease. He incorporated all the same information the other students had incorporated in their speeches, but he did it through the narrative of one nutritionist named Alicia working with one patient named Tony. When I could create a name and face for both parties, it was so much easier to follow. I could relate to the tough decisions Alicia had to make when reading Tony's test results and dealing with his less-than-cooperative attitude. It gave me a new respect for nutritionists and patients—and for the difficulties caused by this disease. That presentation was by far the best of the day. I didn't want to completely rip off the speaker's ideas, but I was obviously influenced to do something similar, as were several other students who still had to speak. The assignment as a whole was well received by everyone, and I think the stories were key. I learned a lot.

A specific person's story, though potentially powerful, is **anecdotal evidence**, and you need to identify it as such for your listeners. Anecdotal evidence draws a conclusion from specifically chosen circumstances while ignoring others. So while it may be true that the new expressway through town shortened Ms. Citizen's daily commute, the politician should not rely on that as the only evidence that it was a good policy for *all*.

6. Narratives benefit the speaker

Incorporating narratives into their presentations is something many speakers enjoy doing. First, because it's a familiar skill, the process of storytelling comes naturally to most people. Second, narratives are easy to remember; in the Western tradition, there is always a beginning, middle, and end. You just have to practice your story to remember the necessary details. Finally, the use of the narrative, especially a personal one, can increase your credibility. Speakers often preface their stories with comments like, *I was at a White House dinner recently and . . .* or *When I was speaking at the American Medical Association conference . . .* or

Essentials

The Power of the Narrative

Narratives enrich the speaking experience in many ways:

- They create images that connect.
- They evoke emotions.
- They instruct and inspire.
- They entertain.
- They put a human face on a general concept.
- They are easy to tell and can increase your perceived credibility.

When I was testifying as an expert witness . . . Such narratives are excellent devices for increasing credibility while simultaneously engaging the audience through storytelling.

Even stories that put speakers in a vulnerable position or a less-than-favorable light can add to their stature. Stories that begin *While I was in prison . . .* or *When I had a drinking problem . . .* or *I dropped out of high school because . . .* are usually told for good reason and can frame the speaker as a regular person—real, complete with faults and complexities, but striving every day to be the best he or she can be.

23B

Know How to Use the Narrative

So the reasons for using stories in your presentation are many. Now, ask yourself these two questions:

- What should my narratives sound like?
- Where in the speech do they work best?

1. Composing the narrative

- **Components of the narrative.** Like any story, your narrative should contain the necessary components of **character** (who), **action** (what is happening), and **scene** (where and when the action is taking place). Your listeners are accustomed to hearing narratives with all these components. Use your practice sessions to ensure they're in place.
- **Narrative structure.** Traditional Western narrative structure calls for a certain story flow, as you may have studied in a literature class (Figure 23.1). Your narrative should contain
 - the **setup**, or introduction of character and scene and the start of the action.
 - a **conflict**, something that happens that causes the action to go in a direction toward the climax.

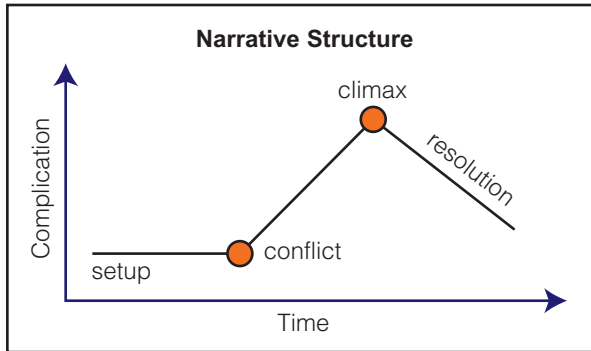


Figure 23.1 Western audiences expect your story to follow this narrative structure.

- a **climax**, the peak of tension or the most exciting moment.
- a **resolution** of the conflict.

Your audience members expect to hear this sequence and may miss a sense of completion if your story doesn't follow it. But stories don't necessarily work the same way in other cultures. If you plan to use narrative when speaking before a non-Western audience, research storytelling practices so that you can better reach your audience.

- **True or hypothetical?** When you tell a story, audience members believe it to be true unless told otherwise. Indeed, the ethics of public speaking *require* your content to be accurate and truthful. On occasion, however, a **hypothetical narrative**, or an invented story, can be of use, especially when you are conceptualizing past or future events or outcomes. None of us knows what life will look like in 2020, for example, but that doesn't stop people from making predictions. If you use a hypothetical narrative, you have an ethical responsibility to label it as such.
- **Urban legends.** Our culture is filled with stories that many or most of us believe to be true. Perhaps you know that many hotels are now encoding your room key card with personal information that can be easily stolen. Many of us heard about the man who survived the collapse of the World Trade Center by air-surfing on a piece of debris from the eightieth floor. And we all know that if you leave a baby tooth in a glass of Coca-Cola overnight, it will dissolve by morning. Right?

Wrong. These stories, or **urban legends**, are *not* true, but speakers occasionally share them, and others like them, as if they were. Don't risk your credibility by spreading these urban myths as you attempt to support a point. Some quick research on an urban legend website (such as Snopes.com) can help you determine whether your planned narrative is true, unconfirmed, or absolutely false. Of course, some urban legends are quite funny (*Microsoft will send you \$1,000 for helping test a new e-mail tracking system! Terrorist-hunting dolphins equipped with toxic dart guns got swept into the sea during Hurricane Katrina!*), and you can feel free to tell them to prove or disprove a certain point. Simply identify the story as an urban legend immediately before or after telling it.

2. Incorporating the narrative

- **Narrative as an opening and/or closing device.** Stories are a great way to open and close your presentation. The narrative structure quickly grips the audience's attention in the introduction and generates interest in your message. Completing the narrative in the conclusion brings unity to the speech as a whole.

Essentials

Using a Narrative in Your Speech

Use narrative in a variety of ways:

- To open your speech and/or to close it
- To rationally or logically support a point you're making
- To provide emotional proof
- As the entire structure of the speech

In his speech on the success of the Harry Potter series, Jesse, a college freshman, opened with a narrative about a 10-year-old boy who gets swept away into a world of magic, friendship, and battles between good and evil. Listeners soon realized that the boy who couldn't wait to get in bed each night with his first Harry Potter book was Jesse himself. After a successful speech body examining the legacy of J. K. Rowling's multivolume series, Jesse concluded with another tale, this time of a 19-year-old man closing the cover of the seventh and final book, saying good-bye, along with Harry, to his childhood—and forever being changed by the experience.

- **Narrative as a supporting point.** You can also use a narrative to support a point you want to make somewhere in the presentation. During a persuasive speech on the medicinal benefits of ginkgo biloba, you may talk about how it can enhance memory. To support the claim, relate the story of how your own memory has improved since you began taking ginkgo biloba a year ago.
- **Narrative as emotional proof.** While narratives can provide rational or logical support to a point you're trying to make, they can also convey feelings that can greatly affect an audience. While giving an acceptance speech upon being awarded a large scholarship to a private university, one young woman paid tribute to her mother, a woman who eighteen years earlier had smuggled her infant daughter into the United States. Though she admitted the illegality of her mother's actions, the speaker persuaded the audience to accept her tribute nonetheless, for had her mother not acted, this speaker would not be the vibrant and successful student she was today. The tears on the faces of the audience members were proof that they were clearly moved by the intense love and respect communicated in this emotional narrative.
- **Narrative as structure.** The entire body of your speech can be structured as one story. Members of therapy groups tell their stories to fellow members, people share their oral histories to others in their communities, politicians tell their stories to voters, and business people tell the stories of their products or services to clients and investors. Zvi Ben David is the chief financial officer of a company that markets a pill containing a video camera that takes pictures of the small intestine. To

convince investors to become shareholders in his company, he has created a story that takes potential investors through an actual procedure featuring his product. Ben David believes that he makes his point better through the storytelling. He says he designed his presentation “to tell a very human story” because “the investment world has seen everything, so you have to transmit in a short time why your company is a good investment, and why people should listen to you.”⁶

Summary

- **Listeners are used to thinking in narrative patterns. Stories are an engaging and efficient way for you to communicate your messages.**
- **Narratives benefit the speech by creating images that connect with the audience, evoking emotions, instructing, inspiring, entertaining, and putting a human face on a general concept. Narratives also benefit you because they’re easy to tell and can increase your credibility.**
- **When creating the narrative, incorporate all the necessary components and follow the expected narrative structure.**
- **Use narratives for introductions and/or conclusions, to support a point, to provide emotional proof, or as your overall structure.**



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS SUPPORT KEY

Narratives have universal appeal. Incorporating relevant and appropriate stories into your speech is a fun and easy thing to do. More importantly, narratives attract and hold listeners’ attention, allowing you to make a point and create an emotional connection with them.

EXERCISES

1. *As a class, brainstorm three lists—one each of characters, settings, and conflicts. Working in groups of three, choose two characters, one setting, and one conflict, and invent a story. Be sure that your story has a crisis, climax, and resolution. Choose one person from your group to give the introduction, the second to tell the story, and the third to deliver the conclusion. For the conclusion, include a moral or take-away for the audience. What’s in it for them?*
2. *Interview a veteran storyteller in your community or someone who teaches storytelling at your school. What insights can he or she share with you about effective storytelling?*

3. Consider one of your favorite fairytales. What about the story has made it stick with you for this long? Is it the imagery, the characters, the resolution, or something else? What can this analysis tell you about using narrative in public presentation?
4. Find a newspaper or magazine article that opens with an anecdote. How does the author transition from the anecdote to the content of the article? Is the anecdote revisited again in the middle or the end of the article? From a reader's point of view, did the use of the narrative help the author effectively communicate his or her content? Can you apply anything you learned from this exercise to your public speaking?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 24

Selecting and Incorporating Visual Support

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“As a visual person, I loved having the opportunity to think in those visual terms when preparing for my presentations and to communicate my ideas through images as well as through words.”

“Do not do as I did and wait until the last minute to prepare your visuals. The worst case was when I sweet-talked a friend into making my visual for my major informative speech. When I put that chart up there in front of my audience, I wanted to run out of the room. I was unfamiliar with the visual, hadn’t practiced with it, and had no clue how to talk about it. I just kept it up there and made up some lame stuff to say about it. I could sense that the audience was embarrassed for me, but don’t worry—I was plenty embarrassed myself. If only I could have that day back again to do it the right way. Know thy visual!”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

Prepare and use visual support.

STYLE

24A**Understand the Role of Visual Support**

1. *Visual support serves different functions*
2. *Visual support appeals to the audience*
3. *Visual support benefits the speaker*

24B**Determine Whether a Visual Is Right for Your Presentation**

1. *Are you communicating any ideas that need visual support?*
2. *Do you fully understand your visual?*
3. *Does your visual material support your presentation or drive it?*

24C**Manage Your Two-Dimensional Visual Support**

1. *Types of two-dimensional support*
2. *Preparing two-dimensional support*

24D**Manage Your Three-Dimensional Visual Support**

1. *Types of three-dimensional support*
2. *Preparing three-dimensional support*

24E**Understand the Role of Presentation Software**

1. *Should you use PowerPoint? Yes, if . . .*
2. *Advantages of PowerPoint*
3. *Disadvantages of PowerPoint*
4. *How to make a great PowerPoint presentation*

24F**Follow These Guidelines for Using Technology in Your Presentation**

Know How to Use Your Visual Support

1. *Discovery*
2. *Discussion*
3. *Distraction*

Key Terms

atmospheric visuals	▶ 375
bar graph	▶ 381
chart	▶ 379
enhancing visuals	▶ 375
flow chart	▶ 379
graph, or data-driven graph	▶ 380
line graph	▶ 381
model	▶ 386
organizational chart	▶ 379
photo illustration	▶ 381
pie graph	▶ 380
slideware	▶ 387
substituting visuals	▶ 375
timeline	▶ 380

Speakers of yesteryear could only dream about the technology that now allows us to create images quickly, inexpensively, and creatively. When developed well and used effectively, visuals increase a presentation's listenability by attracting audience attention and encouraging interaction through sight as well as hearing. Many presentations greatly benefit from some sort of visual support, but not all speeches need it. This chapter first explores the role of visual support in your public speeches. Next, we look at various types of two- and three-dimensional visuals and discuss presentation software and other kinds of technology. You'll also learn about some guidelines for using any type of visual support.

Understand the Role of Visual Support

Before you can decide whether to use visual support in your public presentation, you should have a basic understanding of the role visual support plays.

1. Visual support serves different functions

- **Visuals enhance or substitute for verbal information.** A good visual shows information in a format geared for the human eye. **Enhancing visuals** are images that show the information you are *already* discussing through language. **Substituting visuals** take information you *could* discuss through language but instead show *only* through images. Enhancing and substituting visuals are best for the majority of your informative and persuasive speeches because they engage listeners intellectually.
- **Visuals add atmosphere.** While enhancing or substituting visuals increase understanding or influence opinion or action, **atmospheric visuals** aim to create a mood or feeling. Atmospheric visuals are especially effective during persuasive and special-occasion speeches because they can engage listeners emotionally. In informative presentations, atmospheric visuals should be secondary to more informative enhancing or substituting visuals.

2. Visual support appeals to the audience

- **Visuals draw your listeners in.** Nothing grabs your audience's attention like the unveiling of a visual. Whether or not your listeners are engaged with your words, a newly revealed visual rarely fails to redirect attention toward you and your message.
- **Visuals stimulate audience interaction.** Visuals provide your audience with something else to do while interacting with your ideas. A map arouses spatial thinking and takes listeners to a particular place; a graph sparks the consideration of conceptual relationships; a photograph evokes emotion. The more you can do to keep your audience engaged, the less time they have to fall victim to distraction.
- **Visuals increase understanding, influence opinion, and create memories.** Many listeners are visual in nature; images make impressions on them. They remember that picture of the woman's leg damaged by flesh-eating bacteria; they better understand the water cycle after seeing your animated sequence illustrating evaporation, condensation, precipitation, and collection; and they'll talk later about the contrasting photographs of baseball slugger Barry Bonds, strong yet lean in 1999 and a gargantuan hulk two years later.

3. Visual support benefits the speaker

- **Visuals help you make a point.** Because visuals tend to make such a strong impression on your audience, a well-designed visual can help you indelibly make a point. Convince your audience of the increasing air-pollution levels in your area by showing a photo of the thick brown cloud hanging over your fair city. Show your listeners how easy it is to merge digital files by performing a quick demonstration. Increase your audience's understanding of just how large a fin whale is by showing its length in comparison to other whale species.
- **Visuals increase your credibility.** A good visual tells your audience that you have thought deeply about your ideas. It also shows that you respect your listeners enough to create visuals for their sake. Audiences think highly of speakers who smoothly

Our Increasingly Polluted Air

- Stagnant air (formed due to high pressure).
- Atmospheric inversions.
- Lots of cars/lack of mass transit.
- Heavy industry.
- Dust from unpaved roads.



Which slide more quickly helps you reinforce your point about the increasing air pollution in your city? Rather than showing the text-based slide, simply talk about these points while showing the photo.

incorporate a well-made visual and speak about it articulately. Your stature as a speaker increases when you look like you know what you're doing with visuals.

- **Visuals provide a shortcut.** Almost all ideas can be communicated through language, but some are more quickly communicated through a visual. Yes, you could talk at length about how a tadpole turns into a frog, describing the various stages of development in great detail. But showing those stages of development as you discuss them lets your audience quickly see what you are describing. You could explain the hierarchical structure of the United States Army with words, but showing an organizational chart helps your audience grasp the chain of command in much less time.
- **Visuals keep you active.** Many speakers take pleasure in the creative process of designing and presenting visual support. Others enjoy picking things up with their hands, pointing, demonstrating, and pressing buttons during their presentations, all in the name of communicating ideas. Most speakers report that working with visuals is a positive way to channel excess speaker's energy, giving them "something to do other than stand there."

24B

Determine Whether a Visual Is Right for Your Presentation

When you incorporate visual support, you invite audience members to engage their sense of sight, thereby increasing their involvement in your message. Stimulating that second sense is a worthwhile goal, but still, you want to include visual support in your presentations for the right reasons. Here are three major questions to consider:

1. Are you communicating any ideas that need visual support?

Many ideas benefit from the support of visual material, but not all ideas require it. Here are some ideas that work well in visual form. Note that you *could* describe these ideas through language, but showing them is a more efficient and effective means of communication.

Essentials

Why Use Visuals in Your Presentation?

- Visuals enhance, substitute, or lend atmosphere to your language.
- Visuals appeal to listeners by drawing them in, stimulating interaction, increasing understanding, influencing opinion, and creating memories.
- Visuals help you make a point, increase your credibility, provide a shortcut to longer explanations, and give you a way to channel excess speaker's energy.

- **Relationships of size:** how big a certain jungle leaf is in relation to a 10-year-old boy, how small the Mercedes Smart Car is compared to a Hummer, how similar in size human and dolphin brains are.
- **Relationships of time:** before and after reconstructive facial surgery, the Roman Coliseum then and now, a photo of you as a baby and one as a high school senior.



Use visual support to show relationships of size.

- **Relationships of space:** maps, visuals charting movement from one place to another, a mock-up of the solar system.
- **Unique or unfamiliar objects or features:** a Chilean *arpil-lera*, a new species of mushroom, Cy the one-eyed kitten.
- **Things difficult to describe:** a certain kind of cloud, a weird shape, a style of artwork, an older style of clothing, relationships within an organization.
- **Complex objects:** a piece of architecture, a wiring system, a chemical compound.
- **Small things enlarged for understanding:** a hair follicle, a microchip, a tooth.

2. Do you fully understand your visual?

The increasing number of images available in print and on the web makes it easy to find ready-to-go visuals and incorporate them into your presentation. It's fine to use one of these found visuals (citing it, of course, as you would any outside research source), as long as you fully understand what it represents. Remember: choose or create a visual because you need to support an idea, not just because the visual is available or is somehow related.



Use visual support to show relationships of time. For example, these two images of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* help listeners see the success of the restoration process. (Left: before restoration. Right: after restoration.)



Use visual support to show relationships of space.

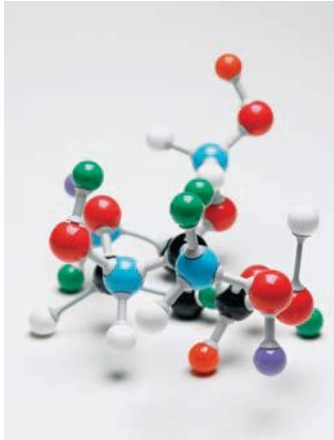


Use visual support to show things that are difficult to describe. Imagine trying to describe a cirrus cloud without showing an example of it.

Some speakers, especially those who procrastinate or are pressed for time, fall prey to the bad habit of using visuals without examining or understanding them. For example, a speaker discussing United Nations food programs in Africa once displayed a found graph showing UN food-program statistics in Iraq. Another speaker, discussing the correlation between educational degrees and average yearly income, mysteriously showed a found chart depicting the percentage of household income dedicated to rent or mortgage in various parts of the country. The resulting confusion distracted listeners from the two messages and lessened the speakers' credibility—both major concerns. Make sure that you fully understand your visual and that it directly relates to the idea you're communicating.

3. Does your visual material support your presentation or drive it?

Here's a fundamental lesson about visuals: visuals should *support* your speech, not *drive* it. (That's why it's called *visual support*!) Avoid these



Use visual support to show a complex item you're referencing. Your listeners can better follow your discussion of a complex chemical compound if they have a model to look at.

two visual-support mistakes sometimes made by beginning speakers.

- **Mistake #1—abandoning a speech topic because you can't decide on a visual.** *I want to give my speech on Topic X, but I don't know what to use for a visual. I guess I'll have to choose another topic.* Instead of prematurely dismissing a topic, remember that you should prepare your visuals—if they're needed—*after* you've prepared the speech, not the other way around. Only after you know what ideas you want to communicate can you find or create visual material to support those ideas. Be patient. The more you work with your ideas, the more likely a logical visual will present itself.
- **Mistake #2—forcing a visual into a presentation.** On occasion, because a visual is pretty, exciting, or otherwise interesting, a speaker builds his or her presentation around it or awkwardly forces it into the presentation. Again, choose or create visuals because they support an idea, not the other way around.

24C

Manage Your Two-Dimensional Visual Support

Two-dimensional (2-D) visual support has height and width only. As we'll discuss later in this chapter, presentation software is becoming the 2-D delivery system of choice for many presenters. Other 2-D delivery systems include poster boards, display boards, transparencies, and flip charts; though they are low-tech, these 2-D materials helped speakers communicate ideas very well before the invention of PowerPoint slides. And guess what. They still work!

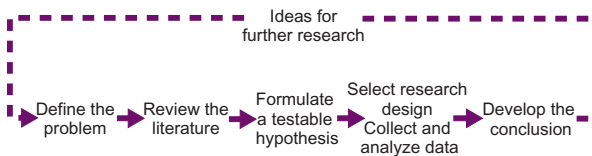
1. Types of two-dimensional support

- **Maps.** A map is a great way to get your audience involved. Not only do maps help orient the geographically unsure, but they are big and colorful and can take your listeners on an interesting journey to another part of the city, state, region, country, or world.
- **Charts.** A **chart** is a diagram that groups detailed information in one place.
 - **Flow charts** show the sequence of operations in a process. For example, use a flow chart to show how scholarship applications are collected, processed, and ranked.
 - **Organizational charts** show how authority and supervision are distributed within a company or organization. Use an organizational chart to explain the structure of a new company you are launching.

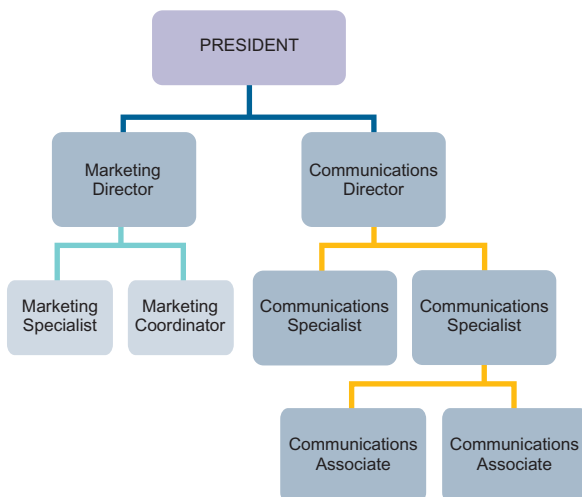
Essentials

Do I Need a Visual?

- Can I communicate this idea visually?
Yes—look for or prepare a visual to enhance, substitute, or add atmosphere.
No—some ideas are not visual in nature and are better communicated through language only.
- Do I fully understand my visual?
Yes—use it confidently in your presentation.
No—study it to ensure that it's compatible with the idea you're communicating.
If compatibility is lacking, find another visual.
- Does this visual support my presentation instead of driving it?
Yes—use it confidently.
No—drop it and find another, or do without a visual.



Flow chart.



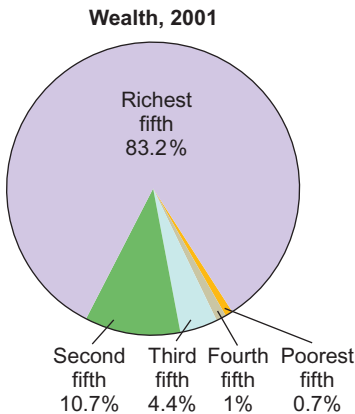
Organizational chart.

- **Timelines** show key events arranged chronologically. Use a timeline to show important dates and events leading up to the creation of the national minimum wage or to show key deadlines for an upcoming group project.

- **Graphs.** A **graph**, sometimes called a **data-driven graph**, helps you communicate numerical relationships.
- **Pie graphs** show how 100 percent of something is broken down into smaller segments; the segments of the pie always add up to 100 percent. Use a pie graph to show that 47 percent of your classmates work full-time, 33 percent work part-time, and 20 percent do not work at all.



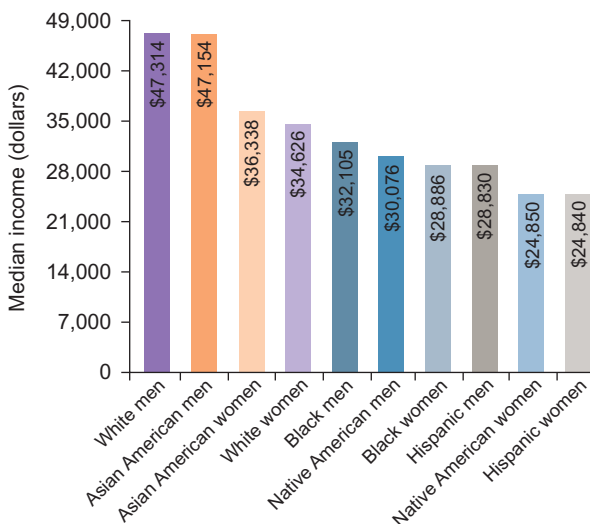
Timeline.



Pie graph.

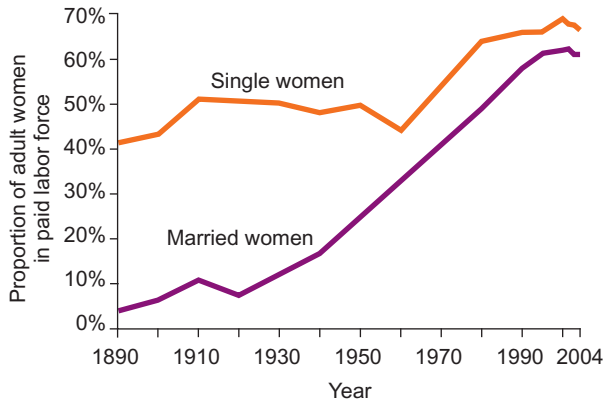
- **Bar graphs** use bars of varying lengths, oriented vertically or horizontally, to illustrate comparisons of two or more values; numerical data and explanatory labels are arranged along the x- and y-axes.
- **Line graphs** use single or multiple lines to show trends over time. Use a line graph to show winter-holiday sales figures at your company over the last fifty years.

- **Photos.** Photographs are an excellent way to show your audience what something looks like or to evoke an emotion. Use photographs to show exactly how bizarre looking some deep-sea creatures are. Use a photograph of police officers attending a colleague's funeral to make your point about the need for increased use of police body armor.



Bar graph.

- **Photo illustrations.** Technology has made it possible for nearly anyone to manipulate photographs. A **photo illustration** does not record the real world as a photograph would; instead, it is a created image that looks like it could be a photograph. Use a photo illustration to show what your new city plaza might look like upon completion. Stage or build a photo illustration of a harried individual being pulled in all directions by children, pets, friends, and coworkers. Unless you are using it for obvious comedic or outrageous effect, you are



Line graph.



Photo illustration.

you don't have time to cover or for giving your listeners something to follow along with at some point during your presentation. Handouts are also expected in some business contexts. See the "Did You Know?" box for tips on the effective use of handouts.

2. Preparing two-dimensional support

Make your 2-D support communicative, simple, and pleasing to the eye. In most cases, your audience doesn't have the time to study and make sense of it. Instead, your 2-D visual should immediately speak for itself.

If you intend to use a found visual, give yourself time to locate what you need. If you're preparing your own support, give yourself additional time to design it, gather materials, and create it. Speakers bring undue stress on themselves when they wait until the last minute to glue photos onto their poster boards or search for the spellings of certain words. This stress, in turn, predictably affects their presentations. Manage the days of your speech preparation wisely. You need more time than you think to design and create professional-looking support.

ethically obliged to point out that your visual is a photo illustration and not a regular photograph.

- **Video.** Video starts with the power of a photograph and adds sound and action. Use a video to show the incredible force of a volcanic explosion. Use it to support your opinion that Shakira deserves her reputation as a phenomenal dancer.
- **Animation.** With a little training, we are able to use today's technology to create animated sequences. Use one to take your audience on a "three-dimensional" tour of a theatre set. Show an animated sequence of a fertilized egg splitting in two.
- **Handouts.** Some speaking situations are ripe for handouts. They're great for providing your audience members with additional information

Did You Know?

Guidelines for Using Handouts

- Be judicious in the amount of information you put on the handout. Providing irrelevant or excess content may defeat your communication goals.
- In most situations, provide your handout only after the presentation. You don't want your audience distracted while you're still speaking.
- If you must provide the handout at the beginning of your talk, consider asking listeners to put it to the side for now, and assure them that you'll review it with them at the appropriate time in your presentation.
- If the handout contains data you'll be talking about, display an enlargement of the data on a slide or overhead transparency for easy audience reference.
- If the handout has multiple pages, number them for easy reference.

Whether your 2-D support is shown on a digital slide, a poster board, or an overhead transparency, here are some preparation guidelines for creating visuals with high audience impact.

- **Think quantity.** A thirty-minute presentation with two visuals can be just as effective as a five-minute talk with ten visuals or a twenty-minute speech with none. Consider your specific topic, its suitability for visuals, and your audience's needs. Jesper Johansson, a senior security strategist in the Security Technology Unit at Microsoft, blogs about an upcoming presentation. Note how Johansson explicitly thinks about his purpose, the audience, and the context when deciding on the number of visuals to use:

Now I am off to give yet another presentation. This one has four slides: a title slide (because the organizers require it), a graph of the fundamental tradeoffs in security, which I could put on paper if I weren't worried about the trees, a really complicated time-series progression with annotations at various places, and a picture. The presentation is expected to last for an hour, during which I will spend 55 minutes discussing the middle two slides with the audience.”¹

Remember that each visual takes up time in your presentation—probably more than you think. Some speakers, especially those using presentation software, make the mistake of having too many visuals. Their listeners watch helplessly while the speakers, suddenly aware of the remaining time, rush mutely through the rest of their slides. Your practice sessions are key in determining the realistic number of visuals you can show and discuss.

- **Think simplicity.** Keep each 2-D visual simple.
 - **Ideas.** Each visual should communicate one idea only. Though you discuss your visual while showing it, your 2-D support should make an impact on your audience all by itself as soon as it's shown. It's a lot to ask your listeners to look at a slide for only twenty seconds and get through a complicated numerical chart with seven columns

and thirteen rows, or eighteen photographic angles of a particular object. A busy visual is not a better visual; less is almost always more. Abide by the KISS rule—keep it simple, sweetheart!

- **Title.** Your 2-D support should contain a title at the top or bottom, summarizing its one main idea.
- **Lettering.** Bold, clear, and simple lettering is easy for everyone to read. Fancy script can be difficult to sift through and may distract from your ideas.
- **Numbering.** Audiences find Arabic numerals (1, 4, 63) much easier to read than Roman numerals (I, IV, LXIII). Use Arabic numerals.
- **Think color.** Color is more appealing to your viewers than simple black on white. Color can attract attention, separate ideas, and even evoke emotion. A visual with too many colors can create a busy mess, however, while one with too few colors can bore your audience.
 - **Color theory.** Colors can affect our moods, our interactions, and even our behavior. Understanding the basics of color psychology and theory helps you create a visual with impact. Does this color have connotations that you want or don't want (like green for the environment or white for purity)? Do your chosen colors go together well? Books and websites on basic color theory are widely available, and a few minutes studying them can go a long way toward helping you create audience-pleasing images. One helpful website is Color Matters: <http://www.colormatters.com/colortheory.html>.
 - **Use red minimally.** In Western culture, red symbolizes danger, emergency, passion, or power; few colors attract as much attention. If you use red, apply it sparingly and for the right reasons. Use it to highlight an important piece of data within a chart or to draw your audience's attention to a certain section of a photo illustration. Use red on a map to indicate a danger zone.
- **Think contrast.** Dark text shows up better against a light background (like the black on yellow of many traffic signs), whereas white or bright yellow images contrast best against a dark background. Save your less-contrasting colors (pink on white) for shading only. You can also contrast ideas by using images of different size, style, or shape.
- **Think size.** What looks fine to you up close or on the computer screen may not transfer well to the speaking space. Everyone, even those in the back row, must be able to easily see your 2-D support. Make sure that all fonts and images are large enough and that there are enough pixels to ensure consistent clarity when your images are enlarged.
- **Think balance and design.** Though you don't want to use every square inch of your 2-D support, fill up the whole visual space, or perceived space. A 4-inch-high title across the top of the page and a 15 × 20-inch centered image fill up the visual space of a 22 × 28-inch poster board much better than does a single 8 × 10-inch image. Think balance as you place your text and images. Too much information on one side of the visual can cause your listeners' heads to tilt!
- **Think credibility.** Your visual is a direct reflection of your thinking and the care you took preparing for your presentation.

Essentials

Making a Great 2-D Visual

- Think **quantity**. The specifics of *your* speech determine the appropriate number of visuals.
- Think **simplicity**. Communicate one idea only on each visual. Avoid fancy lettering and numbering.
- Think **color**. Know how colors work to attract and distract.
- Think **contrast**. Make sure that pieces of data are distinct from one another.
- Think **size**. Everyone in the speaking space must be able to see everything on your visual.
- Think **balance and design**. Make your visual pleasing to look at.
- Think **credibility**. Check for spelling and grammar, and be sure that your visual materials are sufficiently sturdy.

- **Grammar and spelling**. Demonstrate your respect for your audience and yourself by checking and double-checking your 2-D support for grammar and spelling. The slide spelling *poker* with an extra *r* evoked giggles as the audience imagined a game called *porker*. The poster board transposing the *d* and the *i* in the word *soldier* left the audience questioning what on earth a *solider* was. Do you mean *there*, *their*, or *they're*? Don't let grammatical or spelling errors distract from your message and lead to embarrassment. Double-check with a trusted source.
- **Sturdiness**. Two-dimensional visuals have an uncanny ability to come to life during a presentation. The edges of a poster board can curl in, forcing the speaker into a public wrestling match with a piece of paper. An air draft can blow overhead transparencies around, sending the speaker crawling about on all fours under a table. Ensure that your 2-D support does what you need it to do by spending a bit more on the initial materials (\$3 for a piece of foam core rather than \$0.59 for a thinner poster board) or reinforcing thinner materials with cardboard or wood to give them added heft.

24D

Manage Your Three-Dimensional Visual Support

Three-dimensional (3-D) support has height, width, and depth. It can give your presentation additional attraction, power, and interest.

1. *Types of three-dimensional support*

- **People**. Speakers sometimes use themselves or others as visual support. A live body attracts an audience's attention and encourages interaction; most people like to watch other people doing or demonstrating things. Show how to wrap a sari by putting one on.

Use an assistant as you demonstrate self-defense techniques. Ask for volunteers as you teach your audience the trick of guessing someone's weight within three pounds. If you are using other people to assist you, share your plan with them ahead of time. Ensure that your "visual-support person" seamlessly enhances your presentation rather than distracts from it.

- **Animals.** If there's one thing an audience prefers to watching other people, it's watching animals. If your instructor gives permission, bring in your dog as you demonstrate obedience training. Show your parrot in all its beauty while discussing its characteristics as a pet. Because animals attract immediate attention, keep yours out of sight until it's time to use it as visual support. Of course, make sure the animal will cooperate with you and do what you need it to do. Will your dog concentrate on you and the trick you are asking her to do, or will she be more interested in getting to know the people in the audience? Will your parrot squawk continually, making it difficult for your audience to hear you? Also, consider the potential audience reactions to your animal. For example, some people have intense fears of birds or snakes, and some people are highly allergic to dogs. You may want to check ahead of time to ensure that your listeners and your animal will remain safe and sane.
- **Objects.** Nearly all objects attract attention, but most make more of an impact when they are new to the majority of your audience. Everyone has seen a cell phone, but how many people have seen a kidney stone? Demonstrate the advanced technology of a titanium knee by bringing one in. Show your audience how exotically cool a didgeridoo is by giving a mini-concert. Alicia Ruiz, a veterinarian who often speaks on career days at junior high schools and elementary schools, likes to bring in cat X-rays and her stethoscope. She says that the objects get the children's attention and help keep their interest while she talks about the world of veterinary medicine. You can also use objects for their value as metaphors. Show a pair of champagne glasses to symbolize a couple's commitment. Light a candle to represent an "eternal flame of hope" in the search for a cure for multiple sclerosis.
- **Models.** **Models** are a way to show your audience a scaled-down version of an object too large or too dangerous to bring in. Architects build models to communicate to clients their vision of a new park or building. A replica of an eighteenth-century sailing ship helps your audience gain an appreciation for its grace and complexity. A model of a weapon allows you to demonstrate its utility in a safe and nonthreatening way.

2. Preparing three-dimensional support

The novelty and excitement of 3-D support increases audience attention and engagement. As with 2-D support, give yourself sufficient time to gather, train, build, or locate your 3-D material. Whether it takes the form of people, animals, objects, or models, consider the following guidelines to create high audience impact.

- **Think visibility.** Your main challenge in using 3-D support is making the visual big enough for all audience members to see. Do the sight lines in the room let those on the sides or in the back comfortably see your object or demonstration? Can everyone see

the details on that Fabergé egg, or do you need a projection device like a document camera to magnify them?

- **Think reliability.** You want your 3-D support to come through at the moment you need it. Make sure that the radio-controlled car has a fresh battery. If your puppy is not yet house-trained, ask yourself whether you really need to bring him in and risk having an accident to deal with. If you have to manipulate a small part of your model, will your hands be steady enough to do it?
- **Think transportability.** Your visual should be easy to take from place to place. Is your visual too cumbersome to lug across campus? If you are taking it out of town, can you get it through airport security?

24E

Understand the Role of Presentation Software

Presentation software, also known as **slideware**, has revolutionized the use of visual support in public speeches. PowerPoint and other presentation software programs* have become commonplace in presentations in business, military, government, and academic contexts. In fact, Microsoft estimates that 30 million presenters use its software program each day.²

PowerPoint is a wonderful tool, and when used well, it greatly enhances the impact of a presentation. But PowerPoint must always be a tool, not the driving force behind your talk. It's not your salvation, and it's not a replacement for what you do as the public speaker. Think carefully about PowerPoint. Don't just use it blindly because "everyone else is." Critically analyze the role of presentation software in each of your specific presentations and then choose to use it—or not—for the right reasons.

1. Should you use PowerPoint? Yes, if . . .

- **PowerPoint is right for your message.** The single most common and most egregious PowerPoint error is to use it to display your speaking outline. Your speaking outline is for your eyes only and has little to no function or meaning for your audience. Listeners want to interact with you and your ideas, not follow along as you read words off a screen. Your PowerPoint slides should either visually enhance your information, substitute for it, or add atmosphere, as you read earlier in the chapter.
- **PowerPoint is right for your audience.** PowerPoint may be popular because of its wide appeal to *speakers* rather than its appeal to audiences.³ After all, it encourages speakers to focus *their* ideas, helps *them* with their outlines, and compels *them* to be prepared for their big upcoming speeches. In striving for listenability, however, you want to make

*Because of PowerPoint's popularity, the term *PowerPoint* is used in this textbook to refer to PowerPoint specifically and to presentation software programs in general. Other slideware programs of increasing popularity are Apple's Keynote, Lotus Freelance Graphics, Macromedia Director, and Flash Professional.

choices that are right for your audience, not just for you. Create slides to draw your audience in and keep them connected. Create slides to encourage listeners to interact with and remember your ideas. A great listener-centered PowerPoint presentation does all that and more, but speaker-focused slides of your outline do not.

- **PowerPoint is right for you.** Don't feel pressured to use PowerPoint because others are using it. Speakers who use PowerPoint give both terrific and not-so-terrific presentations. So do speakers who don't use it. The jury is still out on whether using PowerPoint improves a speaker's ability to communicate or listeners' ability to understand the speech content.⁴ Slideware is merely a supporting tool. Use PowerPoint only if *you* need or want to show enhancing, substituting, or atmospheric visuals and if *you* feel comfortable using it. Of course, your teacher, supervisor, or the speaking host may require PowerPoint for a variety of reasons. You'll certainly need to use it in these situations.
- **PowerPoint is right for this speaking context.** Not all speaking situations are right for PowerPoint. Presentation software requires a flat wall or screen, electricity, a projector, and a functioning computer that you know how to use. Are all these readily available to you? PowerPoint often requires you to dim or turn off the lights, and no matter how engaging your presentation is, a dark or semidark room can be tempting to drowsy audience members who have just eaten lunch or are at the end of a long day. Analyze the specifics of your speaking context as you consider your use of PowerPoint. Make sure that it enhances your use of slideware rather than detracts from it.

The "Speaker's Story" box profiles one speaker who uses his slides for the right listener-centered reasons.

2. Advantages of PowerPoint

Once you've decided that PowerPoint is right for your message, your audience, you, and the speaking context, you can confidently use it for its many advantages.

- **PowerPoint looks professional.** Crisp and colorful slides are a pleasure to view. Audience members are spared the flimsy poster board filled with ink smudges or the monochromatic transparency with that distracting white strip down the side.
- **PowerPoint is easy to learn.** You no longer need specialized training in graphic design and computers to create a beautiful visual presentation. Many people are already skilled in using presentation software programs. If you're not, look in the software program itself or for built-in tutorials on the web. Microsoft hosts one helpful site: <http://www.microsoft.com/Education/PPTTutorial.msp>. Training classes at libraries, community centers, organizations, schools, and businesses are also widely available. You'll soon be on your way to creating your own visually appealing presentations.
- **PowerPoint is easy to use.** When all is running smoothly, PowerPoint is a simple tool to operate. You can use a remote-control device, ask someone else to run it for you, or stand by the computer and run the program yourself. Operating commands are simple and quick and won't pull you from your main task of communicating your ideas to your listeners.

A Speaker's Story

My Slides

“

Garr Reynolds, an associate professor of management at Kansai Gaidai University in Japan, teaches marketing, global marketing, and multimedia presentation design. Reynolds often presents on subjects related to design, branding, and effective corporate communications. He says the following about the role of slides in his presentations:

My slides do not tell nearly the complete story. If you attended one of my presentations, you would see that the slides serve to reinforce my points and my connection to the audience. But on their own, aside from being interesting and perhaps nice to look at, they serve no real utility outside my presentation. And that's OK. Presentations are ephemeral, a unique moment in time to connect, to teach, persuade, sell, or whatever your purpose of the talk may be. Once it's over, it's over. A printout of slides is of little use. And that is precisely why I do not print out my slides for the audience. Instead, I provide a handout to be distributed after my presentations. This allows me to provide more detail and better-written prose, rather than the short bulleted lists contained within wordy PowerPoint slide printouts that confuse (not to mention bore) more than they inform.

Check out Reynolds's website at <http://www.garreynolds.com> to see samples of his slides. Click on *presentations* and then *slide tips*.

Quote edited by permission of Garr Reynolds.

”

- **PowerPoint engages the audience.** Audience members respond positively to well-prepared slides. The large screen, bright colors, animation, and sound attract your listeners' attention and invite them to interact with your message. Audiences like engaging their eyes as well as their ears during a public presentation.
- **PowerPoint adds to your credibility.** A well-designed and professionally managed PowerPoint presentation does wonders for your credibility. It says that you are contemporary and competent and an “electronically eloquent” member of society.⁵ The “Speaker's Story” box (📍 p. 391) describes the added credibility one speaker earned through her excellent use of PowerPoint.

3. Disadvantages of PowerPoint

Even if you have decided that PowerPoint is right for your message, your audience, you, and the speaking context, you must be aware of its disadvantages.

Essentials

When to Use PowerPoint

Use PowerPoint or other presentation software only when

- it's right for your message. You're communicating an idea that can be expressed visually.
- it's right for your audience. The software will increase their engagement with your message.
- it's right for you. You want to use it and feel comfortable doing so.
- it's right for the context. The software is suitable for this speaking space, situation, and time of day.

- **PowerPoint can mask complex ideas.** The built-in outline templates that most users of PowerPoint adopt may conceal complex ideas you need to communicate.⁶ Some ideas are too multilayered, nonlinear, or intricate to format according to the sequential and hierarchical constraints of PowerPoint templates. After the loss of the space shuttle *Columbia*, investigators attributed part of the disaster to the PowerPoint presentations used within NASA during the crisis.⁷ Though the engineers knew full well that the foam that hit *Columbia*'s left wing at liftoff was potentially damaging, their crudely made PowerPoint slides led decision makers higher up in the organization to perceive the situation as much less dangerous. People within NASA needed to talk to one another face-to-face to fully communicate the nuances and uncertainties of the crisis rather than rely on the minimal, text-only outlines on the PowerPoint slides.

The point is well taken: people have had the ability to communicate complex ideas for centuries—well before the invention of PowerPoint—and many of our contemporary ideas are still better communicated without it.

- **PowerPoint can dumb down your presentation.** The built-in templates can reduce the intellectual impact of your content and presentation.⁸ Bulleted lists and brief outlines limit what you can say and may have the overall effect of making your presentation look as if it's geared toward the lowest common denominator. Just how smart can you look when you use six lines of text of six words each? Goofy clip art and dancing sentences, accompanied by silly noises, quickly grow old and may result in your not being taken as seriously as you would like to be.
- **PowerPoint can disconnect you from your audience.** A heavy reliance on PowerPoint can hurt the relationship between you and your audience. The low lights minimize eye contact. The allure of the colorful slides draws your gaze and that of your listeners to an inanimate screen, furthering a disconnect between you at a time when connection and interaction are your goals. The disconnect increases if you need to stand in the back of the room to work the PowerPoint program.

A Speaker's Story

PowerPoint Lends a Credibility Boost

“

Bella, a student at a large public university, recently gave an hour-long presentation to her department community as part of her senior project. Bella's thesis centered on how the conflict between Northern Ireland's Catholics and Protestants is, in part, communicated through the visual means of large public murals. She knew that visual support was critical to her audience's understanding, so she spent time creating a series of supportive PowerPoint slides.

During the presentation, Bella showed example after example of the murals, pointing out relevant details and speaking about each knowledgeably. The slides were perfectly arranged and seamlessly operated by a tiny remote in her hand. She didn't have to keep looking up at the screen to see which slide was showing because she had practiced. The photos were large, crisp, well cropped, and shot from clear angles. She pointed out specific characteristics of the murals with a laser pointer. Bella's credibility as a speaker, already high from her research and her travels to Northern Ireland, was greatly enhanced through her professional use of her presentation software.

”

- **PowerPoint can bore your audience.** Like anything no longer fresh, PowerPoint presentations may bore the average audience. You were no doubt dazzled the first time you saw a PowerPoint presentation, but by now, you have probably seen quite a few. Endless words on a screen are boring. Twirling graphics get old fast.
- **PowerPoint can fail.** Technology and equipment can fail. Expect it. Some speakers like to bring in transparencies of their important slides or copies of an important chart. Others practice giving the speech with and without PowerPoint. Whatever your strategy, have a backup plan. One business professional tells her story:

I attended a conference session given by a speaker I really wanted to hear. I showed up early to get a good seat, only to find the speaker desperately trying to get the conference-supplied computer up and running. His presentation was slotted for forty-five minutes, yet the first twenty minutes were taken up with excuses, awkward smiles, and yet more attempts to get the machine to cooperate. A technician was finally called (and waited for), and though she managed to get the computer to respond, even more bad news awaited—the device containing the speaker's PowerPoint presentation was incompatible. Though the speaker had brought backup printed materials, the momentum was lost; not only was he frazzled and now pressed for time, but I (and probably his other listeners) had essentially checked out.

Essentials

Advantages and Disadvantages of PowerPoint

Advantages of PowerPoint

- It looks professional.
- It's easy to learn.
- It's easy to use.
- It engages the audience.
- It adds to your credibility.

Disadvantages of PowerPoint

- It can mask complex ideas.
- It can dumb down your presentation.
- It can disconnect you from your audience.
- It can be boring.
- It can fail.

4. How to make a great PowerPoint presentation

- **Use PowerPoint for photographs, charts, maps, graphs, and animated sequences that enhance, substitute for, or add atmosphere to your spoken ideas.** These visuals allow PowerPoint to shine. The clarity, size, and color of your slides appeal to listeners' eyes. Your audience members are drawn into PowerPoint's ability to bring your ideas to visual life in a professional and exciting way.
- **Use slides only when necessary.** Don't feel compelled to use slides throughout your presentation merely because the software presents you with the capability. Instead, use PowerPoint as a visual support tool only. Plan your speech without PowerPoint in mind (the "analog" version, so to speak). Once you have the speech prepared, ask yourself whether any of your ideas can be supported by a visual. If the answer is yes, then look to PowerPoint as an excellent support tool.
- **Abide by the tips for making 2-D visuals.** A PowerPoint slide is merely another form of a two-dimensional visual (see 📌 pp. 382–385) .
- **Don't overdo the gimmicks.** PowerPoint gives you the ability to incorporate lots of attention-grabbing tricks. Don't be tempted by the crazy sounds of the Cash Register, the Drumroll, or the Ricochet. Beware of overly busy background effects (such as Marble or Ribbon) or a text effect (Fly In or Typewriter) whose only purpose is to draw attention to itself. Because you *can* do these things does not mean you *should*.
- **Double- and triple-check for technological success.** Building your PowerPoint slides takes time. You also want to practice with them to ensure their smooth use during the actual presentation.

24F

Follow These Guidelines for Using Technology in Your Presentation

Our access to and command of technology empowers us in wonderful ways, but equipment is not always reliable or perfect, and we can quickly become imprisoned by our best technological intentions.

Use the checklist below to ensure that you are right for the technology and the technology is right for your particular presentation. Clearly communicate your technology needs to your contact at the speaking site. Speaking hosts and technicians may wave aside your questions, assuring you, “Yeah, we’ve got everything you need, don’t worry.” *Do* worry! Be reasonable in your technological requests, and then politely and firmly state your needs. You cannot afford the negative impact on your credibility when your technology doesn’t cooperate.

Technology

- _____ Do you confidently know how to work the particular version of the hardware, the software, or the electronic device?
- _____ Do you need additional training? Is there enough time for you to get it?
- _____ If you plan to use live web pages, does the room have Internet access? Is it cable or wireless? If wireless, is the computer compatible?

Equipment and Accessories

- _____ Is the equipment you used to prepare your presentation different from the equipment you’ll use during the actual speech?
- _____ Have you used that equipment, or do you need training? Is there time to get training? Do you have a willing trainer?
- _____ Does the computer have the right application(s) loaded?
- _____ Does your file run more smoothly from the temporary drive or from the hard drive? Is there room on the hard drive for your file?
- _____ Does the computer or electronic device have the right ports for any data-storage devices or cables you’ll be bringing?
- _____ Do you need specialized or extra cables?
- _____ Is there a DVD drive?
- _____ Do you need audio speakers? Are there built-in speakers (and will they be powerful enough), or do you need to hook up some external speakers?
- _____ Is there an extra bulb on hand if the one in the projector blows out?

Compatibility

- _____ Does the program you need work only on a PC, or will it also work on a Mac? Which format is available at the speaking site?
- _____ Is the right port available for your flash drive or other data-storage device?
- _____ Is the right drive available at the speaking site for your disc?
- _____ Is there enough operating power in the computer to run your presentation?
- _____ Is the equipment compatible with your physical needs or limitations?

Plugs and Electricity

- ___ Are there enough electrical outlets for your needs?
- ___ Are the outlets working?
- ___ Are the outlets close by, or do you need to order an extension cord?
- ___ Do you need a three-pronged outlet?

Practice and Preparation

- ___ Many speakers like to come in a day early to work out any kinks ahead of time. Can you do this?
- ___ Does your schedule allow you to get to the speaking location well before your audience on the day of the presentation (at least thirty minutes ahead of time, though preferably more) to make sure that all necessary equipment is present and in working order?
- ___ Have you located operating dials and buttons, like volume control and mute?
- ___ Do you know how to set up and work the remote?
- ___ Does the equipment go into sleep mode if it's not used for a certain number of minutes, and do you know how to wake it up again?

Cues

- ___ If you are using a video, CD, or DVD, is it cued to the exact spot you need? Your audience doesn't want to sit there and watch you search.
- ___ If for some reason the spot you need gets miscued or moved, do you know how to quickly find it again?
- ___ If you need to show a web page, is it already bookmarked? You don't want to go through several layers of other pages to get to the one you want, and you definitely do not want to stand there typing in a long URL!
- ___ Will the equipment have power as soon as you need it, or will your audience have to sit there and watch it warm up?

Assistants

For a variety of reasons, some speakers use assistants to operate devices, carry things, assist demonstrations, and so on.

- ___ Is the assistant willing?
- ___ Does he or she know how to do what you need done?
- ___ Are you confident the assistant will perform the needed function quietly and efficiently and not draw unneeded attention?

Have a Backup Plan

- ___ Bring your data on a backup format. If your CD doesn't work, the flash drive may.
- ___ If you know that a document camera will be on hand, bring in hard copies of essential visuals like slides or web pages. You can use this in the case of computer or server problems.
- ___ Use a practice session or two to see what visuals you could do without if necessary. Can you communicate the idea through language only?

- Keep your cool should something go wrong. Verbalizing and showing your frustration harm your credibility. Calmly ask for assistance from someone who can help.

24G

Know How to Use Your Visual Support

You already know the importance of having enough time to prepare your visual support. You also need sufficient time to practice with it. Though you don't need to choreograph the exact steps of using your visual, you want to familiarize yourself with its details so that it looks and feels second nature when the time comes to use it in front of your audience. You want your visuals—be they 2-D or 3-D, high-tech or no-tech—to work with you, not against you. Here are some guidelines for using your visual support during your presentation.

1. *Discovery*

Your audience must be able to easily find, see, and interact with your visual. Follow these recommendations for easy audience discovery.

- **Introduce the visual.** Provide your audience with a few words of orientation prior to showing and discussing your visual support. Explain what it is the audience is about to experience by saying “and here’s a chart to help you see exactly where the money we raised last year went to help the children in our community,” or “I want to show you this map of South America so you can see how many countries contain at least a portion of the Andean mountain chain.”
- **Orient the visual correctly.** Make sure that you show your visual in the correct orientation. This may seem obvious, but you would be surprised at how frequently a visual is shown upside down or sideways. Some kinds of technology (like a document camera or a transparency machine) require an orientation that may seem illogical to the speaker but is correct for the audience. Be sure to practice with your visual ahead of time so that you know its correct orientation.
- **Don’t block the visual.** Before your presentation, walk around the corners of the room to ensure that all members of the audience can see your visual. Is there a lectern, post, table, or wall that may block an audience member’s view? Is the visual placed at a level high enough for the people in back rows to see? Will your body be in the way?
- **Point to the spot of reference.** Don’t assume that your audience can locate the exact spot of reference on the visual even if it’s obvious to you. Use a laser pointer or another pointing device (a metal pointer, a pencil, your finger) to draw your audience’s attention to that exact slice of the pie graph or that particular visual characteristic you’re discussing.
- **Allow time for the audience to absorb the material.** Despite your visual’s simplicity, your audience requires a bit of time to make sense of and interact with your visual. Allow enough time for them to do so.

2. Discussion

Your visual helps you make a point. You need to discuss it to help your audience understand what they are seeing and how that content supports the point you are communicating.

- **Know what you want to say.** Your practice sessions are essential for helping you prepare the discussion of your visual. Know your visual well enough so that you don't have to study it to think of something to say. Don't be like the speaker who not only failed to label the x- and y-axes on her graph but clearly had no clue what they were measuring. This speaker soon got so frustrated that she just walked away from the visual, leaving it there as a cruel reminder of her lack of preparation. Have a plan for what you are going to say, and then say it.
- **Discuss the entire content of the visual.** Extraneous visual information distracts the audience with thoughts such as, *What's that image for?* or *What do all those other lines on the graph represent?* Unless there are decorative images that obviously speak for themselves, discuss everything on your visual.
- **Speak to the audience, not to the visual.** Though your visual provides an opportunity for your audience to look at something other than you, this is not a time for you to abandon your listeners. It's perfectly acceptable to look at your visual when pointing to a spot of reference, but don't let your eyes stay there and get lost. Don't turn your back on the audience and talk to the visual! Keep your face, eyes, and body oriented toward the audience, much as you have been doing during the rest of the speech.
- **Cite the content of the visual as you would another reference.** If you're using a found visual or incorporating researched material into your own created visual, you have an ethical obligation to cite the research source. See page 58 for a full discussion on citing research sources and pages 58–59 for guidelines regarding fair use of another person's creative work.

3. Distraction

It's both an advantage and a disadvantage that visual support gives your audience something to do. While visuals enrich your presentation by inviting audience members to participate with their eyes, they can also unnecessarily draw your listeners' attention away from your message.

- **Show the visual only as needed.** The appealing colors and images of your visual make it necessary to keep it out of sight until it's time to discuss it. Keep your iguana in the terrarium under a sheet until it's time to show off her beautiful beaded pattern; keep your chart turned around or flat on the table until you need to discuss it; leave the lights on and the video monitor on a blank blue or white screen until it's time to show the clip; show a blank slide until you're ready to show one with content. Once you're done discussing the visual, remove it to redirect your audience's attention back to you and your continuing message.
- **Beware of putting things in your audience's hands.** Natural human curiosity makes it nearly impossible for people *not* to pay attention to something given to them. Think before putting anything in the audience's hands during the presentation. Put your photo

on a PowerPoint slide or enlarge it for a poster board rather than passing it around the room. Project your pie graph onto the big screen in front of the room rather than giving a personal copy to each audience member. If you must give people something to take home, you typically want to wait until the end to hand it out.

- **Consider legality, safety, and propriety.** Presentations suffer when speakers use illegal, unsafe, or improper visual support. For example, one classroom audience was rightfully shaken when a student brought in a gun to demonstrate how to clean it. The speaker's message was perfectly valid and would have worked well at a meeting of gun owners at a private club, but the mere presence of a potential weapon in a public classroom created an enormous distraction for the majority of the listeners. Check with your speaking host if you are thinking of using anything that may not be legal, such as alcohol in the hands of a minor, drugs on campus, or weapons in public buildings. Ask yourself whether your visual—knives, dogs, or needles—could cause you or someone else harm. Is your visual in questionable taste in this context? You want your audience to remember your speech for its ideas, not its inappropriate visual support. Think before you use it!

Summary

- Visuals play several roles in the presentation, including supporting your message, attracting the audience, and assisting you in meeting your communication goals.
- Use visual support only when you are communicating an idea that needs it.
- Visuals come in two major formats: 2-D visuals include slideware, poster boards, and overheads; and 3-D visuals include people, objects, and models.
- Guidelines for preparing 2-D visuals include making them simple, using colors effectively, using large fonts and images, and checking for spelling and grammar. Visibility, reliability, and transportability are some considerations for preparing 3-D visuals.
- Presentation software such as PowerPoint is a tool only; it should not drive your presentation. Use slides as you would any other type of visual support.
- Plan carefully if choosing to incorporate any technology into your presentation.
- Using visuals in your presentation is easy. Help your audience understand the purpose of your visual, discuss it thoroughly while showing it, and prevent distraction.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS SUPPORT KEY

Well-prepared and smartly used visuals give you the speech support you want—they attract and engage your audience, enhance your credibility, and most importantly, help you communicate your message. It's easy to "see" the success you'll have with great visual support!

EXERCISES

1. *Pick up a copy of USA Today or one of the major news magazines like Time or Newsweek. Alone or with a classmate, analyze its use of visuals—charts, graphs, and so on. How do these visuals help you understand the articles? What connections can you make to public speaking? Present a summary of your analysis to your classmates or your teacher.*
2. *Go to a magazine or the web (Google Image is a good place to start), and bring in an example of a visual that shows*
 - *relationships of size.*
 - *relationships of time.*
 - *relationships of space.*
 - *a unique or unfamiliar object or features.*
 - *something that is difficult to describe.*
 - *something small that's enlarged for understanding.*
3. *You're giving an informative presentation on the four major blood types (O, A, B, and AB). With some classmates, brainstorm potential visuals to support your speech.*
4. *Take one of the ideas from Exercise 3, and actually design a visual. Keep the tips for making a 2-D visual in mind as you do.*
5. *As a class, discuss the advantages and disadvantages—from a listener's point of view—of the PowerPoint presentations you have seen.*



The Online Learning Center for A Speaker's Resource includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 25

Maintaining Listener Engagement

REAL STUDENTS

REAL WORDS

“When I first stepped into the classroom, I thought public speaking would be all about me. I used to think I would have to force those people to sit there, politely waiting for the time to go by while they listened to me blab. How wrong I was. My whole focus now is away from me and my sometimes neurotic self and toward a much healthier place—my audience.”

“Of all the speeches I heard in class, the best ones were not necessarily the most eloquent. To me, the best were those involving the listeners to the highest extent possible. Now, when I am in the audience, I expect speakers to make me feel that they are giving the speech to me and not to themselves.”

KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER			
STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	SUPPORT Maintain listener engagement.	STYLE

25A

Engage Your Audience by Connecting Them to Your Ideas

25B

Engage Your Audience through Your Language

1. *Incorporate “You-language”*
2. *Use humor, if appropriate*

25C

Engage Your Audience through Interaction

1. *Question the audience*
2. *Invite audience participation*
3. *Invite rhetorical participation*

Key Terms

auditory appeals	▶ 411
closed question	▶ 408
gustatory appeals	▶ 411
olfactory appeals	▶ 411
rhetorical participation	▶ 410
self-deprecating humor	▶ 407
tactile appeals	▶ 411
visual appeals	▶ 411
You-language	▶ 403

Keeping your listeners engaged is one of your foremost goals as a speaker. Audience members typically come to a presentation expecting to participate at the very least through their listening, but they're often eager for other forms of engagement. Take advantage of this willingness with the specific methods discussed in this chapter; they'll all enhance your listenability by keeping your audience interacting with your ideas. Audience engagement challenges you to take your audience analysis and put it, literally, into action!

25A

Engage Your Audience by Connecting Them to Your Ideas

The more listener-centered your mind-set, the easier it is to stress the relevance of your ideas to your audience. By now you know that you want to make a general connection between your listeners and your thesis, telling them why you are choosing to discuss your topic in this way and how that angle is relevant to their lives. But there are many other opportunities to connect the language and details of your talk to your listeners *throughout* the presentation.

Take some time during your everyday interactions to see how you connect your ideas to your conversational partners. Chances are, you do it frequently. For example, you raise topics of joint interest, bring up mutual acquaintances, and highlight shared experiences. Now transfer that same orientation to your public presentation. Ask yourself where in your speech you can make a connection between your ideas and your audience.

The more listener-oriented your frame of mind, the more naturally the connections should come while speaking. Max, a college freshman who at first found himself planning his audience connections, provides inspiration. "I had to force those sections of relevance in my first few speeches," he says. "I've been taught to be more subtle when writing papers, but I can see how I need to be more obvious while speaking. By the last few presentations, it was becoming second nature. I just keep seeing more and more opportunities to connect."

Those opportunities abound. Tell your listeners how your ideas can benefit them, help them learn, or cause them to think in new ways. Make connections to the issues that matter in people's daily lives—love, money, health, school, work, stress, family, and time. Appeal and connect to their goals or beliefs. Comment on areas of shared experience. Base other connections on geography, gender, occupation, nationality, education, age, or common interests.

Here are some examples of connecting your ideas to your audience.

Excerpt from a Speech Dedicating a New Library

- Unconnected:

This new library promises great things for the people of this community. The old library has been replaced with this new one, characterized by its beauty, openness, and utility.

- Connected:

This new library promises great things for our community. I'm sure many of you remember the dark corners and musty smells of our old library and are rejoicing with me in the beauty, openness, and utility of our fabulous new facility.

Excerpt from an Informative Speech on the State of Russia's Declining Population

- **Unconnected:**
Despite incentives from the government, Russian women are thinking long and hard before committing to having more than one child. Russian women have excessive demands on their time and energy. Life can be hard in Russia, and these women aren't sure additional children fit into the picture.
- **Connected:**
Despite incentives from the government, Russian women are thinking long and hard before committing to having more than one child. Like many of us—men and women alike—Russian women have excessive demands on their time and energy. We have a family friend, Marie Rice. She's lived in Russia for the last decade, and she confirms that life there can be hard. She has befriended many Russian women, and they often tell her they aren't sure additional children fit into the picture.

Excerpt from a Persuasive Speech on the Merits of Hospice

- **Unconnected:**
Hospice should be an essential element in the dying process. When people need to help a loved one die, they should consider the many benefits of hospice care.
- **Connected:**
Hospice needs to be an essential element in the dying process. Though I wouldn't wish it on anyone in this room today, should you ever need to help a loved one die, consider the many benefits of hospice care.

Whatever ways you decide to engage your audience, keep in mind the importance of doing so ethically and civilly. Luring audiences in with engagement techniques so that you can trap them later is not ethical. Neither is forcing engagement through any position of power you might hold. Begging an audience to participate or making them feel guilty for not doing so only pushes them away from you. Audience engagement must be voluntary to be effective. The following specific strategies can work for you.

25B

Engage Your Audience through Your Language

The language choices you make as a speaker influence your audience's decision to stay with you and interact with your ideas. Chapter 20 explores several categories of language that—depending on the speaker, the ideas, and the context—can create a bridge between speaker and audience. Here we'll look at language in more specific terms. Using personal pronouns and, if appropriate, incorporating humor are effective means of creating audience connection and allowing your listeners to feel that they are an intrinsic part of the communication event.

1. Incorporate “You-language”

You probably use the words *you*, *yours*, *we*, *us*, and *ours* quite often in casual conversation. Good conversationalists know that other-oriented personal pronouns are a way of creating bonds between people. These pronouns are a way of saying, “What we are talking about is of importance to us, here and now.”

These listener-centered pronouns, known as **You-language**, are easy to incorporate throughout your presentation once you're in a listener-oriented frame of mind. Read the two following paragraphs. Which would you rather listen to if you were in the audience?

- Without You-language:

It is a given that today's younger generation needs to care for themselves and their families, but many young people are also facing the need to care for their aging parents. Aging parents may require economic assistance as they retire from the workforce and begin to rely on Social Security. If they are lucky, pensions or investment returns may also be available. Physically, aging parents often need more medical care. Aging eyes and slower reflexes make transportation another issue to contend with. These are a few of the many challenges facing young people with parents who are getting older.

- With You-language:

Most of you would agree with me that it's hard enough to take care of our families and ourselves, but many of us are also facing, or will soon face, the need to care for our aging parents. As our parents retire from the workforce, most of them will be able to rely on Social Security, and some, if they're lucky, will also have pensions or investment returns from which to draw. Many of us have parents who will need more medical care, and as their eyes age and their reflexes become slower, we'll have to contend with their transportation needs on top of everything else. These are a few of the many challenges most of us with aging parents face.

You-language works to effectively bring your audience closer to you and your ideas. One student put it succinctly: "You-language says that I as the speaker am one of the audience in so many ways and tells my listeners that we both have an interest in the topic and ideas at hand." Another said, "You-language really draws an audience in. When I hear someone speaking directly to me, I want to listen. We as humans automatically perk up at the use of the word *you*. It makes us listen. As I reviewed my informative speech on tape, I could see that my pronoun usage was not forced; rather, it was natural and effective. As I listened to it, even I felt included!"

You-language may not be appropriate for every presentation, however. Your audience analysis can help you determine how much to use it. If the topic is considered negative or can make people feel bad, too much You-language can make listeners defensive. Your audience analysis can tell you whether or not to use personal pronouns to establish commonality between the topic, yourself, and your audience. For example, when discussing chronic debt with a group of people who suffer from it, audience-connecting personal pronouns are appropriate. But you'd want to use more qualified You-language when discussing this topic with a mixed audience. Using phrases like *If you are one of the many U.S. adults who have chronic debt . . .* helps establish everyone's individuality.

2. Use humor, if appropriate

Humor is an effective device for attracting and maintaining audience engagement. It can break the ice in a new situation, create social bonding, and put audiences at ease. When a group laughs, the message is, *Relax, you're among friends*.¹ Humor can also help defuse a serious or unpleasant situation and create a nonthreatening atmosphere. In the workplace, humor can help with team building, organizational morale, creativity, problem solving, and even stress management.² Research shows that humor can even benefit one's health.³ In the public speaking context, humor attracts interest and increases a speaker's likeability.

Be careful with humor, however. Here are six general considerations when deciding whether to use humor in your presentation.

- **The humor must be relevant to your ideas.** Using a gag or telling a joke just because it is funny is not reason enough to include it in your presentation. For example, one speaker approached the speaking platform, produced a small vase, poured some water in it, and arranged a single rose. He then made movements as if he was ready to begin speaking. Before doing so, however, he stopped, smiled at the audience, picked up the flower vase . . . and took a long drink from it. Caught off guard, the audience laughed. Very quickly, though, listeners became distracted with questions about why the speaker pulled the gag: there was no apparent relevance to the speaker's ideas, and the stagey quality of it didn't fit with his communication orientation. If you plan to use humor in your speech, be sure it relates to your message.
- **The humor must be relevant to the tone of the speech.** Presentations relatively light in nature can benefit from humor throughout them. Speakers with more serious topics, however, should tread carefully. Humor may work well in certain sections of a more serious speech—during the opening, perhaps, or during a particular narrative—but inappropriately timed humor can offend listeners and lessen the impact of the message. One speaker learned this point when he made several thoughtless “fat” jokes while discussing the obesity epidemic in the United States. The audience was offended and unable to take him seriously, and many soon checked out as listeners.
- **The humor should complement the context.** Examine the context of the speech, and determine the appropriateness of your planned humor. Are you speaking before a familiar, intimate, informal audience that will quickly get your innuendo and in-jokes? Are you speaking at a funeral for a person who loved humor throughout her life and would appreciate a lighthearted send-off? Are you speaking at work in front of an audience that includes your decidedly unfunny boss? An analysis of the context helps determine the appropriateness of your humor. Also, keep in mind that in most contexts, G-rated humor (PG-13 max!) is favored.
- **The humor should complement the culture.** Humor does not always cross cultural boundaries. Whereas some cultures love dry wit, others enjoy physical comedy, aggressive humor, sexual humor, or a combination of styles. British humor, for instance, is often based on varying interpretations of a word, while the German way of bolting words together to create precise meaning lessens the chance of creating linguistic humor.⁴ Research and prepare if you choose to use humor before an audience whose culture is different from your own. Doing your homework helps prevent situations like those suffered by the two speakers profiled in the “Speaker's Story” box. The International Society for Humor Studies (<http://www.hnu.edu/ishs>), dedicated to the advancement of humor research, provides links to research, books, and other websites. Websites like Comedy Zone–International (<http://www.comedy-zone.net/links/International>) provide access to a wide array of humor-oriented websites from around the world.
- **The humor must not be offensive.** Humor that has as its target gender, race, sexual orientation, body parts, bodily functions, body shapes, or a specific religion

A Speaker's Story

A Chill in the Air

“

Attempts at humor sometimes collide with the customs of a culture. For example, Christopher Shirley, an international educator at Georgetown University, recently had an uncomfortable experience while speaking to a group of fifty Spanish MBA students who had just completed a weeklong course in the United States. “To put everyone at ease,” he said, “I opened my brief presentation with a bit of humor . . . that fell on stone faces. I had to explain that in the United States, opening with levity or a joke is a custom. I was told that in Spain, speeches and presentations are much more formal. It didn’t get things off to the best start.”

Travel writer Bill Bryson learned the hard way that Australians don’t appreciate reminders that British prisoners were the first Europeans to settle their country in the late eighteenth century: “I can personally affirm that to stand before an audience of beaming Australians and make even the mildest quip about a convict past is to feel the air-conditioning immediately elevated.”

Sources: Christopher Shirley, personal interview with the author, August 10, 2005; and Bill Bryson, *In a Sunburned Country* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000), 53.

”

or culture is not appropriate. Such humor can sometimes be acceptable in *very* specific contexts, like telling a lighthearted body-shape joke at a meeting of plastic surgeons. But in general, telling such a joke says more about you than about whatever point you are trying to make. Most importantly, if it’s inappropriate, it can turn off your audience. About ten minutes into his forty-five-minute keynote address, one conference guest speaker told a joke about “three ethnic guys” and a stolen car. The joke was so completely inappropriate that the speaker’s credibility evaporated on the spot, and though he continued speaking for his remaining thirty-five minutes, he had long lost his audience. The offensive joke, rather than the speaker’s ideas, became the topic of conversation among conference attendees throughout the day.

- **The humor must be appropriate to your personality.** A lifetime of feedback has most likely told you whether others find you funny. If humor is a part of your personality, you’ll find it easy to transfer those skills to your public presentation. If you’re not by nature a funny person, you can still incorporate humor into your speaking, but it may take a little work. Check out some of the many books and websites dedicated to the art of humor. For insights into just what makes people funny, listen to friends who are funny or to stand-up comedians who appeal to wide audiences. Popular TV shows and movies may provide other ideas. If, ultimately, you decide that you are not a funny person or don’t care to become one, don’t feel pressured. Forced humor rarely works. Plenty of effective, successful speeches are given without a hint of humor.



Speaking of Culture

What We Find Funny

Chii (Zimbabwe)

"Our Shona language is extremely descriptive, making a lot of room for humor. For example, the word for motorbike is mu du du du. It sounds like a motorbike, and it's very funny when spoken in the right way. We also find humor in social-class differences. Rural people make fun of snobby city people, and people who can speak English make fun of those who can't. I like a lot of American humor, but there's still stuff I can't get. Like what's so funny about The Simpsons or Family Guy? Also, the way late-night comedians make fun of the government and politicians—we absolutely cannot do that."

Ayumi (Japan)

"We usually don't use humor in public speeches. But if we do, we would use an instance when we failed at something. It's OK to make fun of ourselves, but you would never use an example of another person failing at anything. That would be very rude."

Marleny (Panama)

"We like to take phrases from certain TV shows and mimic them. Everybody understands the references because the shows are so popular. We also like to give nicknames to people based on an exaggerated physical feature. For example, I have big ears, and when I was in high school, everyone called me Dumbo. It's funny. Oh, and we love mother-in-law jokes! Now, you could not get away with any joke about Catholicism or the pope. Those are pretty much off-limits."

Hasan (Turkey)

"Humor depends on the type of speech. Politicians rarely use humor, but they do use wisecracks and satire to great effect. Irony is a vital part of Turkish culture, and it's used widely. Daily situations, interactions between people, and bureaucracy are all acceptable targets, but we would not use sexual humor."

Essentials

Using Humor in Your Presentation

If you are using humor, it should be

- relevant to your ideas.
- relevant to the tone of the speech.
- appropriate to the context.
- appropriate to the culture.
- not offensive.
- appropriate to your personality.

What types of humor *are* appropriate in public presentations in the United States? Some of the best kinds work by playing a trick on the mind or painting a picture that is ludicrous or incongruous.⁵ **Self-deprecating humor**, humor poking fun at yourself, nearly always works. Witticisms, puns, and observational humor (think Dave Chappelle, or Dane Cook) have their place. Here are a few examples of successful public speaking humor.

- In paying tribute to his dad, one speaker noted that his father's thrifty habits and his fashion sense could be summed up in two words—Sam's Club.
- When introducing a speech on the importance of education, one speaker reflected on a family saying: "Whenever someone around my house did something kind of stupid, another one of us would be sure to remind the offender, 'Typically people live and learn. You just live.'"
- On a career day at a junior high, one orthodontist told the audience that though she liked her job, her patients often had to "brace themselves" before coming to see her.

Listeners from other cultures often find humor in different themes. See the "Speaking of Culture" box for some examples.

25C

Engage Your Audience through Interaction

The effective public presenter, aware that a speech is a singular, in-the-moment, dynamic event, makes choices to keep the presentation energy going. Involving the audience is a successful way to maintain the energy and support your speech. Most audience members are happy to contribute in any way asked, whether through a direct question, actual participation, or rhetorical participation. If you choose to engage your audience through interaction, check with your instructor first. Some assignments may not lend themselves to audience participation as well as others.

1. Question the audience

Asking a direct question is a terrific way to engage the audience. Questions are a common device for opening a presentation as well as an effective way to refresh and maintain audience interest throughout your talk. Don't ask a question merely for its own sake; be sure that it connects to the ideas you're discussing. Questions should be short, easy to understand, and easy to answer with only a few words by at least one person in the room. **Closed questions**, those answered with a yes or a no, also work well. Beware of questions that could spark a long-winded answer and take your planned discussion off in a direction for which you are not prepared. Solicit answers for:

- Trivia questions—*Does anyone know the percentage of U.S. adults who have a college degree?*
- Experiences—*Can I see a show of hands from those of you who have been to the Middle East?*
- Attitudes—*How many of you enjoy country music? OK, now keep your hands up if you enjoy your country music with a punk flair.*
- Beliefs—*Who believes in love at first sight?*
- Opinions—*Do any of you think our border policy with Mexico needs revisiting?*
- Habits—*What was the last electronic gadget you purchased?*

Allow time for a response. It's insincere to ask a question and then move on to your next thought without waiting for an answer. Also, consider the size of the audience and the speaking venue when asking direct questions. If the room is large, you may need to repeat an audience member's answer for everyone to hear. When a listener responds, acknowledge the answer and, if appropriate, comment on it. Your question, the listener's response, and your follow-up comment further the sense of dialogue taking place between you and your listeners.

2. Invite audience participation

Audience members respond positively when "one of their own" becomes involved in the presentation. Consider audience participation if you want to demonstrate something, provide a fresh and relevant example, or reinforce a point. Here are some ways to maintain listener engagement through audience participation:

- **Make an open invitation for general participation.** One of the easiest ways to encourage participation is to make a general call for it. Audiences are nearly always willing to respond to such an invitation. One student, Sara, had this to say in a post-speech evaluation:

I think the best part of my speech came when I got my audience involved by asking them to apply the critical thinking theory I had just discussed to some photographs I projected on the screen. Not only did it make me feel more at ease, but I think it helped their understanding and brought them much closer to the presentation. At first I was hesitant and thought maybe if I bring the audience in, it'll seem like I'm just trying to fill the time requirement. But now that it's over, I feel like more speeches should be that way. I think that the invitation to interact surprised some people. But the comments I got afterward told me my audience enjoyed it.

- **Call on a specific audience member.** Call on a certain person to share an experience or give an example. For instance, you could say, *Meg, I know you had lunch*

A Speaker's Story

Loukas Connects



Loukas has a charismatic personality that quickly draws people to him. Taking advantage of the relationships he had built up over the course of a school term while studying in the United States, Loukas, a native of Greece, made the most of his final persuasive presentation, *Maintain Your Cultural Identity*, by inviting a high level of general and specific audience participation. Loukas encouraged his audience members to maintain their cultural identities through three paths: passing on their native languages to their children, learning to cook traditional dishes, and remembering to make room for cultural traditions. Here are just some of the ways he got his audience involved:

- When talking about how many cultures are losing their native languages, he asked a student from New Zealand to talk about the indigenous Maori and their attempts to hold on to their native language.
- He asked a new father whether (and why) he planned to teach his child his native Spanish.
- Before making a point about the importance of native foods, he asked a student from the American South about some of the cultural dishes she remembered her grandmother making.
- After talking more about the importance of regional dishes, he polled the audience to see who had experienced international travel and then asked about some of the foods they most remembered from those trips.
- Prior to the speech, Loukas gave each audience member a small Greek “evil eye.” Later in the presentation when discussing cultural traditions, he explained the significance of the evil eye in Greek culture as an object that protects people from negative random events. He then asked for examples of similar objects from other cultures.

Loukas’s audience couldn’t have been happier to join in. Throughout his presentation, there were nods of agreement, laughter, and heads turning every which way while various audience members participated. Led by Loukas, communication flowed in countless ways around the room. The result was a dynamic and memorable human connection.



with the client just last week. What were your impressions? or Andre, we all know you’ve been through this before, and you told me you came out of it with real positive feelings. Could you quickly fill everyone else in? Though you don’t need to plan out the answer with the specific audience member in advance, be sure that the person you are calling on is willing and able to come through with a response. The “Speaker’s Story” box recounts how one student created a memorable experience for his classmates through general and specific audience participation.

- **Conduct a verbal poll.** A quick verbal poll can serve several purposes. It gets listeners involved, and it can help you introduce an upcoming topic or quickly gauge listener knowledge, values, or beliefs. For example, while introducing your speech on repairing iPods, you could ask, *Who in here has an iPod? OK, of those with their hands raised, who has dropped it or banged it on something?* Use polls as a kind of pre-test/post-test. Before your speech on the history of soccer's World Cup, ask listeners whether they know how many and which countries have ever won it. By the end of your speech, repeat the question. All should now be able to list the seven countries —Argentina, Brazil, England, France, Germany, Italy, and Uruguay.
- **Invite your listeners to write something down.** If your audience members have access to pens and paper, getting them to write something down can be an effective method of participation. One speaker opened his presentation by asking listeners to "write down the first five words you think of when I say *freedom*." Later in the speech, he asked the audience members to go back to their lists of words to support a point he was trying to make.
- **Ask for a volunteer.** Should your speech call for it, consider inviting an audience member or two to volunteer for something. To prove how light your new titanium bicycle is, ask someone to pick it up and report exactly how little 2.6 pounds weigh. If you are showing how to wrap a sprained wrist, use an audience member's wrist for your actual demonstration. See pages 385–386 for more on using real people as visual support.
- **Ask listeners to interact with each other.** Most audience members are willing to interact with others if asked to do so. Ask them to share an experience, a perception, or an attitude. Give them a question to debate. Request that they generate some ideas to share with the larger audience. The type of interaction will depend on the length of your presentation. If your speech is only five minutes long, ask listeners to share a brief exchange with the person sitting next to them; if your presentation time is longer, consider dividing your audience into groups for an exercise. Either way, be sure to still have time to get your message across.
- **Ask the audience to do something.** Most people in your audience are happy to play along if you invite them to do something. Ask them to pat their heads while rubbing their stomachs as you discuss coordination. During your speech on the properties of perception, ask listeners to close their eyes and focus only on their sense of touch. The "Did You Know?" box provides other ideas on how to engage your audience's senses.

3. Invite rhetorical participation

Rhetorical participation asks your audience to contemplate an issue, consider a scenario, reflect on a value, or mull over a proposal without making a verbal response. It's a common device for opening a presentation and can also effectively refresh and maintain listener engagement throughout your talk. You don't want to invite rhetorical participation for its own sake; instead, look for opportunities to connect to the ideas you're already discussing. Here are some examples:

Did You Know?

Inviting Engagement by Appealing to the Five Senses

People interact with the world around them through their five senses. Keep these in mind as you create opportunities for relevant audience engagement.

- **Visual appeals**—Can the audience *look* at anything to stay involved in your message? Show colors, action, textures, animation, beauty, or novelty. See Chapter 24 for a thorough discussion on using visual support for increased audience engagement.
- **Auditory appeals**—Can the audience *listen* to anything (other than your voice)? Make a noise, have them repeat something, share a song clip, or play an instrument.
- **Tactile appeals**—Is there anything the audience can *touch*? How about the back of their chairs, their ribs, a piece of soft fabric, or a unique object?
- **Gustatory appeals**—Is it appropriate to let the audience *taste* anything? Your famous cake recipe, an exotic fruit, or a new sour candy just might work.
- **Olfactory appeals**—Can an *odor* or *scent* engage them in any way? A classic perfume, some freshly baked croissants, or a scratch-and-sniff sticker may be relevant to what you're talking about.

- *Can you remember that first day of elementary school?*
- *Imagine yourself five years from now.*
- *How do you illustrate your commitment to your community?*
- *You all were here when our company president was fired last month. How did that affect your relationship with this workplace?*
- *Think back to what you were doing the morning of September 11, 2001.*
- *If you were faced with the same choices I just described, what would your response be?*
- *Fame . . . what does it mean to you?*
- *Reflect for a moment on Frederic's presentation we heard last week.*

If you invite rhetorical participation in your presentation, be comfortable with a small amount of silence following your appeal. Otherwise, you risk the perception that your invitation to ponder was artificial. Consider the depth of your request when deciding how much silent response time to allow. Some questions need only a few seconds; more complicated invitations require more time.

The “Did You Know?” box (📍 p. 412) summarizes the many audience-engagement techniques discussed throughout this book, but from a “what-not-to-do” perspective.

Did You Know?

Pushing Listeners Away

Whereas some speaker actions maintain listener engagement, others do just the opposite. Here are some things you *don't* want to do:

- Read to your audience from a densely worded script.
- Choose—or try to manufacture—a topic that has no apparent relevance.
- Use language that is over your listeners' heads.
- Look anywhere but at your audience.
- Talk about your topic in a dry, clinical way.
- Offend your listeners through inappropriate humor or language.
- Disregard the logical organization of your ideas. (*As long as I'm talking, I'm giving a speech.*)
- Speak for much longer than your allotted time.

Summary

- **Seek opportunities to connect your ideas to your audience throughout the presentation. Connections should always be relevant to the ideas you are communicating.**
- **You-language, comprising mostly listener-oriented personal pronouns like *you*, *yours*, *we*, *us*, and *ours*, works to bring your audience closer to you and your ideas.**
- **When used appropriately, humor refreshes audience interest and engagement.**
- **Asking direct or rhetorical questions and encouraging actual or rhetorical participation are effective means of maintaining audience engagement.**



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS SUPPORT KEY

You know that you're speaking for the sake of your listeners. So go ahead. Invite them in to your greater conversation. Audience-engagement techniques support your ideas and keep listeners with you.

EXERCISES

1. Go back and review one of your recorded speeches. Find at least five places where you could have made an audience connection. Explain what those connections might have entailed.

2. Pay attention to your use of personal pronouns (you, I, we, they, and so on) over the next twenty-four hours. Do you use them? To what effect? When do you use them? Could you smoothly and genuinely use these pronouns while speaking in public? Would it take effort or just a mind-set? Share your insights with some classmates.
3. Think of one of your favorite comedians. Dismissing the specific content of the jokes, can you identify what techniques he or she used to positively engage you? Does he or she rely on wit, physical humor, puns, one-liners, or the element of surprise? Without trying to emulate the comedian, are there any techniques you could borrow to engage your public listeners?
4. Think about your upcoming speech. Brainstorm a list of five actual questions requiring responses (vary them so that they're not all closed) and five rhetorical questions. Which one from each category is your best? Can you work it into the actual speech?
5. With a partner, see if you can identify other general or specific audience-engagement techniques.



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 26

Establishing Your Credibility as a Speaker

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I never considered the concept of speaker credibility. I can now see that every choice I make as a public speaker in some way affects the way the audience perceives me. I don’t mean to say that the overarching goal in my presentation is to make the audience think highly of me, but it sure can be a by-product. When I am perceived as credible, my listeners are more ready to accept my ideas as important.”

“As a listener, I’m going to give any speaker the benefit of the doubt—at first. But once he or she gets going, that speaker has some work to do. I need to see and hear for myself that the speaker earns credibility in ways that make me listen to and believe in what he or she is saying.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

Establish and maintain your credibility.

STYLE

26A**Understand the Role of Speaker Credibility****26B****Know the Ways to Establish Credibility for All Speakers in All Contexts**

1. *Be prepared*
2. *Show that you are ethical and civil*
3. *Show that you are competent*
4. *Use an objective tone when citing credentials*
5. *Show that you own the material by speaking conversationally*
6. *Use "I-language"*
7. *Be dynamic*
8. *Show that you want to communicate*
9. *Dress the part*
10. *Look at your audience*

26C**Know the Ways to Establish Credibility for Individual Speakers in Individual Contexts**

1. *Education and training*
2. *Occupation*
3. *Age*
4. *Experience*
5. *Expertise*
6. *Personal connections*
7. *Memberships*
8. *Culture*

26D**Manage Your Credibility**

1. *Before the presentation*
2. *During the presentation*
3. *After the presentation*

Key Terms

charisma	▶ 419
ethos	▶ 416
I-language	▶ 418
speaker credibility	▶ 416

Though public speaking is a listener-centered communication event, your individuality as the speaker still plays a role. You can connect with your audience and support your message in many ways, and one of them, ironically, has everything to do with *you*. When listeners perceive you as a likeable, trustworthy, and competent person who cares about the relevant ideas you are discussing, your speech is more listenable. When they sense your commitment, the audience is more likely to connect with you and, by extension, with your ideas. This chapter discusses the role of speaker credibility and provides ways you can achieve it.

26A

Understand the Role of Speaker Credibility

It's impossible for you to separate yourself from your presentation. *You* are the person at the front of the room who has come with something to say. All eyes and ears are on you, anticipating a worthwhile, meaningful message. Speakers are not robots programmed to deliver a random script. They're *people*. And each person has his or her own image, personality, degree of charisma, intelligence, experience, credentials, and demeanor to bring to the public speaking event. That means you, too.

Speaker credibility, defined as the way your character directly influences the listeners' willingness to receive and accept you and your ideas, is essential to speaking success. Also known as **ethos** (a term coined by the Greek philosopher Aristotle), credibility is something you want to establish as thoroughly as possible. While the rest of this chapter is dedicated to the many ways you can create and communicate your credibility, first realize that credibility is a *perceived* quality, not an inherent one. It's the audience that determines the degree of your credibility, not you. You can know everything possible about your topic and be the best person to talk about it, but if you don't communicate your credibility to the audience—verbally and nonverbally—then that credibility doesn't exist. So create and communicate it you must. Credibility does not happen without effort.

Listeners who perceive a speaker as credible are much more likely to attend to and interact with the speaker's message, whether that message is informative, persuasive, or entertaining.

26B

Know the Ways to Establish Credibility for All Speakers in All Contexts

The very fact that you're up in front of a group lends you initial credibility, but this takes you only so far. You need to establish yourself in other ways. Constructing speaker credibility does not mean going before your audience and boasting about yourself. Instead, show your audience through your words and actions that you have thought about your ideas, are fully prepared to discuss them in a personable and ethical way, and genuinely want to communicate them.

1. Be prepared

If the motto in the real estate industry is “location, location, location,” the motto for public presentation is “preparation, preparation, preparation.” Prepare your content, your speaking notes, your visuals. Know your structure inside and out. Be practiced. An organic-chemistry major said it perfectly: “There is no substitute for having done your homework. Audiences have a sixth sense when it comes to a speaker trying to fake something. You know when you aren't fully prepared, and the audience can just feel it. Knowing your stuff always helps you come through in a more positive light, affecting your credibility in a good way.”

2. Show that you are ethical and civil

Convince your audience that you can be trusted and that you care about the speaker-audience relationship. Begin and end the presentation on time, give credit to your sources (no plagiarizing!), and be upfront as to your intentions rather than ambushing your audience with a hidden agenda. Fully support your ideas, be accepting of other opinions, and consider the consequences of your words. Demonstrating your integrity increases the chances your listeners will give your ideas a fair hearing. Civil, ethical speakers get invited back again. See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of ethics and civility.

3. Show that you are competent

Audiences want to know that they are in competent hands. They want to be assured that you are knowledgeable, have thought in-depth about your ideas, and have done your homework. Demonstrate your competence by discussing your credentials, your research, and your connections. Use your visual support or any technology with ease. Pronounce words, names, and places correctly. Show that you are up-to-date through your choice of topics, ideas, examples, and appearance.

4. Use an objective tone when citing credentials

Some speakers initially feel uncomfortable when establishing their credibility because they think it requires bragging or drawing undue attention to themselves. But, as one student said, “Speaking is not about acting like you're better than everyone. It's about being your best and, when necessary, stating some facts.” As you mention your research, experience,

and credentials, use an objective, matter-of-fact vocal tone and a confident facial expression and stance. Superior-than-thou messages—verbal or nonverbal—are rarely well received. You may have to ask a trusted source for feedback as you attempt to balance the need to establish your credibility with the need for modesty, a quality audiences find appealing.

5. Show that you own the material by speaking conversationally

Speaking conversationally shows that you know what you are talking about, have absorbed the materials, and care enough about the audience to speak with them in language patterns that are easy to listen to. Own your material. Listeners quickly sense when you do and when you don't.

6. Use “I-language”

Personal pronouns are a natural part of conversational speaking. If You-language consists of listener-oriented personal pronouns, **I-language** consists of personal pronouns and adjectives that refer to the speaker—I, me, mine, we, us, ours. Connect yourself to the topic and main idea, share your feelings, talk about your perceptions, and share your experiences. Audiences like to know that you are one of them and are reassured when they hear that you have an interest and a stake in your message.

Read the following two paragraphs aloud. The one without I-language communicates, but it does so in a way that distances the ideas from the people in the room. The paragraph with I-language, on the other hand, creates relevance and makes the ideas expressed seem more central to the present lives of both the speaker and the audience.

- Without I-language:

Sexual activity without commitment is nothing new. After all, it takes place among each young generation. What changes are the words describing it, the rules governing it—if it can be said that there are any—and the reactions to it. “Hooking up” is among the terms used by today’s generation. Hooking up can mean different things to different people, but in general it covers anything from kissing to having sex with another person outside the bounds of commitment. The ways people perceive hooking up also vary. Whereas some people like the freedom of hooking up and celebrate the fact that it’s becoming more of a normal and accepted kind of behavior, others find the new rules of sex confusing and regret the trend away from commitment.

- With I-language:

I’m probably not telling you anything you don’t know when I say that sexual activity without commitment is nothing new. It’s been going on for generations, and it’s still happening today. What changes are the words we use to describe it, the rules governing it—if we can say that there are any—and our reactions to it. “Hooking up” is among the terms our generation uses. Hooking up can mean different things to you and to me, but in general it covers anything from kissing to having sex with another person outside the bounds of commitment. The ways we perceive hooking up also vary. Whereas I, hypothetically, might enjoy the freedom to hook up and celebrate the fact that it’s becoming more of a normal and accepted kind of behavior, you might find the new rules of sex confusing and may object to the trend away from commitment.

7. *Be dynamic*

Audiences want to see a real person speaking. Though you want to put forth your best face, there is no need for that face to be overly serious and unemotional. Let your personality come through as you show that you are caring, friendly, comfortable, approachable, and human. Successful conversationalists communicate emotions as well as content. Should the topic call for it, feel free to smile and laugh, sound angry, or look exasperated. Be careful to avoid drama and histrionics, but don't hold back on emotions that surface naturally during your presentation.

Some people have a natural **charisma**, great personal charm or a magnetic personality that draws others toward them. These speakers rarely have to work at being dynamic; they just are. Not everyone is charismatic, however, and because it's a trait and not a skill, it's difficult to learn how to display it. Nonetheless, you can overcome a lack of charisma. One speaker said, "Though I have many good qualities, I am being honest when I say I don't have huge amounts of charisma. I need to build my relationship with my audience in other ways. Most importantly, I've got to be prepared. The 'I-language' also helps because I know audiences respond when speakers talk about themselves. Finally, I choose topics and ideas I really care about because I know my audience can sense my passion and connect with me there."

8. *Show that you want to communicate*

Walk to the front of the room with confidence and enthusiasm. No matter what your message is, enthusiasm goes a long way toward attracting and retaining the audience's attention. In public speaking, enthusiasm doesn't mean the friskiness of puppies or the rah-rah of cheerleaders but rather your passionate interest in your ideas. It's easy to speak enthusiastically about a fantastic vacation or favorite sport, but you can also speak with passionate seriousness about domestic violence or the rapid spread of HIV infection in sub-Saharan Africa. Your passion in turn tells listeners that they should view those ideas the same way.

If you present with a ho-hum attitude, speak tiredly or sarcastically, or appear to be speaking only because you have to, the audience quickly gets the message that it's OK to stop listening; there's evidently nothing valuable being said. Listeners may even resent having their time wasted. Find that passion, hold onto it, and share it generously with your audience.

9. *Dress the part*

There is tremendous power in a first impression. Fair or not, people make snap judgments about others, often within three to six seconds.¹ First impressions are hard to overcome and can positively or negatively influence future interactions. Though a nice appearance can never compensate for a lack of ideas, presenting an appropriate appearance is important. Remember: your audience sees you before they hear you.

Professional and/or appropriate dress increases a speaker's credibility by commanding respect, attention, and cooperation.² A nice appearance tells your audience that you respect them enough to take the time to look your best; they respect you for this in return and are more likely to give you their attention. A careful appearance also reflects your preparation and good time management; it says that you had time to give to your appearance and were not struggling with your presentation up to the very last minute.

Just as good appearance can attract respectful attention, inappropriate clothing, messy hair, or flashy jewelry can prove distracting and create a negative image. See the “Did You Know?” box (🔗 p. 421) for some examples. It’s likely that the following speakers were remembered more for the distraction factor than for the ideas they communicated:

- The speaker whose too-big cowboy hat kept falling onto his face, forcing him to repeatedly take it off, push his hair back, and put the hat back on.
- The female speaker whose low-plunging pink T-shirt read “Luscious” in big black letters.
- The speaker whose serious speech topic was compromised by his Looney Toons tie that was too wide, too short, and loudly imprinted with bright images of Daffy Duck, Tweety Bird, and the Tasmanian Devil.
- The speaker who kept sucking on his lip ring between thoughts.
- The speaker who put her glasses on every time she needed to look at her notecards and took them off again every time she looked up at the audience to speak.

There are no absolute rules when it comes to your appearance on speaking day, because each audience and occasion is different. It may be smart, for instance, to dress like your audience in situations when you need to stress your role as an “ordinary” person, as one of them. For example, many union leaders wear their work uniforms when addressing co-workers. Evo Morales, a Bolivian activist elected to the presidency in 2006, found his red, white, and blue alpaca sweater to be a powerful symbol throughout his successful populist campaign.

Though exceptions are sometimes necessary, here are two general rules:

- **In academic or community speaking contexts, appear at least one degree nicer than your audience.** If you are speaking in front of a neighborhood group in a casual setting, look at least as nice as you would going into the office on casual Friday. If you are speaking in front of your classmates, dress as if you were the instructor. A trusted friend or teacher can help you with any appearance choices you may have in these situations.
- **In business or ceremonial contexts, appear according to the standards of the profession or ceremony.** Business and professional people are expected to appear businesslike whether they are serving in speaking or listening roles. Ask a trusted colleague, manager, or mentor if you are in doubt about the dress standards of your profession. Ceremonial events, such as weddings or memorial services, often call for more formal attire than everyday wear.

10. Look at your audience

Although this is not true of all cultures, mainstream U.S. audiences expect eye contact. Your willingness to look at your listeners conveys confidence, truthfulness, and a desire for personal connection. These characteristics are important to your credibility. See Chapter 22 for more nonverbal ways to increase your credibility.

Did You Know?

Distracting Elements of Appearance

Clothes that are:

- too tight
- out of date
- rumpled, ripped, or stained
- revealing
- outrageous in style

Hairstyles that:

- hide your face or eyes
- require continuous adjustments
- look like you just got out of bed or sat in a sauna with a hat on

Body ornamentation such as:

- flashy, loud jewelry, especially if it catches light or jingles about
- contextually inappropriate tattoos or piercings
- a hat covering your face

26C

Know the Ways to Establish Credibility for Individual Speakers in Individual Contexts

Highlighting your individuality in some specific ways is another path to establishing and enhancing your credibility. Every speaker has different strengths on which to capitalize and weaknesses to overcome.

An analysis of your audience and the occasion is important as you consider specific ways of establishing your credibility. Your past gang affiliation, for instance, may lend you credibility as you convince young audiences to stay away from gangs, but it's doubtful you would want to mention it during a sales pitch to clients at work. Your research on star formation may make you a relative expert for your presentation in your Astronomy 101 course, but that same research would make you a neophyte at a NASA conference.

Consider using the following factors to your advantage.

1. Education and training

Mentioning your education and training can be a shortcut to enhancing your credibility with most audiences. Listeners respect years of dedicated schooling. They admire the long hours of study and community service required to become a firefighter, the self-discipline it takes

Essentials

General Methods of Creating and Communicating Credibility

- Be prepared. Be prepared. Be prepared!
- Show that you are ethical and civil by proving your integrity in all that you say and do and by showing that you care about your relationship with your listeners.
- Show that you are competent by being knowledgeable and accurate.
- Use an objective tone when citing your credentials.
- Show that you own the material by speaking conversationally.
- Use I-language, personal pronouns that bring *you* into the speech.
- Let your personality come through.
- Show that you want to communicate by displaying enthusiasm.
- Dress the part.
- Look at your audience.

to earn an MBA, and the educated palate of a fine-dining chef. Referencing your education or training also lends you the credibility conferred by your degree and its granting institution and conveys the qualities—such as patience, endurance, creativity, or persistence—you needed to earn it.

Be tactful, however. Not all listeners value the same credentials. Some may be impressed by a long list of your qualifications, whereas others may consider you conceited for mentioning them. Know your audience! Find the right balance between your need to establish your credibility and your need to connect with your listeners.

Your listeners' culture may also determine how they perceive your education and training. The "Speaking of Culture" box shares some reflections from international students who received their public speaking training in the United States.

2. Occupation

Your occupation can quickly enhance your credibility. Many occupations require specialized degrees or training, and the mere mention of your occupation implies these other levels of preparation. The number of years you have been in your occupation also plays a role. A mason who has been in the industry for eighteen years certainly has more credibility than an apprentice. Remember, though, that your occupation may be more relevant in some presentations than in others. Cite your health-care experience while speaking about pulmonary embolisms, but don't expect your medical background to add to your perceived credibility during your speech on new instruments in airplane navigation.



Speaking of Culture

If I Went Home with My New Skills

Ayumi (Japan)

"Japanese people are shy and don't talk much. I wish public speaking skills were taught in my country. If I were to come home with these skills, my classmates would be impressed."

Chol (Sudan)

"If I spoke in the American style to people back in my village, they would tell me, 'Slow down! Do we need to know all this right now?'"

Remember: we have plenty of time to do what needs to get done. Still, I do think they would appreciate knowing how other people communicate. They would be interested in what Americans can do."

Marleny (Panama)

"I would be perceived as very educated. The American style would impress my Panamanian audience. There would be no negatives! Seriously, though, their listening would certainly be better, because I now know how to organize my ideas. We don't study patterns of organization at home, but listeners would pick up on it and follow along much better."

3. Age

Depending on the topic and idea being discussed, age can bestow credibility. A 72-year-old most likely has more credibility on the topic of grandparenting than does a 17-year-old. The teen, however, would probably be perceived as more credible than the older person during a speech on the latest video-game technology.

Essentials

Individual Ways of Establishing Credibility

When relevant, use the following factors to your advantage.

- Cite your education and training.
- Mention your occupation.
- State your age.
- List some experiences you've had.
- Mention your degree of expertise.
- Refer to some personal connections.
- Point out your membership in any relevant groups.
- Talk about your membership or experience with a particular culture or co-culture.

4. Experience

You have innumerable life experiences from which to draw that can enhance your standing before an audience. The experiences you choose to share should be relevant to the idea you are discussing. Mention your travel experiences in Jordan while presenting on the ancient rock city of Petra. Tell about the fashion show you helped stage while speaking about the designer John Galliano. Talk about how you worked in your aunt's herb shop when discussing the herbal remedy Saint-John's-wort.

5. Expertise

Your accumulated knowledge, training, and experience on a given topic lead to a level of expertise, thereby increasing your credibility. Though you are most likely not the world's leading expert on nineteenth-century violins, perhaps you have played the violin for more than a decade, own an older instrument, and have done a lot of relevant research. For your presentation on antique violins to the local high school orchestra, you *are* the relative expert. Be sure to talk up your expertise if it's appropriate for you and your topic.

6. Personal connections

Speakers strengthen their own credibility by associating with people who are already perceived as credible. Name-dropping for its own sake is a form of bragging and thus unbecoming, but you *can* look better when you connect yourself socially or professionally to other people your listeners see as important and reliable. Cite personal connections only when they are truthful and relevant, of course: talk about how you were coached for a summer by the highly ranked table-tennis player; mention your Capitol Hill internship with your state's senator; point out your mother's well-known work on cloning.

7. Memberships

Relevant affiliation with a group can also strengthen your credibility. Your work with the campus chapter of Amnesty International is appropriate to mention in your presentation on the CIA's program of extraordinary rendition. Talk up your eleven years as a card-carrying member of the National Rifle Association during your presentation on the World Black Powder Rifle Championship.

8. Culture

Though it's naïve to think that any one person can represent an entire culture—and distasteful to present yourself as a stereotype—drawing on your role as an individual from a particular culture or co-culture can lend you credibility. Because most listeners associate tango with Argentina, referring to your relevant experience with or membership in Argentine culture could heighten your credibility, especially if you had instruction in the dance as well. Refer to your family's history as rodeo riders for added credibility while discussing the history of the cowboy hat. Talk about your life as a foodie during your presentation on foie gras.

Speaking of culture, bear in mind that credibility is won in different ways in different cultures. While one culture may value a high-intensity, rational, and relatively egocentric delivery style, that same style can cause other audiences to perceive you as heavy-handed. Some cultures perceive as credible those who demonstrate humility, the ability to listen well, the willingness to share credit for good ideas, and the ability to compromise. Always get additional training if you are speaking to a cultural group with which you are unfamiliar.

26D

Manage Your Credibility

Credibility should be uppermost in your mind at all points during the speechmaking process. You establish, create, and communicate things about yourself through all you say and do before, during, and after the presentation.

1. Before the presentation

- **What you can do.** Like it or not, your audience constructs a first impression of you before you begin to speak. Create a good impression by having all speaking notes and visuals prepared and neatly arranged. Sit tall and smile. Walk confidently to the front of the room as soon as you are introduced.

Also, believe in the power of your self-talk, and do all that you can to make that talk positive. Convince yourself that you're ready, willing, and able to present in front of your audience. Just as your positive self-talk can create a reality for the upcoming presentation, so, too, can negative self-talk. One student, Dottie, struggled with negative self-talk during a low point in her school term.

I came into one of my midterm speeches with a negative attitude, and I now regret doing so. Looking back at that speech, I see that I gave off such negative energy.

Did You Know?

A Note on Apologies

Speakers seem to love to apologize. Unless the entire point of your speech is to apologize for something you have done (a speech genre known as *apologia*), avoid the apology. A speaker may think that an apology somehow excuses laziness during speech preparation or a mistake during the speech, but ironically, all it does is draw attention to the problem and decrease credibility. Apologizing for how nervous you are only draws attention to your trembling voice, a characteristic listeners were most likely blissfully unaware of until you brought it up. Begging your listeners' pardon for your scuffed-up and cheap-looking poster board only leads them to agree that your visual *is* scuffed up and cheap looking. Asking forgiveness for a scratchy throat or stuffy nose only shines a spotlight on your weakened state of health, forcing your audience to wonder why, if things were so bad, you didn't just stay home.

Always give the best you have to give. Your listeners are none the wiser if you never point out and apologize for your "faults."

I appeared nervous and unsure. I learned a big lesson and that was to never beat yourself up before giving a speech, because it definitely shows up in your delivery. I knew I needed a change for the final speech. Before I came to that class, I repeatedly told myself that I could do it and that I had to do it. The more positive talk really helped.

- **What another person can do.** In most speech contexts, another person introduces you. This person's job is to welcome the audience and tell them a little bit about you and your presentation. He or she therefore plays a role in establishing your credibility. Provide this person with a list of the credentials and biographical data you would like to have shared. Ensure the accuracy of names, dates, and titles. Clearly communicate your topic so that your introducer can properly prepare the audience. Give your full attention to this speaker while he or she introduces you, and be sure to give thanks for the warm welcome. It makes you look humble and gracious.
- **What printed materials can do.** On occasion, printed materials containing speaker biographies are available to the audience prior to the presentation. Should your speaking host request such information, promptly provide the needed data, complete with full names of schools and organizations and proper spellings. Because these printed materials affect the perception your audience has of you, insist on seeing a proof of your biography before it goes to print. Grammatical errors or misspellings don't get things off to the best start.

2. During the presentation

- **Things you do.** Your voice and body reveal a lot about you during the entire presentation. Show through your nonverbal communication that you are prepared,

Did You Know?

How to Tear Down Your Speaker's Credibility

Just as you can build your speaker's credibility, you can also tear it down. Here are some actions you'll definitely want to avoid:

- **Being inattentive during the host's introduction.** Don't be busy finishing up the last details of your notes or rummaging around in a briefcase, backpack, or purse while the speaking host is introducing you. Such behavior is not only rude, but it spotlights your lack of preparation.
- **Primping.** Don't brush your hair, fix your makeup, or pick lint off your clothes while waiting to be called on to speak. One audience had to watch in horror as a speaker rolled on deodorant right before walking up to the speaking platform! Speakers who display such self-absorbing behaviors start off on the wrong foot for the listener-centered speeches they are expected to give.
- **Mentioning forgotten items.** Some presenters feel the need to mention a forgotten visual, reference citation, or set of notes. Evidently, these speakers think that comments like *I tried to find a review of Book X, but I had computer trouble* or *I had a visual for this, but I left it at home* will at least earn them points for trying. Wrong. Remember: the audience has no idea what you have planned. Mentioning forgotten items only focuses the audience's attention on your lack of effort.
- **Making excuses.** Some speakers like to prepare their audiences for the second-rate presentation they are about to listen to. One well-known speaker told his audience that though he typically speaks conversationally, because of illness, he was going to read from a script instead. Things would have been bad enough *had* he just read. But because he told listeners *why* he was going to do so, many in the audience felt deflated and resentful. If he was so sick, they thought, why didn't he just cancel the speech and spare them the trouble?
In another instance, a student speaker mournfully warned her audience that she had not had any time to practice. Immediately recognizing that they were now victims of a first practice session, listeners were relentlessly critical of the presentation. Clearly, the excuses given in both these examples made audiences realize that they were going to be on the receiving end of the speakers' second best. What was the use in staying to listen? Why not just go home and forget the whole thing?
- **Beating yourself up after the conclusion.** Some novice speakers are so thankful to have reached the end of their presentation that they slump over and emit huge sighs of relief upon uttering their final words. Other speakers are overly self-critical and immediately begin to publicly beat themselves up. (*That was horrible! Did you hear how many times I said um?!?!*) Perhaps everything did not go as planned, but reserve your self-evaluation for later, when you are alone or with a trusted friend or colleague. Public self-criticism tarnishes any credibility you have earned.

want to communicate, and believe in your message. Chapter 21 fully explores the impact that your voice and actions have on your audience and on your perceived credibility.

- **Things you say.** Despite the presence or lack of printed materials or another person to introduce you, begin to verbally lay the groundwork for your credibility somewhere in the introduction of your presentation. Many speakers like to mention their research and list some credentials early on in order to assure listeners of their trustworthiness and competence. Many others also like to note their interest in the topic and their motivation for talking about it. Continue building your credibility during the body of your presentation. See Sections B and C of this chapter for some ideas. As you near the conclusion of your talk, tell your audience how you plan to use or think about your message in the future as you encourage them to do the same. The “Did You Know?” box (📌 p. 426) provides a warning against one common speech ingredient—the apology. The other “Did You Know?” box (📌 p. 427) summarizes some credibility techniques and behaviors by reminding you what *not* to do.

3. After the presentation

Continue building and maintaining your credibility even after you have communicated your final thoughts. Stand confidently while you graciously accept your round of applause. If you have a question-and-answer session, keep your best face forward while you interact with your audience. Once the last question has been fielded, thank your audience again, and return to your seat or stand with assurance while the audience leaves. Many times, audience members will approach you afterward for additional comments or questions. Maintain your credibility throughout.

Summary

- **Speaker credibility, a perceived characteristic, directly influences your listeners’ willingness to receive and accept you and your ideas.**
- **Credibility is established in general ways by showing your audience through your words and actions that you have thought about your ideas, are fully prepared to discuss them in a personable and ethical way, and genuinely want to communicate them.**
- **Credibility is also established in individual or relative ways. Each speaker has different strengths on which to capitalize, including education, occupation, experience, and group membership.**
- **Credibility is created and communicated through all you say and do before, during, and after the presentation.**

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS SUPPORT KEY**

You are an important part of listener-centered speaking. Keep your audience with you by doing all that you can to make them believe that you are the right person to deliver this particular message.

EXERCISES

1. *During the next round of speeches, focus on one classmate's ability to establish credibility before, during, and after his or her presentation. Write up a short analysis and give it to the speaker.*
2. *Find a video of a speech by a speaker you're not familiar with. After watching it the first time, do some research on the person and his or her credentials. Watch the speech again. Did your perception of the speech change once you knew more about the speaker?*
3. *Think of someone you have heard speak whom you would consider charismatic. What observable behaviors cause you to deem this person "charismatic"? What does this say about charisma?*
4. *As a class, discuss the role of appearance in relation to speaker credibility. Does a speaker's appearance matter? Be sure to analyze speakers under several different circumstances.*
5. *Attend a speech on campus. Pay special attention to the host's introduction of the speaker. What is the host saying? What is the speaker doing while the host is talking? Did the introduction help you perceive the speaker's credibility in a positive, negative, or indifferent way?*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 27

Speaking to Inform

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“Informative speaking was difficult for me. I’m a very opinionated person, and I didn’t like not being able to spout off about what I think and feel. But on the other hand, I can now see the need for knowing how to speak informatively, and just informatively. I realize that when I’m in the audience, I sometimes just want to get right to the information without having it tied up in the speaker’s messy opinions. Just the facts, ma’am, you know? There’s a time and place for everything. I’ve come to accept that.”

“I was speaking informatively on historic weaponry, a topic I knew a lot about, and I was frustrated that I would have to pare down my ideas so much. We had a class discussion about ‘envisioning our outcome,’ seeing exactly where we wanted our audience to be at the end of our talk. That ‘place’ had to be clearly defined as one thing we wanted them to know or understand. Envisioning the outcome was the big solution. Once I knew the one informative place I was going, it was easier to take my audience there.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

Determine your speech purpose.

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

STYLE

27A

Understand the Role of Informative Speaking

27B

Recognize Types of Informative Speeches

1. *Speaking about objects*
2. *Speaking about people*
3. *Speaking about a process*
4. *Speaking about an event*
5. *Speaking about a concept*

27C

Use Common Strategies to Help Listeners Learn

1. *Make it relevant*
2. *Remember: less can be more*
3. *Organize your ideas for maximum engagement and focus*
4. *Explain, do not assume*
5. *Elaborate*

Key Terms

concept speech	▶ 439
event speech	▶ 438
informative speaking	▶ 435
object speech	▶ 436
oratory	▶ 435
process speech	▶ 438

Public communication events typically fit into one of three major types—speeches to inform, speeches to persuade, and speeches to mark a special occasion. Determining the purpose of a speech is often more complex than you'd think. For example:

- A speech that ultimately attempts to persuade often has informative sections.
- Listeners can change their minds (be persuaded) about a person after hearing that person's life story during a eulogy (a special-occasion speech).
- In order to get and keep an audience's attention on an informative topic, the speaker must persuade them that the information is relevant and important.

Although identifying your major speech purpose may be challenging, defining that ultimate purpose helps you achieve listenability: when you begin by imagining some sort of an outcome—what you want the listeners to know, do, believe, or feel—you can better make listener-friendly choices about how to get there. This chapter introduces the first of the three major speech purposes, speaking to inform. Read about persuasive speaking in Chapters 28 and 29 and special-occasion speaking in Chapter 30.

27A

Understand the Role of Informative Speaking

Informative speaking, or speaking to enhance the knowledge of others, is a relatively new phenomenon. The ancient art of **oratory**, studied and practiced by Greek and Roman scholars, focused only on speaking with competence, style, and grace for persuasive purposes. The rise of the scientific movement in the 1700s, wherein people began to examine life's questions from a natural, secular perspective rather than a religious one, created a need for objective and factual presentation. But what today would be labeled an "informative speech" did not exist until the Plain Speech movement, in the 1920s, sought "briefer and simpler" talks to respond to the needs of commerce.¹

Informative speaking continues to have staying power. There are endless occasions for which objective and factual presentations are appropriate and necessary.

- Managers clarify new policies.
- Salespeople and project engineers make reports and updates.
- Coaches explain rules and strategies.
- Health-care professionals explain medical procedures.
- Inventors describe their technologies.
- Professors teach theories.
- Presidents of neighborhood associations inform residents about community happenings.
- Elected officials explain new laws.

Indeed, we live in a time and participate in a global economy where there are seemingly infinite pieces of information to be shared and disseminated. A listenable informative public speech occurs when you succeed in helping your audience members take in and understand your information.

You could argue that any time people share information, they're actually attempting to persuade. Because it's impossible to tell everything there is to know about any one topic, speakers inevitably share some facts while intentionally or unintentionally withholding others, thereby painting only a partial picture of "the truth." Savvy listeners recognize that speakers can easily manipulate statistics, carefully select anecdotes, and control visuals—all to support a particular point of view.

The lines between information and persuasion *can* get fuzzy. For example, the mere fact that you choose to discuss your topic says something about your opinion of it. For public speaking purposes, look ethically and honestly at your intention. If your genuine goal is to teach your audience what you know, to convey what you have learned in your research, and to describe the world as it is, your purpose is informative. But if your goal is to share cherry-picked information in order to lead your listeners to a specific conclusion or to modify their values, beliefs, attitudes, or actions, then your goal is persuasive. You need to recognize and acknowledge the difference.

Teaching is among the best examples of speaking informatively. Teachers consider their audiences and impart knowledge that's new and/or useful for specific listeners. Informative speakers are reporters of the way things are—warts and all. Telling your listeners how the human body processes a fat calorie is informative; telling them that they should reduce their consumption of fat calories is persuasive. Table 27.1 provides more examples.

Informative speeches broaden the intellectual horizons of those in the audience. Listeners learn about the past, present, and future. They learn how things function, gain insight into the relationships between ideas, and discover the mysteries of the greater world around them. Audience members leave the informative presentation with a wider understanding of their world.

27B

Recognize Types of Informative Speeches

Informative speeches typically fall into one of five classifications—they are about an object, a person, a process, an event, or a concept. Some speeches can fit two or more of these types simultaneously. For example, a presentation on the technical steps in editing a digital film looks at both a process (editing) and an object (the finished film). A presentation on how players' heights factored into the final standings of the NBA's recent season examines an event, but from a conceptual framework. The key is for *you* to decide what the major classification for your speech is. Your focus makes for clearer communication to your listeners.

As with all presentations, you will want to narrow your discussion of your chosen object, person, process, event, or concept; center it on a thesis; and organize it effectively.

1. Speaking about objects

An **object speech** teaches the audience about something visible, audible, or tangible. Think nouns. An animal, vegetable, mineral, place, or thing is the main focus in an object speech.

Table 27.1 Recognize the Difference between Informative and Persuasive Speaking

TOPIC	INFORMATIVE	PERSUASIVE
Graffiti art	<i>Pseudo-anonymous British graffiti artist Banksy is getting a lot of media attention for his eye-catching art pieces.</i>	<i>Graffiti art is a meaningful form of artistic expression.</i>
Rudy Giuliani	<i>Rudy Giuliani's post-September-11 actions as mayor of New York City earned him praise from many sources.</i>	<i>Rudy Giuliani's controversial actions as mayor of New York City make him an unacceptable candidate for higher office.</i>
Transgendered people	<i>More transgendered people of all ages are living more openly than ever before.</i>	<i>Laws must be passed to protect transgendered people from employment discrimination.</i>
Florida Everglades	<i>The Everglades support a multitude of species, including alligators, venomous snakes, and toxic plants.</i>	<i>Because alligator populations in the Everglades have rebounded in such great numbers, tightly managed hunting should be allowed.</i>

Examples of object speeches include an explanation of Balinese shadow puppets, a tour of a paleontology lab, and a description of the newest cell-phone features. Other objects to speak about include:

- an aircraft carrier
- Brazilian Carnival costumes
- the birth-control patch
- echidnas
- antique world maps
- Jupiter's moon Io
- staphylococcus
- a meadow
- greenrooms
- Gregorian chants

2. Speaking about people

Most listeners like to learn about other people, including people who have significantly shaped our collective past, people who fashioned (for better or worse) the society we inhabit today. Who were they? In what historical and societal context did they live? What motivated them to act and think as they did? What challenges did they face? What is their legacy? Possibilities include Atahualpa, Sacagawea, Harriet Tubman, Jonas Salk, Genghis Khan, Socrates, and Napoleon.

We also like to learn about people in our present day.

- Well-known people like Beyoncé, Steve Nash, and Howard Stern typically make for out-of-the-ordinary biographies.
- People who have notably contributed to our lives through their inventions, their diplomatic skills, their courage, or their sacrifice have stories that are usually fascinating to hear even if their names are not well known. For example:
 - Art Fry, inventor of the Post-it Note
 - Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, fifth secretary-general of the United Nations

- New Mexico high school teacher Bill Nevins, fired for defending the artistic rights of his students
- Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old peace activist who was crushed by a bulldozer while trying to prevent the Israeli government's destruction of Palestinian homes
- People unlike ourselves can broaden our understanding of our global community by teaching us about the way other people live. They may come from a certain place (the Minnesota Somali community), or believe certain things (Mennonites), or adopt intriguing cultural behaviors (Tonga's *fakaleiti*—boys raised as girls).
- People who are poised to have an impact on our collective future, like leaders, artists, inventors, policy makers, pioneers, revolutionaries, and builders, give us insights into what's to come.

Provide concrete imagery and tell stories when sharing another person's biography. These specifics help listeners see the person through an objective lens rather than through the abstract lens of fame, celebrity, or history. Above all, tell your audience why they should care to know about this person. Reinforce the idea that learning about the stories, struggles, insights, and achievements of others helps us better understand ourselves and the greater human condition.

3. Speaking about a process

A **process speech** describes a series of actions or events that result in a specific outcome or end product. Process speeches

- provide a step-by-step explanation of how something came to be, like how saber-toothed cats became extinct or how the country once known as Burma came to be called Myanmar.
- show how something relatively abstract works, like couples counseling or a successful advertising campaign.
- demonstrate how something concrete is done, like creating a plant hybrid or applying feng shui concepts to a room.

A successful process speech allows for two possible outcomes: listeners better understand the intricacies of a particular process, or they now know how to complete a process themselves. Other topics ripe for a process speech include:

- how wildfires are fought
- how the water cycle works
- how contestants are chosen for reality shows
- how flesh-eating maggots are used in some surgical procedures
- how adults can help a child build self-esteem
- how to prepare for long-distance hiking
- how to more effectively work in a team setting

4. Speaking about an event

An **event speech** enlightens an audience about anything that has happened, is happening or is believed to be happening, or will happen. An event speech brings to life a singular occasion, occurrence, or experience for people who were not or cannot be there to encounter the event for themselves. The imagery you provide helps audiences stay engaged with your message. Event-speech examples include a description of the hoopla surrounding the release

Essentials

Types of Informative Speeches

- An object speech teaches about something visible, audible, or tangible.
- A speech about a person or people illuminates the significance of a specific person or group of people.
- A process speech describes a series of actions or events that result in a specific outcome or end product.
- An event speech highlights anything that has happened, is happening or is believed to be happening, or will happen.
- A concept speech looks at the intangibles of life, things we cannot see or touch but nonetheless perceive, suppose, or imagine.

of the first iPhone, an explanation of why *E. coli* broke out in bagged spinach, or the story of how Maya Lin's design won the contest for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC.

Other informative events include:

- Ireland's "Bloody Sunday"
- the Big Bang
- Lynne Cox's swim to Antarctica
- the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver
- Saddam Hussein's trial
- the birth in San Diego of Hua Mei, the first giant panda born in North America to survive to adulthood
- Zinedine Zidane's head-butting incident in the 2006 World Cup finals
- the Summer of Love, 1967

5. *Speaking about a concept*

A **concept speech** looks at the intangibles of life—theories, ideas, impressions, attitudes, beliefs, and values that we cannot see or touch but nonetheless perceive, suppose, or imagine. A successful concept speech uses concrete examples and imagery to help listeners see the associations between abstractions and reality. For instance, in your speech on corporate fraud, provide legal definitions (and, if necessary, do so in nonlegal language!) and share real-life stories of people who were found guilty of the offense. Other potential topics explored in concept speeches include:

- teenage rebellion
- color-blindness
- the warring ideologies of Iraq's Sunni and Shia Muslims
- utopia
- supplication
- Waldorf education
- sexual power

- jingoism
- Freakonomics

27C

Use Common Strategies to Help Listeners Learn

Bear in mind that the majority of the skills needed for successful informative speaking are covered throughout this textbook. Adopting the mind-set of listener-oriented public speaking, conducting a thorough audience analysis and acting appropriately on it, creating and communicating a full introduction, using narrative, being ethical and civil, fully supporting your ideas, and practicing are just some of the behaviors all speakers accomplish to achieve their informative communication goals.

But there *are* a few specialized skills. One of them is to recognize and act on some ways in which people learn. The degree of a listener's new understanding may vary from slight to considerable, but either way, he or she leaves your presentation seeing the world in a new way.

1. Make it relevant

Motivation is one of the most influential keys to learning. It's difficult for listeners to maintain their attention on your presentation and benefit from it if they don't see your ideas as relevant to their own lives. Work diligently to ensure that your listeners perceive some degree of relevance and are motivated to learn. A detailed analysis of your audience helps you better understand your specific listeners. Use this evaluation to create connections between your ideas and the needs of your audience. Establish initial relevance in the speech introduction and then build on it throughout the presentation. The "Speaker's Story" box shows how one student succeeded in doing exactly this.

2. Remember: less can be more

Bear in mind the phrase "quality over quantity" when speaking informatively. It's better to state, support, and reinforce one main idea (your thesis) than to cram too many ideas into your speaking time. Fifty unrelated details about a topic may be individually interesting, but they're difficult for the average listener to retain. Reflecting on his too-busy informative speech about the architect Félix Candela, one engineering student honestly evaluated himself: "Should the listener perceive the architect as sculptor, or should the listener recognize alternative uses for concrete? Or is the technique of using hyperbolic parabolas the wave of some undefined future, or am I providing insight into the way I choose to build? Not all these questions needed to be answered, yet I was trying to do so."

Listeners learn better when you highlight one main idea, clearly explain it, and support it in detail. See Chapter 9 for tips to help you narrow down your topic ideas into a thesis that communicates one—and only one—main idea.

3. Organize your ideas for maximum engagement and focus

Organizing your ideas is essential for a listenable presentation. See pages 189–201 for a discussion of five organizational patterns for informative speaking—topical, chronological,

A Speaker's Story

Kyle Makes It Relevant



In his speech to classmates on the effects of soda on the human body, Kyle worked hard at establishing relevance. He spent time in his introduction convincing listeners that *they* were the ones who needed to hear his message.

Kyle began by discussing per-capita soda consumption in the United States, narrowing consumption rates by age before ending up at the age range of the typical college student. People in the audience nodded in agreement; they, too, were aware that college students drink a lot of soda. Kyle continued creating relevance by offering statistics on soda sales from *their* campus. Audience members began looking guilty. But he still wasn't done luring them in. He then shared his personal observation of the amount of drinks classmates tended to bring to class. People were now squirming, either from their own guilt or for their friends in class. "Effects of soda consumption" was no longer an abstract problem for other people; it was an issue of immediate relevance to those in the room. Listeners were captivated. Kyle had created motivation to listen and learn.

Nor did Kyle let the audience go during the speech. He continued making personal connections. When beginning his discussion of soda's effects on teeth, for example, he commented on all the beautiful teeth he saw in the room and then asked classmates to flash a toothy smile at the person sitting next to them. Listeners complied while laughing nervously. They knew where he was going with this, but they stayed tuned; they wanted to know what happens to teeth—*their teeth*. Kyle succeeded in establishing relevance once again.

Kyle continued motivating his listeners to learn at other points throughout his presentation. At the completion of his speech, hands were shooting up in the air ready to ask questions, make comments, and share stories. Listeners had been involved. Learning had happened.



causal, comparison/contrast, and spatial. No informative topic comes with a built-in mandate for organization. Instead, a familiarity with each of these patterns allows you to keep kneading your topic, looking at it from multiple angles to see which pattern works best for what you want to say to your audience. Here are five possibilities, for example, for an object speech on chewing gum. Which one message do you want to communicate in this speech?

- Topical—the main ingredients in chewing gum
- Chronological—the history of Wrigley's Juicy Fruit gum
- Causal—the long-term effects of excess gum chewing
- Comparison/contrast—the differences between the production of chewing gum and bubble gum
- Spatial—marketing strategies for selling bubble gum to teens in different parts of the country

Essentials

Helping Audiences Learn

- Make your information relevant in the introduction, throughout the presentation, and again in the conclusion.
- Remember that less can be more. Help your audience see the world in *one* new way.
- Organize your ideas in a way that best suits your topic for maximum reception and focus.
- Explain. Do not assume everyone understands references to words, terms, people, dates, events, and other details.
- Elaborate to give your listeners a full picture of the ideas you are communicating.

Whatever pattern you select, identify it and communicate it to your listeners during your presentation.

4. *Explain, do not assume*

Considerate informative speakers minimize demands on listeners by not assuming a broadly shared context of information. Reduce the need for your listeners to make inferences. Don't let them tune out because of a gap in their knowledge. Define terms or concepts you had to learn or look up during your research and preparation; chances are, if you had to learn them, so do audience members. If you refer to a particular person, provide a brief explanation of that person's role or title unless you are positive everyone already knows who he or she is. Here are examples of how two speakers handled needed explanations:

- School principals and secretaries were gathered to learn about their district's hiring policies. At one point, the speaker mentioned "necessary compliance with ADA rules." Realizing that most but not all listeners would know what the ADA was, he added a quick clarifying description: "ADA, as many of you know, stands for the Americans with Disabilities Act, a law that since 1992 prohibits governments and other employers from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities."
- During an in-house presentation, one office manager cryptically referred to "that situation we had to deal with last year." Everyone laughed—except for two new employees who just looked baffled. Realizing her error and not wanting to highlight the new employees' outsider status, the manager took a few seconds to summarize "last year's situation." Once all listeners were again on the same page, she continued with her presentation.

5. *Elaborate*

Going into greater detail helps people learn. Use the following:

- Definitions to explain or clarify what a word, idea, or expression means.
- Examples, descriptions, and explanations to expand on or provide more information.

- Visual support to enhance your ideas.
- Demonstrations and visualizations to help listeners see what you are talking about.
- Analogies, comparisons, and contrasts to help people learn something new by attaching it to something they already know.

You can use these strategies within your speech when needed. Some presentations—often called speeches of definition, demonstration, description, or explanation—rely on these strategies for the whole of the speech. For example, one speaker spent the full ten minutes of her informative speech *defining* fair trade. To do so, she outlined the three criteria a product must meet to receive this valuable designation. Another speaker's whole speech *described* the male narwhal's long tusk. Still another speaker *demonstrated* how to set a formal dinner table.

Summary

- **Informative speaking is alive and well. There are endless opportunities for conveying information to others.**
- **A listenable informative speech is one that succeeds in making your audience access and retain new and/or useful information.**
- **Informative speeches fit into one of five types—they are about an object, a person, a process, an event, or a concept.**
- **When speaking informatively, use strategies to help people learn: reinforce the relevance of your topic, simplify ideas, organize your ideas, do not assume mutual references, and elaborate.**



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY KEY

You recognize that there are times when information—and just information—is needed or wanted. By identifying a clear informative speaking goal and relying on some strategies that help people learn, you can open your audience's eyes to the greater world around them.

EXERCISES

1. Research an ideological organization on the web or at the library. Search for the organization's "facts and statistics" that back up its viewpoints, assertions, or stances. Take three of these "facts or statistics," and research other sources to see whether you can find opposing "facts and statistics." What does this say about the blurred lines between information and persuasion?
2. During one of your other classes over the next day or so, pay attention to how your professor approaches information and persuasion. Was the class mostly informative or mostly an

argument, where the professor was trying to get you to accept a point of view? Provide examples as you report your findings to your classmates. Do you feel that your professor's approach to informing and/or persuading you was appropriate for that course?

3. *With a small group, brainstorm ten topics of interest for each of the five kinds of informative speeches—objects, people, processes, events, and concepts.*
4. *Create a transcript of one of your past recorded informative speeches, or find a transcript of an informative speech in a book or on the web. In the margins, identify each of the strategies used to help listeners learn. See pages 440–443 for a full list.*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 28

Speaking to Persuade

REAL STUDENTS

REAL WORDS

“Persuasion is everywhere in our culture. Just look and listen. I liked learning more about persuasion and applying it in my speeches, but what I’ll really take away from this class is my new ability to better recognize persuasion when others use it on me, which is just about every day.”

“I couldn’t wait for our persuasive speeches. I feel passionately about a lot of the things I see in this world—especially social justice—and I was highly motivated to learn how to reach my fellow citizens more effectively.”

KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER			
STRATEGY Determine your speech purpose.	STRUCTURE	SUPPORT	STYLE

28A

Understand the Role of Persuasive Speaking

1. *A persuasive speech creates, changes, or reinforces thinking*
2. *A persuasive speech creates, changes, or reinforces action*

28B

Recognize Types of Persuasive Speeches

1. *Argue an assertion of fact*
2. *Argue an assertion of value*
3. *Argue an assertion of policy*

28C

Use General Persuasive Strategies

1. *Know your audience*
2. *Be realistic about your persuasive goal*
3. *Be organized*
4. *Be understood first*
5. *Use classical appeals*
6. *Use contemporary appeals*

28D

Use Framing as a Persuasive Strategy

Key Terms

assertion of fact	▶ 449
assertion of policy	▶ 450
assertion of value	▶ 449
coercion	▶ 454
electronic eloquence	▶ 455
ethos	▶ 454
expectancy-outcome values theory	▶ 455
expectancy-violation theory	▶ 456
frames	▶ 456
framing	▶ 456
hierarchy of needs	▶ 455
pathos	▶ 454
persuasion	▶ 447
public memory	▶ 455

Each of us has a right to the many opinions and preferences we hold. In your personal life, you don't have to necessarily explain why you think a particular restaurant is romantic, why you think country music deserves its popularity, or why you admire Oprah Winfrey. But when it comes to making claims in a public context, you are responsible for fully backing up what you say. Persuasive speaking is one of the three general types of public speaking (informative and special-occasion speaking are the other two). In a persuasive speech, your goal is to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. This chapter first explores the concept of persuasion. It then discusses types of persuasive speeches and general strategies for persuading others.

28A

Understand the Role of Persuasive Speaking

Persuasion is the act of attempting to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. A public presentation contains a potentially powerful and wide array of persuasive ingredients including words, eye contact, facial expressions, hand movements, images, vocal tone, and personal appearance. Combined with the immediacy of face-to-face interaction, your effective use of persuasive tools is capable of altering or reinforcing other people's thoughts or actions on facts, values, or policies.

Even though your persuasive messages *can* effect or reinforce change, they might not always succeed in doing so. It's difficult to persuade others. Their current thoughts, values, attitudes, and behaviors stem from a complex foundation of experience, personality, education, and socialization formed through the influence of family and culture. Does that mean that we should not bother speaking persuasively? Of course not. Your message may be the first time your listener hears a new idea; it may be one of many messages someone hears prior to making a change; or it may be the final piece of evidence for a decision that someone has long debated. You never know. So we keep speaking persuasively. Instead of judging the success of your persuasive speech by whether it changes another person's thoughts or actions, consider your presentation listenable if your audience successfully accesses and understands your argument.

Persuasive speeches happen every day. Living, in essence, means constant negotiation with others. Students argue points of view in theory classes and speak out in various campus venues about many different causes. Community members speak to raise funds, protect neighborhoods, elect representatives, and shape local policy. The world of work is filled with people using persuasive speaking on a daily basis. Here are two examples:

I ask clients and organizations if I can speak to their friends or associates about the need for investing. I use my presentation skills to increase audience members' knowledge and call them to action. My success is determined by how many new clients I acquire from a specific presentation. In my business, it's all about numbers, and I have a very high success rate. As a side note, whether or not a listener becomes a new client, I strive to connect with each person and help him or her identify the need for saving for the future. —Scott J. Jones, Investment Representative with Edward Jones and Co., LLP

When I speak, I see myself as an advocate. Most people find animals and geology interesting, but plants aren't on a lot of people's radar. Yet plants are cool! And I want people to share the passion I have for them. When I speak to homeowner groups and other general audiences, I often have to start with the basics, so my persuasive strategy is as follows. As a scientist, I present the facts with enthusiasm and passion. I take these audiences on a journey that raises awareness, increases appreciation, and ideally leads to a desire to protect plants and plant environments. When I'm presenting to land managers, taxonomists, and other botanists, my ultimate goal is still the same—it's just that I start out on a higher level. I have to keep up with the latest information so I can increase their knowledge and their desire to protect the amazing plant diversity. —Wendy Hodgson, Senior Research Botanist and Director of the Herbarium at the Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix, AZ

Ultimately, persuasive speeches focus on debatable issues and topics about which people have different points of view or responses. For example, people handle their money in a variety of ways, so Scott Jones, the investment representative, has his work cut out for him when he attempts to convince people not only to invest (rather than spend), but to invest with his company (rather than another firm). Wendy Hodgson often faces an uphill battle in getting people to pay attention to plants, much less be concerned about protecting them.

Some beginning speakers choose persuasive topics to which there's minimal or no counterpoint. While it may be sweet reinforcement, convincing your audience to "be nice during the holidays" is pointless, because who would argue that people should be mean and stingy? The following section looks more narrowly at the goals of your persuasive speech.

1. A persuasive speech creates, changes, or reinforces thinking

Each of us holds a set of values, attitudes, and beliefs that structure our world. Our moral and ethical training, our philosophical outlook, and our sociological experiences strongly define who we are as individuals. We devote much of our interpersonal communication to sharing and negotiating this belief system with others. We also deliberate our belief systems in public presentations. In a persuasive speech, a speaker stands before an audience with the intention of getting that group of listeners to adopt part of his or her values, attitudes, or belief system.

Persuasive speeches rarely achieve radical shifts of perception. It is highly unlikely that you can persuade an audience of Republicans to become an audience of Democrats. It is nearly impossible to persuade an audience of atheists to believe in the importance of school prayer. Changes in thinking are more likely when the speaker's focus of persuasion is smaller in scope and resides in a gray area. For example, you may succeed in convincing some Republicans that a recent bill enacted by your state's majority Republican legislature was not good environmental policy. You may persuade some atheists to accept a daily minute of silence for primary school students.

Persuasive speeches can also reinforce thinking. Communicating publicly can be a powerful way to strengthen the belief system a group of listeners already possesses. Business leaders speak to reinforce company values. Military leaders speak to energize troops and keep them forging ahead with their mission. Political and religious leaders speak to strengthen views their followers already firmly hold.

2. A persuasive speech creates, changes, or reinforces action

A credible, persuasive speaker can be influential in getting others, either individually or as a group, to behave in a particular way. Whether your persuasive speech goal is to create new action or change or reinforce existing action, you must assure your audience that the desired action is reasonable and achievable and that proper and sufficient resources exist to make the action a reality. Your chances of altering or reinforcing action are greater when your aim is smaller in scope. You will probably not succeed in persuading a group of nonreaders to start in tomorrow on *War and Peace* (nearly 1,500 pages!), but you may get them to try your favorite short story. It's unlikely that you can convince a group of two-packs-a-day smokers to go cold turkey; you may, however, get them to cut their cigarette consumption by 10 percent for one week.

28B

Recognize Types of Persuasive Speeches

Persuasive speeches argue one of three types of assertions—of fact, value, or policy.

1. Argue an assertion of fact

Persuasive speeches based on an **assertion of fact** argue whether something is true or not true, whether something happened or did not happen, or whether something exists or does not exist. Some questions of fact are quickly answered in an encyclopedia; these are not assertions of fact that interest listeners. Instead, argue questions of fact that have not yet been definitively answered. Claims about past events where the record is murky, questionable, or nonexistent make for good presentations, as do claims about the present and future where two or more justifiable answers exist. Your task is to argue for one particular answer. Examples of persuasive speeches based on assertions of fact include:

- *Drinking red wine in moderation lowers your chances of suffering heart disease.*
- *Declining birth rates in industrialized countries combined with rapid population growth in developing countries will negatively affect the ability of the wealthy to aid the poor.*
- *MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccines cause autism.*
- *The United States will suffer another major terrorist attack.*
- *Social Security will be bankrupt by 2050.*

2. Argue an assertion of value

Persuasive speeches based on an **assertion of value** argue whether something is right or wrong, whether something is good or bad, how much something is worth, how fair something is, or how important or useful something is. Assertions of value go beyond your personal fancies. You may greatly value the teapot handed down by your great-grandmother, but it would be hard to provide enough evidence to make your listeners value it the same way. And persuasive speeches must be supported with evidence. Examples of persuasive speeches that assert value include:

- *We should support tourism built on sustainable resources.*

Essentials

Persuasive Speeches Attempt to Create, Change, or Reinforce Thinking or Action

Examples of speeches that attempt to create, change, or reinforce thinking include:

- *Schools should discount college tuition 25 percent for all who complete two years of community or military service.*
- *All cargo ships coming into U.S. ports need much tighter security screening.*
- *Spanking is an acceptable form of child discipline.*
- *Teen magazines are a negative influence on a girl's body image.*
- *The government should grant amnesty to undocumented workers already in the country.*

Examples of speeches that attempt to create, change, or reinforce action include:

- *Boycott Company X because of its unethical overtime policies.*
- *Make sure the next chocolate bar you buy is made from fair-trade chocolate.*
- *Protect against general antibiotic resistance by not buying antibacterial soaps.*
- *Sign up for a community-service trip to Haiti.*
- *Never drive while intoxicated.*

- *The Catholic Church is right to deny communion to public figures who speak out against church doctrine.*
- *The United States should pursue technological progress at all costs.*
- *No level of dishonesty belongs in an intimate relationship.*
- *Shareholders' rights are no more important than employees' rights.*

3. Argue an assertion of policy

Persuasive speeches based on an **assertion of policy** argue programs of action—how things should or should not happen, proceed, or get done for an individual or a group or at a societal level. Assertions of policy either encourage action on the part of listeners or seek to gain audience support for courses of action that others take. As in all persuasive speeches, you must support your assertions with evidence; you cannot expect an audience to agree with your claim of policy just because you support it. Examples of persuasive speeches based on policy include:

- *All cell phones must come prepackaged with GPS units.*
- *U.S. troops need to be provided better body armor.*
- *China's one-child policy must remain in place.*
- *Take the stairs!*
- *Parents should get microchip IDs for their children.*

The lines between the speeches of fact, value, and policy can overlap. Value and policy are often tightly connected. A speaker attempting to reinforce a certain policy should most likely also reinforce the value on which that policy is based. For instance, if you are arguing

against school uniforms, you should also reinforce the value of individuality as expressed in clothing styles. Fact and value are also connected. When presenting an argument about the presence of ghosts in your town's boarded-up hotel, you may have to spend significant time convincing listeners to value unconventional forms of proof.

The discussion in Chapter 11 looks in detail at ways to objectively and subjectively support your assertions. These include emotional proof, statistics, and examples. Chapter 29 also looks at another way—reasoning. But first, let's explore some general persuasive strategies you'll want to use every time you decide or are asked to speak persuasively.

28C

Use General Persuasive Strategies

1. Know your audience

Your listeners must see how they can benefit from your ideas if your attempts at persuasion are to stand a chance. So you must know your audience. For example, a realtor who specializes in helping buyers find their first homes would be wasting his breath trying to convince a group of well-to-do retirees to contract his services. Collect audience data through research, experts, surveys, and personal observation to help you determine the demographics, values, attitudes, needs, and wants of your listeners. These audience characteristics will guide your topic selection, the appropriate depth of information, and the type of language you need to best communicate the message. The “Speaker's Story” box (🔍 p. 452) reinforces the importance of knowing your audience.

You may face several types of audiences when speaking persuasively:

An Audience That Is Open and Receptive to Your Idea

- Talk up your commonalities; reinforce your areas of agreement.
- Be clear and open about your persuasive goal.

An Audience That Feels Indifferent toward or Is Uninformed about Your Idea

- Fully explain your idea. Elaborate.
- Spend extra time building the relevance of your idea.
- Stress audience members' commonalities; build their bonds with one another and with you.
- Highlight your credibility; show that you are friendly and trustworthy.
- Communicate your passion about your idea.
- Strongly reinforce your persuasive goal in the conclusion.

An Audience That Is Closed and Unreceptive to Your Idea

- Mention the controversial nature of your idea. Ask the audience to listen, not necessarily to agree.
- Limit your persuasive goal; having the audience accept your idea *as* an idea may be your ultimate purpose.
- Talk up areas of agreement.
- Show your respect for opposing views while attempting to refute them.
- Reinforce your (limited) persuasive goal near the end, but do it gently and respectfully.

A Speaker's Story

The Power of Knowing Your Audience

“

Mike Gorman, a manufacturer's representative specializing in high-voltage electrical equipment, understands the power of knowing his audience:

Information about your customer is gold. I have to know my customers' needs. I can't sell them something they don't need, and I only have what I have to sell. During our early interactions, I'm usually working with one or two people from the company. I ask open-ended questions in a casual way and encourage conversation. Then I have to be a great listener. I look for things they tell me that uncover their needs. I call those needs their "hot buttons." Later, when I make my full sales presentations to the larger decision-making group, I appeal to those hot buttons. I tell them how adding or substituting their equipment with my equipment will solve their problems. I convince them I am easy to work with and can be their one-stop shop. I must be doing something right. I've been in business now for more than twenty years!

Source: Personal interview with the author, July 22, 2005.

”

2. Be realistic about your persuasive goal

Voices on the fringes of an issue certainly have their place in a democracy but rarely find immediate success in their persuasive efforts. To have staying power, these voices must find a way to evolve and gain wider intellectual or emotional appeal. It's the conversations taking place toward the center of an issue that eventually influence public opinion and action.

This is not to say that your persuasive speech need only be targeted at the center. Audience analysis is crucial to helping you set your persuasive goal. The more mainstream your audience, the less radical your goal should be. It's doubtful you would succeed with *Governments should allow citizens unrestricted mobility by removing all fences, borders, and political boundaries*, or *Reduce all wages to the same amount*. Speeches like these better appeal to smaller segments of the population.

You need not pander to audiences either, and it's good to challenge their thinking. But know your audience, and keep your persuasive goal realistic. One student, Kori, knew she was taking a risk with her thesis, *Meat is an outdated food source*. Instead of creating the goal of getting her audience to agree with her, she just wanted to put the radical idea on their radar. Kori considered her speech successful because she at least got listeners to accept her idea as one to consider.

The human condition is complex, and there are endless issues to discuss from a variety of angles. Speeches that argue an issue's black-and-white edges rarely persuade anyone but those already on the edges. Persuasion is more interesting and more likely to appeal to larger

segments of your audience when you look to an argument's shades of gray. In a column on the ongoing conversations about abortion, journalist Anna Quindlen writes:

People will keep on reducing this discussion as best they can: God and freedom, rights and wrongs. But this will never be an easy issue to parse. It cannot be; instead of fitting neatly into black-and-white boxes, it takes place in that messy gray zone of hard choices informed by individual circumstance and conscience. People of good faith need to talk about it just that way, to advance the dialogue even in the face of rigid opposition. . . . We insult ourselves by leaving its complexities unexamined.¹

3. Be organized

Organizing your ideas is key to retaining listeners' attention and helping them follow your argument. The discussion on pages 201–208 looks at four patterns of organization for persuasive speeches—a why pattern, a how pattern, a problem/solution pattern, and Monroe's motivated sequence. This is a good time to review them. Look critically at your topic, and think about what you want your audience to do or believe. Select the pattern that works best for your persuasive goal.

4. Be understood first

Listeners must first understand your position before they can be persuaded to accept your claim or point of view. Persuasive speakers are often in a hurry to get to the good stuff and jump right into their persuasive arguments. Take the time, however, to ensure that you and your listeners are on the same page. Do you need to define terms, explain concepts, or describe organizations?

Sharon O'Brien-Metzger and Sonia Teder-Moore are the founders of *Stories That Soar!*, a program empowering children through writing. Wanting to grow their successful yet small nonprofit organization, O'Brien-Metzger and Teder-Moore created a thorough business plan and went out to raise funds. They designed a professional presentation complete with charts, figures, photos, and other important details they expected would appeal to investors. They looked sharp and spoke enthusiastically.

The two women quickly realized that they were in trouble, however, when the first question from an audience member was, "What is it exactly that your organization does?" Because the speakers had become so focused on fund-raising as their next step, they had lost sight of the need to start with the basics. They had assumed that their relatively brief explanation of "what exactly their organization does" would suffice. Obviously, it did not. Listeners had trouble making an investment decision because they were stuck trying to understand the organization's mission. The fund-raisers heavily revised their presentation before speaking to any other investment groups.

5. Use classical appeals

Several persuasive techniques you'll use have ancient roots. The Greek philosopher Aristotle identified three broad strategies that he coined *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Chapter 29 looks in depth at logos, or persuading listeners through their ability to reason. We look here at ethos and pathos.

Use the power of your character You saw in Chapter 26 that **ethos**, or speaker credibility, is an essential tool in any presentation. But it's especially important in a persuasive speech. People are often swayed to do or believe things based in large part on the power of the personality doing the asking. While it's rare that you can rely solely on your ethos for effective persuasion, here are some essential behaviors and traits you should display.

- **Demonstrate ownership of the material.** Audiences are more likely to believe you when they believe that your ideas are authentically yours. If you're tied to your notes, fumble over words, hesitate, and sound uncertain, listeners may wonder whose ideas you're conveying. Communicate your genuine belief in your ideas by speaking confidently and conversationally. Listeners need to believe that you believe.
- **Emote, but don't overemote.** Listeners want to see and hear your passion and genuine concern for your cause; they want to feel your true emotions. Identify the emotional rhythms of your presentation, and communicate them naturally. Leave the overemoting to bad actors. Clutching at your breast in grief or displaying exaggerated expressions of horror only distances your audience.
- **Be ethical and civil.** Coercion and persuasion share the same goal of getting people to do things, but **coercion** relies on threats, raw power, or the use of force. Unlike coercive people, who do not care if they are disrespected or feared, persuasive speakers *need* to care. Being persuaded is a voluntary action, and audiences follow only those speakers they deem ethical and trustworthy. Listeners seek your commitment to positive ethical values and civility. They look to see if you are being up front about your intentions and want to be assured that all your supporting materials are truthful and accurate. Chapter 4 discusses the importance of ethical and civil public communication and provides methods for creating them.

Use emotional appeals **Pathos**, or an appeal to your audience's emotions, is another classical persuasive strategy. People often make decisions based on emotions, ignoring logic or putting it aside for another day. Feelings of sympathy, anger, fear, pride, revenge, and joy are just some of the reasons people alter their predispositions or actions. You can tap into your listeners' emotions for successful persuasive effect.

- Appeal to the audience's sense of *injustice* while convincing them that telemarketers unfairly target older people.
- Appeal to their belief in *sacrifice* while arguing for increased medical funding for wounded Iraqi war veterans.
- Appeal to their sense of *community* while enlisting participation in a local Habitat for Humanity project.

Abide by ethical obligations when relying on emotional appeals. Beware of a heavy-handed use of emotions, and respect your audience's ability to think with their heads as well as react with their hearts. Listeners may resent your focusing solely on emotion. Seek a balance between supporting claims with evidence and appealing to sentiments.

6. Use contemporary appeals

Contemporary scholars describe several other methods for persuading others.

Electronic eloquence Communication theorist Kathleen Hall Jamieson says that television has greatly influenced what it takes to be persuasive.² Jamieson notes that modern persuaders often successfully appeal to audiences through a combination of storytelling; incorporation of the speaker's personality, complete with self-disclosure; and the integration of images—a method that has been dubbed **electronic eloquence**. Today's political campaigns, especially at the presidential level, offer good examples of Jamieson's theory in action.

You can use it too. Create an opportunity to use the narrative as part of or throughout your presentation. Tell audiences why you're interested in your topic, how you use the ideas being discussed, and if appropriate, how you feel about these ideas. Expertly use a variety of professional-looking informative and atmospheric visuals (and sound) to support your message.

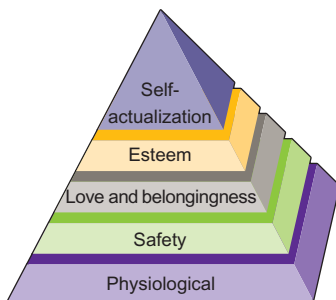


Figure 28.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs According to psychologist Abraham Maslow's **hierarchy of needs**, one can persuade other people by appealing to a range of needs, from the most basic physiological needs like food and shelter to the highest needs like creative self-expression and solving other people's problems.³ Figure 28.1 shows Maslow's five levels of needs. Listeners must perceive their lower needs as filled in order to prioritize any higher-level needs. For instance, be sure that your listeners feel a sense of security in their jobs (safety needs) before you encourage them to participate in the company picnic (belonging needs). Encouraging people to be spontaneous while traveling (self-actualization needs) is more likely to work on a group of

listeners with high levels of self-confidence (esteem needs) Maslow's theory tells us that an upward move toward higher needs is what motivates people to alter their beliefs or actions. Your audience analysis is essential in determining what needs to use as persuasive appeals.

Expectancy-outcome values **Expectancy-outcome values theory**, developed by psychology professor Icek Ajzen and communication professor Martin Fishbein, says that each of us consciously evaluates the potential costs and benefits—the value—of taking or not taking a particular action.⁴ We consider the costs and benefits not only to ourselves but also to our relationships with others. *If I take this action, how will my friends/mother/partner react?* When speaking persuasively, identify and stress the value of the outcome of a particular action or inaction. These strategies can keep your audience involved and move them in your desired direction. When recruiting people to be counselors at your summer camp for kids with cancer, tell stories about the deep, authentic friendships that are made; note how good such volunteer work looks on a college application; and stress the intrinsic rewards of helping others in need.

Public memory Cultural groups are often invested in their shared experiences, and they need and desire to recall these experiences. Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp and other communication scholars describe **public memory** theory, pointing to the power of TV, music, radio, film, and memorials to persuade us about the past and the way we remember it.⁵ These notions and symbols create public memory that you can tap into for persuasive effect during your speeches. For example, because TV has played a key role in creating public memory of how efficiently crimes are solved, you can refer to *CSI* during your speech promoting the use of

DNA evidence in court cases. Ironically, public memory needn't be true to have persuasive effect. For example, most U.S. adults "remember" feminists burning their bras in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet no serious scholar or journalist says that this happened.⁶ The public "memory" probably stems from a blending of the accurate events of women throwing bras into trash cans and men burning their draft cards. Nonetheless, a speaker could evoke this memory during a speech discounting the effects of the women's movement. Keep ethics in mind, however. Once you know that the bra-burning story is false, you can no longer ethically use it as support.

Expectancy violations Communication scholar Judee Burgoon's **expectancy-violation theory** notes that speakers can attract attention when their words or actions catch listeners by surprise (or violate their expectations).⁷ When the outcome of the unexpected behavior is positive, audiences increase their liking toward you. Their goodwill strengthens the relationship between them and you, increasing your chances of meeting your persuasive goals. Check with a trusted teacher, friend, or supervisor if you have an idea about catching your audience off guard. There can be a fine line between creating a positive and a negative outcome.

28D

Use Framing as a Persuasive Strategy

In the social sciences, **frames** are "mental structures that shape the way we see the world."⁸ For example, *flag* carries a frame of "birth of a country, patriotism, national pride, and international status." We can't see or hear frames; instead, they are part of our subconscious. But we know them through their consequences; they affect the way we reason and what we consider common sense. We communicate frames through language. "When you hear a word, its frame (or collection of frames) is activated by your brain."⁹

To help his Cognitive Science 101 students better understand a frame, Berkeley professor George Lakoff tells them, "Don't think of an elephant. Whatever you do, do *not* think of an elephant!" The professor says that he has never met a student who can do this. "*Elephant*," he says, "evokes a frame, which can be an image or other kinds of knowledge: Elephants are large, have floppy ears and a trunk, are associated with circuses, and so on. The word is defined relative to that frame. [Even w]hen we negate a frame, we evoke the frame."¹⁰ In other words, you possess the frame, and the word—even if you are told not to think about it—immediately causes you to think about it.

Framing is a speaker's purposeful use of language, more specifically, loaded language—to capitalize on particular images or other kinds of knowledge that listeners possess. To use the term *tax relief*, for example, is to engage in framing. *Tax relief* takes two frames (*tax* = "giving money to the government" and *relief* = "a release or a reprieve from an affliction") and combines them into a new frame ("taxes are an affliction from which we need relief"). And who doesn't want relief from something that's bad?

A powerful frame like this influences your ability to communicate. For example, those arguing *for* tax relief have an easy task, because there is very little to argue for; the evoked frame in the minds of the listeners created by the loaded word *relief* does the job for you. Those arguing *against* tax relief have a more difficult task. How can you argue against an

evoked frame that sounds so appealing? Instead, those arguing “for taxes” need to rely on language evoking a different frame. Arguing for increased *tax investment*, for example, taps into the original frame for *tax*, but adds the frame for *investment*—“pay a little now, reap greater rewards in the future.”

Public speakers, especially those with persuasive messages, can use loaded language to their advantage. The Bush administration’s justification for invading Iraq, for example, was heavily framed. Saddam Hussein was portrayed as a *madman* filled with *evil* intentions of wreaking havoc with his *weapons of mass destruction*. The United States, in contrast, *victimized* on 9/11, would save the world from this *monster*. Each of these italicized terms was purposefully communicated and inescapably understood in terms of metaphor. Indeed, 62 percent of U.S. adults supported military action against Iraq a few months before the invasion.¹¹

Consider the frames evoked by the following italicized words. Each pair of terms refers to the same idea, but through language, the framing taps into different ideas the listener probably holds.

- Is the third world country you are discussing a *growing economy* or an *underdeveloped nation*?
- Is it easier to argue for or against *gay marriage* or *same-sex unions*?
- Is China an *intolerant culture* or an *emerging global force*?
- Are *undocumented workers* or *illegals* the focus of your immigration discussion?
- Would the *partial-birth abortion* ban have passed if called by its medical term, *intact dilation and extraction*?

Consider the frames evoked through the use of your language. Keep a particular frame in mind as you research, create your argument, and support your idea. Who is using the frame and to what effect? What images will your words evoke? Most importantly, will the frame work for or against your persuasive goal? Remember, listeners cannot *not* think of an elephant. In other words, it is essentially a futile exercise to argue, as just discussed, that your audience does not need *tax relief*.

Summary

- **Persuasion is the act of attempting to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others.**
- **A persuasive speech is listenable when audience members successfully access and understand the speaker’s argument.**
- **Persuasive speeches argue assertions of fact, value, or policy.**
- **Use general persuasive strategies such as knowing your audience, being organized, and working first to be understood.**
- **Reach your persuasive goals through classical means such as using the power of personal and emotional appeals.**
- **Several contemporary appeals are also available, including electronic eloquence, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and public memory.**
- **Framing can be a powerful persuasive tool through its use of loaded language.**

**LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY KEY**

You recognize your current or future needs to get others to alter their thinking or behavior. Convince your audience to see things your way by identifying a realistic persuasive goal and relying on some proven persuasive strategies.

EXERCISES

1. *With a small group, generate ten topics to create, change, or reinforce thinking. Generate another ten to create, change, or reinforce action.*
2. *Think of a time in your personal life when you were persuaded only by your emotions. In retrospect, was your decision a good one or not? Can you make any connections between this event and the power to persuade others through the use of emotions in a public presentation?*
3. *Study TV advertisements for their persuasive strategies. Report on two ads, identifying the general strategies used. Is the advertiser attempting to create a belief, reinforce an existing belief, or motivate you to action? Is the advertiser using credibility or emotional appeals? Use examples.*
4. *Review the contemporary persuasive strategies on pages 454–456. Identify examples from your life when you used one or more of these strategies on someone else, perhaps without even knowing you were doing so. Do you see an opportunity to use one or more of these strategies in your upcoming persuasive talk?*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 29

Developing Your Arguments

REAL STUDENTS REAL WORDS

“I had taken a logic class in a previous semester. The only time I got to use the reasoning principles was in papers, so the logic instructor was the only audience I had. I liked the challenge of practicing reasoning principles and using those skills on a wider audience in my public speaking class.”

“When I started paying attention, I realized that a lot of arguments I hear are not well reasoned. Lots of people fall prey to fallacies. It’s easy to just say that something is true, but arguing why it’s so is tougher than I thought. I have a new respect for good reasoning.”



KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER

STRATEGY

STRUCTURE

SUPPORT

Apply reasoning.

STYLE

29A

Use Reasoning

29B

Arrange Your Reasoning According to a Pattern

1. *Inductive reasoning: From specific instances to a general conclusion*
2. *Deductive reasoning: From a general principle to a specific instance*
3. *Causal reasoning: From cause to effect or effect to cause*
4. *Analogical reasoning: Reasoning through comparison*

29C

Beware of Reasoning Fallacies

1. *Appeal to fear: Believe me or beware!*
2. *Slippery slope: You'll end up with this before you know it*
3. *Ad hominem: Attacking the person instead of the problem*
4. *Either/or: A false dilemma*
5. *Red herring: A distraction from the real issue*
6. *Bandwagon: Everybody's doing it!*

Key Terms

absolute claim	▶ 464	fallacy	▶ 469
ad hominem		inductive	
fallacy	▶ 471	reasoning	▶ 463
analogical		logos	▶ 461
reasoning	▶ 467	major premise	▶ 464
appeal to fear		minor premise	▶ 464
fallacy	▶ 470	reasoning	▶ 461
bandwagon		reasoning	
fallacy	▶ 472	backward	▶ 466
causal reasoning	▶ 466	reasoning	
claim	▶ 461	forward	▶ 466
deductive		red herring	
reasoning	▶ 464	fallacy	▶ 472
either/or fallacy	▶ 471	slippery slope	
enthymeme	▶ 465	fallacy	▶ 470
evidence	▶ 462	syllogism	▶ 464

Long ago, humans began to understand the power of the mind and how it could be used for making observations, testing ideas, and drawing new conclusions. Today, we understand and depend on the reasoning power of our minds to negotiate many aspects of life. As a persuasive speaker, you need to understand logical arguments and know how to use them to convince your audience to see the world your way. This chapter discusses the role of reasoning, provides some patterns for arranging your reasoning, and highlights several reasoning fallacies you'll want to avoid.

29A

Use Reasoning

While some listeners accept any message put before them, most rely on their critical-thinking abilities to sift through the multitude of daily messages we all receive. Because ideas and images are so often expertly spun (for purposes ranging from the good to the suspect), we each have a responsibility to develop a critical radar system that demands logic and evidence before believing any claims. Expect the majority of your audience members to use their best critical skills while listening to you. While you may influence audiences through your personal appeal (the classical strategy of *ethos*) and appeals to their emotions (*pathos*), also acknowledge and respect their ability to think critically.

The third classical persuasive strategy identified by Aristotle is **logos**, using appeals to the logical mind. Speakers accomplish this with **reasoning**, using a sufficient amount of true (or probable) and relevant evidence arranged logically to support a claim. A breakdown of the key words helps clarify this definition:

- **Claim.** The **claim** is your assertion about a fact, value, or policy—the conclusion you want your audience to draw and accept. Claims appear in a speech in two ways. First, the entire purpose of the speech may be to convince your audience of your claim. Second, you may use a claim in just a portion of the speech wherein your audience needs to accept a particular statement before you can move forward with the rest of your presentation. Here are some examples of claims:
 - *U.S. children are fatter than ever before and will continue getting fatter in the next decade.*
 - *Statistics 101 is a difficult course.*
 - *The strange mutations seen in many frog species spell danger for us all.*
 - *The United States Senate is an outdated concept.*
 - *The Sopranos is the greatest television show ever.*
 - *All medical records should be available through a centralized electronic system.*

- **Evidence.** **Evidence** is the material you use to support or back up your claim. Many of the forms of support discussed in Chapter 11, including facts, statistics, and testimony, can serve as evidence in persuasive speaking. For example, to back up your claim that children are fatter than ever, use statistics from a trusted source showing that only 5 percent of kids were considered obese in 1970, 7 percent in 1982, 14 percent in 1999, and 17 percent today. Use this evidence to help listeners see that this upward trend will most likely continue into the next decade if nothing is done to combat the problem.
- **Sufficient.** The evidence you use should be sufficient to back up your claim. In the child-obesity example, was the statistical sample of children relatively small? For instance, did the researchers look only at kids at one school in one Midwestern suburb, or was the sampling from a large number of children in both urban and rural areas, from all socioeconomic classes, and from all parts of the country? To use another example: the fact that your sister got dizzy after riding the roller coaster at Amusement Park X is insufficient evidence that the roller coaster makes people dizzy. However, if ten or more people a day were complaining of dizziness after riding the roller coaster, you would have sufficient evidence.
- **True (or probable).** Is the evidence you are using accurate and verifiable, or is it based on rumor or bad science? Looking again at the child-obesity example, scientists know that people tend to underestimate their weight when interviewed on the telephone or when filling out a survey. Children, especially, tend not to even know how much they weigh. Actual height and weight measurements gathered by qualified personnel are more trustworthy than those obtained through self-reporting. When choosing evidence, beware of hearsay, rumor, and urban legends. Just because you think something is or should be true does not mean it *is* true. It's your ethical responsibility to ensure that any evidence you use is accurate.

Probable evidence means that something is likely to be true, to exist, or to occur despite a lack of sufficient evidence to prove or predict it. For example, you make a claim that bark beetles are most likely responsible for the recent dying off of your city's pine trees. Though you have no actual evidence to prove it, you do have evidence of bark beetles causing similar damage to similar trees in nearby areas. You could use this as probable evidence. Beware of weak probable evidence, though. To claim that the primary reason your niece did so well on her science-project presentation was that you had taken her to the science museum the day before is to use weak probable evidence. Chances are there were several other contributing factors at play in your niece's success. The probable link is weak, and your claim would be difficult to prove.
- **Relevant.** The evidence you use must be related and pertinent to your claim. For instance, the fact that family pets have also become fatter in recent decades is interesting but not relevant to your claim about children. It could be a sign that adults in the house are feeding all household residents more (thus causing them to get fatter), but evidence about obesity in pets is not relevant to your claim about obesity in children.

- **Arranged logically.** Finally, your reasoning needs to be arranged in a configuration familiar to and understood by your listeners. The following section looks at four classic arrangements: inductive, deductive, causal, and analogical reasoning.

29B

Arrange Your Reasoning According to a Pattern

Like any listenable message, your reasoning is easier for listeners to access and understand if it's configured in a familiar way. Here are four arrangements people commonly use when reasoning with one another.

1. Inductive reasoning: From specific instances to a general conclusion

Reasoning inductively is a familiar experience. For example, your significant other likes to buy you flowers, give you hand-made cards, massage your neck when it's stiff, treat you to lunch, and help keep your apartment clean. Taking these behaviors into account, you conclude that this person likes you very much. This same pattern of **inductive reasoning** is used in public presentations. By providing several specific instances, observations, or examples, you attempt to lead listeners to accept a general conclusion.

When you are using inductive reasoning, it does not matter whether your claim comes before or after the evidence. The important factor is for the evidence to back up the claim. In the following example, the speaker starts with a claim and then provides the evidence to lead audiences to accept the claim:

Claim: *U.S. entertainment is appealing more and more to the lowest common denominator.*

Evidence 1: *This season's top-rated shows share many of the same insipid qualities.*

Evidence 2: *An increasing number of movies rely on car chases and buff shirtless men shooting guns.*

Evidence 3: *An increasing number of celebrities lack talent, yet they are famous just for being famous.*

In the next example, the speaker starts with several pieces of evidence and then takes listeners to a conclusion:

Evidence 1: *Beets contain betacyanin, a known cancer-fighting agent.*

Evidence 2: *Beets are a good source of potassium, which is essential for regulating water balance, levels of acidity, blood pressure, and neuromuscular function.*

Evidence 3: *Beets are rich in vitamin C, which is essential for fighting viruses, healing wounds, and strengthening many parts of the body.*

Evidence 4: *Beets are rich in vitamin B folate, which is essential for a baby's normal tissue growth while in utero.*

Claim: *Beets help maintain a woman's overall health.*

Other tips for using inductive reasoning:

- **Use a sufficient amount of evidence.** You'll want to have a minimum of two to three separate pieces of evidence.

- **Choose evidence that is true and accurate.** Be sure that your research sources are credible.
- **Choose evidence that is relevant to the claim.** At the same time, don't ignore evidence that inconveniently disagrees with your claim; listeners may be well aware it exists, and even if they are not, it's unethical to overlook it.
- **Shorten the leap between your evidence and your claim.** You might need to narrow your claim. For example, you may want to narrow the claim about U.S. entertainment from *general entertainment* to *popular entertainment*. After all, many forms of entertainment like jazz, avant-garde theatre, and modern dance are alive and well and not geared to the lowest common denominator.
- **Be careful of making an absolute claim.** An **absolute claim** is one that asks listeners to accept that something is permanent, complete, or in no way conditional. Making such a claim is often a futile task, because few things in life meet these standards. Instead, acknowledge and communicate the degree of probability in your claim. The beet example from above does not claim that beets are a cure-all or the sole factor in a woman's good health. It claims only that beets *help maintain* good health.

2. Deductive reasoning: From a general principle to a specific instance

Deductive reasoning happens when you take a few things you already know, consider them, rearrange them, and come up with something new. For instance, one of your brother's friends has recently been showing distinct signs of methamphetamine abuse, and his family and friends, while fed up with his behavior, aren't sure how to get him help. You recall a paper you wrote on treatments for meth abuse, remembering especially the relative success rates of formal interventions. You ask a few more questions about your brother's friend and eventually conclude that a formal intervention might very well work in his case. Your conclusion is deductive reasoning at work.

According to the principles of logic, one form of deductive reasoning, known as a **syllogism**, follows three steps:

- First, it states a **major premise**, defined as a general principle containing an absolute or an unprovisional relationship between two terms. Here the terms are *the longest day of the year* and the name *the summer solstice*:
The longest day of the year is known as the summer solstice.
- Second, deductive reasoning follows with a **minor premise**, defined as a specific instance about one of the terms. In this case, it's *the longest day of the year*:
Today is the longest day of the year.
- Finally, by combining the major and minor premises, we deduce a conclusion:
Today is the summer solstice.

Here is another example of a syllogism.

Major premise:

Bob has a slight gap between his two front teeth that Bill, his identical twin brother, doesn't have.

Minor premise:

The twin who came to pick me up for our evening out has no gap between his teeth.

Conclusion:

Bill has come to pick me up.

Though they're a staple of logic classes, syllogisms are uncommon in real life. In public contexts, especially, we rarely discuss things that are black-and-white or absolute. Instead, we navigate gray areas by discussing abstractions, arguing interpretations, sharing opinions, communicating values, and explaining things that appear to be true. In public communication, therefore, we rely on an alternate form of deductive reasoning—a syllogism known as an **enthymeme**—in which we claim probabilities or likelihoods, not absolutes. Let's look at a couple real-life examples.

This time the major premise claims a generally accepted idea, not an absolute:

Past reintroduction efforts for bald-eagle populations have had relative success.

The minor premise still speaks to a specific instance about one of the two terms in the major premise; in this case, it's *reintroduction efforts*:

Two reintroduced pairs of bald eagles each recently hatched a chick on Santa Cruz Island, off the Southern California coast.

The conclusion is a probability, not an absolute:

The bald-eagle reintroduction efforts on Santa Cruz Island show great promise.

Here's another example.

Major premise:

Eating dinner as a family at home five to seven times a week has been shown to be a contributing factor in higher academic achievement for middle school students.

Minor premise:

Higher academic achievement in middle school typically leads to academic achievement in high school and college.

Conclusion:

If you want your children to succeed academically in high school and college, eat dinner at home as a family as much as possible, especially during your children's middle school years.

Here are some tips for using deductive reasoning:

- **First establish the validity of the major and minor premises.** Make sure that you have solid evidence to back each premise. For instance, you need to provide true, sufficient, and relevant evidence that eating dinner as a family at home five to seven times a week *is* a contributing factor in higher academic achievement for middle school students. You also need to provide true, sufficient, and relevant evidence that higher academic achievement in middle school typically leads to academic achievement in high school and college.
- **Establish the logical link between your major and minor premise.** Do not leave it up to listeners to assume it or figure it out on their own. Walk them through it.
- **Be careful not to insist on an absolute or unprovisional conclusion.** Instead, acknowledge and communicate its degree of probability.

3. Causal reasoning: From cause to effect or effect to cause

Here are some experiences that are probably familiar to you.

- You attempt to reason with your significant other that spending some time apart will test the strength of your love for each other.
- You convince your mom that she can cut back on work because your leadership role on the hockey team will pay off in increased scholarship offers next year.
- You and your coworkers take turns guessing why your boss has suddenly become so nice.

Each of these scenarios involves **causal reasoning**. In causal reasoning, we connect two events according to a cause-and-effect relationship. One event is known, doable, or generally assumed. The other event is unknown but assumed.

The first two sample scenarios argue that one event will lead to or cause another. This is **reasoning forward**, from cause to effect. In the third scenario, you observe an effect and argue its cause. This is **reasoning backward**, from effect to cause. Let's look at the scenarios again:

- You may reason with your significant other that spending some time apart (doable cause) will test your love for each other (unknown but presumed effect).
- You convince your mom that she can cut back on work because your leadership role on the hockey team (generally assumed cause) will pay off in increased scholarship offers next year (unknown but presumed effect).
- You and your co-workers take turns guessing why (unknown but presumed causes) your boss has suddenly become so nice (known effect).

There are many opportunities to use causal reasoning in public presentations. You may want to move audiences to action, convince them that a next step is beneficial, or persuade them to accept your explanation of why things are as they are. Arguing for cause and effect is one of the most popular patterns; there are endless opportunities to put it to work. The entire purpose of your speech may be to convince your audience of a cause-effect relationship, or you may need it in just a portion of the presentation.

Here are some examples of causal reasoning you may find in a presentation:

- *The Packers are having their best season in years (effect). One significant reason is their team chef's innovative nutritional program (cause).*
- *Fewer soldiers are dying in combat (effect) because of, among other reasons, tremendous advancements in blood-clotting bandages (cause).*
- *The proposed Senate bill (cause) will stem the rising tide of illegal immigration into the United States (effect).*
- *Once employees have attended the customer-service workshop (cause), you will see an increase in repeat customer visits (effect). This in turn will cause company profits to rise (further effect).*

Here are some tips for using causal reasoning:

- **Make sure that the known event (whether the cause or the effect) is true, accurate, and well supported with evidence.** For example, make sure that the Packers really are having their best season in years or that fewer soldiers really are dying in combat.

- **Be prepared to spend time linking the known and the unknown events together.** For example, provide sufficient evidence (statistics, facts, expert testimony) that the blood-clotting bandages have indeed led to fewer combat deaths. It is not enough just to say that they have. Some cause-and-effect situations are intriguing to think about but fall apart when put to the test of providing true links. For example, it is innocent contemplation but bad reasoning to claim that a butterfly flapping its wings in South America affects localized air patterns, which in turn affect the weather, which eventually causes a hurricane in Florida. Do you have the evidence to prove these links?
- **Make sure that the cause and the effect have a close chronological relationship.** You have a better chance of success reasoning that the Packers' new chef has made a difference if the team's improved performance occurred soon after her hiring. Your chances of reasoning successfully decline as more time elapses between the cause and effect. Was that extravagant purchase of the lobby artwork five years ago *really* responsible for the company's deficit this year?
- **Make sure that you are not missing multiple causes or effects.** For instance, blood-clotting bandages are but one contributing factor in the lower number of combat deaths. Overwhelming air power, improved satellite imagery, and better combat training are also responsible. You do not need to focus on these other causes in your presentation, but you should acknowledge their roles. Failing to do so may cause listeners to question your knowledge and preparation.
- **Make sure that your claimed cause or effect is likely or most likely.** For example, the proposed Senate bill *may* make a slight difference in illegal immigration, but if it passes, a *certain* effect is to put additional burdens on legal residents.

4. Analogical reasoning: Reasoning through comparison

People are used to reasoning by comparison:

- You just met Serena at a party. She appears to have many of the same qualities as your dear friend Lorena. You invite Serena out for lunch, suspecting that you and she will become fast friends.
- You are offered the choice between Belgian coffee and Norwegian coffee. You have tried neither one, but you have had Belgian chocolates and consider them to be among the best you've ever tasted. You choose the Belgian coffee.
- Your new study techniques allowed you to do very well in Accounting 101. If you apply them again, you should do equally well in Accounting 102.

When engaging in **analogical reasoning**, you consider the similarities between two things and then presume an unknown quality about one of them must be true because of a known quality in the other. Here is analogical reasoning at work for two of the preceding examples:

Unknown factor: *The superiority of either Belgian coffee or Norwegian coffee.*

Considerations: *Belgium is a country known for producing many fine food items. Norway is known for its friendly people and beautiful scenery, but you have not heard much about its cuisine. Many countries producing fine chocolates also produce fine coffees.*

Known quality: *The excellence of Belgian chocolate.*

Presumed quality about the unknown: *The superiority of Belgian coffee.*

Essentials

Common Patterns of Reasoning

- Inductive reasoning: from specific instances to a general conclusion
- Deductive reasoning: from a general principle to a specific instance
- Causal reasoning: from cause to effect or effect to cause
- Analogical reasoning: reasoning through comparison

Unknown factor: *Your success in Accounting 102.*

Considerations: *Accounting 102 comes right after Accounting 101 in the course sequencing, so they must be somewhat related in content. The same teacher you had for 101 is teaching 102.*

Known quality: *Your new study techniques definitely helped you pass Accounting 101.*

Presumed quality about the unknown: *The same study techniques should help you in Accounting 102.*

Analogical reasoning is common in public presentations. Most of your listeners are used to thinking in analogies and find it easy to stay with you when you're effectively using this type of reasoning. Your job as the speaker is to show listeners how if one item is true, then an unknown about a similar thing is likely also to be true. For example:

- A soccer coach motivates his team, the Thunderbolts, to believe that they can beat their upcoming rival, the Wizards. After all, the Thunderbolts unexpectedly beat the Sparks last week. The coach then proceeds to explain the many similarities between the Wizards and the Sparks. The Thunderbolts eventually believe that if they play like they did last week, they can beat the Wizards just like they beat the Sparks.
- A recruiter from a local rural college is talking to high school seniors. She acknowledges that a lot of the seniors would like to go to the city to attend the state university, but few can afford to leave home. She spends a good amount of her speaking time showing the students how her local college is similar to the state university in course offerings, campus amenities, and quality of instruction.
- A political-science major believes that the latest foreign-policy announcement from the White House regarding Country X is a smart move. She shows how similar the current situation in Country X is to the past situation in Country Y, where the same policy was tried several decades ago. The speaker leads her listeners to conclude that because the policy in Country Y succeeded, the chances for success in Country X are high.

Here are some tips for using analogical reasoning:

- **Convince your audience of the accuracy of the known quality.** Is it only the political-science major's opinion that the foreign policy succeeded in Country Y, or is there sufficient and relevant evidence supporting its success? Did the Thunderbolts beat the Sparks because they were truly the better team, or were the Sparks having

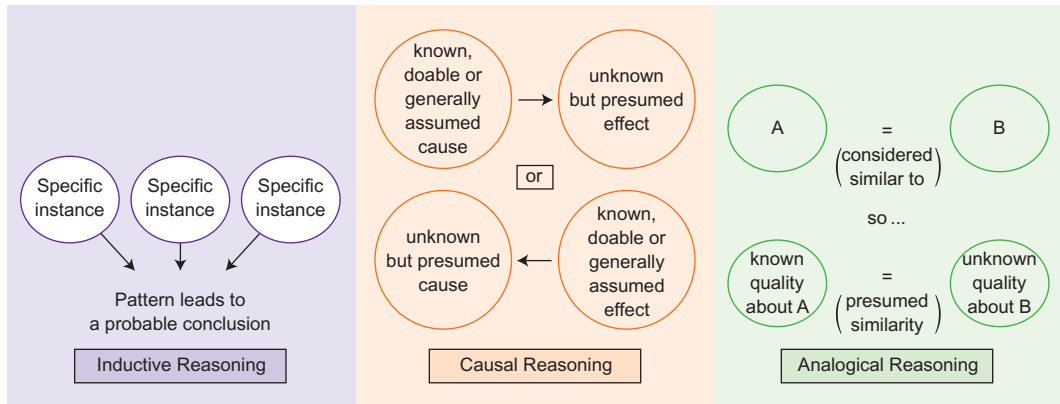


Figure 29.1 Visual summary of inductive, causal, and analogical reasoning. Because of its many variations, deductive reasoning is difficult to depict visually and is therefore not shown here.

a bad day because their star player was out with a twisted ankle and two other starters were sick? If listeners doubt the accuracy of the known quality in one item, the analogy loses its power to convince.

- **Spend time showing how the two factors being compared are effectively alike.** The Thunderbolts' coach needs to point out a sufficient number of specific ways in which the Wizards and the Sparks are similar. The college recruiter should spend a lot of time showing the similarities between the local college and the state university. She would obviously also focus on the superior qualities of her college.
- **Though the two items being compared share similarities, research their differences, too.** Because some differences—for instance, in culture, geography, time, attitudes, gender, or class—are too great or too important, they override similarities, thereby significantly weakening the analogy. For example, the political-science major may have difficulties convincing listeners of the similarities between the situations in Country X and Country Y. After all, the policy was tried in Country Y back in the seventies. The world has changed greatly since then, as has the thinking behind many U.S. foreign-policy decisions. These differences would most likely override the analogy.

Figure 29.1 illustrates three of the four patterns of reasoning.

29C

Beware of Reasoning Fallacies

Many arguments appear logical on the surface, but further analysis shows the presence of a **fallacy**, an occurrence of unsound reasoning. There is a difference between providing incorrect facts, which is bad research, and relating a fallacy, which occurs when incomplete, distracting, or irrelevant evidence is offered or when the inductive, deductive, causal, or analogical reasoning itself is faulty.

When a novice speaker commits a fallacy, it's usually due to poor research or poorly thought out reasoning, but it's rarely intentional. On occasion, however, people commit fallacies deliberately. Politicians, advertisers, and others who want things from you (your vote, your money, your allegiance) often provide fallacious arguments because, in some cases, they know that what they really have to offer could not stand up to honest reasoning. If listeners detect a fallacy, deliberate or not, they are likely to question the speaker's overall intentions and credibility, making the whole presentation suspect.

Take time to learn about fallacies. Before your persuasive presentation, check for them with your instructor or another trusted source. You can also turn to numerous books and websites for assistance. One excellent resource is the *Fallacy Files* at <http://www.fallacyfiles.org/index.html>. An added bonus of learning to recognize fallacies is that it improves your critical listening. When you know what fallacies exist, you are more likely to detect them when others use them with you. Logicians describe well over one hundred fallacies. Here are a few of the more common ones.

1. Appeal to fear: Believe me or beware!

Sometimes known as scare tactics, an **appeal to fear fallacy** presents a claim intended to produce alarm and thereby gain support for a different and perhaps unrelated claim. Creating fear is not the same as providing sound evidence. The pattern of the appeal to fear looks like this:

Claim A is presented in a way to produce fear.

Therefore Claim B is true.

Examples:

- *I'm sure you've heard that there are several convicted felons living in District X. You don't want your children attending school there.*
- *Car A had several rollover incidents last year. Our car is a much safer purchase.*
- *Country X is close to having a nuclear bomb. If we do not engage in military action against it, neither you nor your children can sleep well at night.*

2. Slippery slope: You'll end up with this before you know it

The **slippery slope fallacy** occurs when you argue an inevitable connection from one event to another, bypassing possible or probable links that may or may not exist. The name of this fallacy is apt: if you take a step onto a particular slippery sloping surface, you quickly find yourself at the bottom. But applied to persuasion, a slippery slope is poor reasoning because there is no guarantee that the first step will lead to all the others. The fallacy follows this pattern:

Event A has occurred (or will or might occur).

After A occurs, so will B, C, and so on, leading eventually to Z.

Z should not happen.

Therefore A is bad or should not happen.

Examples:

- *If we drop the legal driving age to 15, the next thing you know, kids will want to drink and vote at that age, too.*

- *If we let same-sex couples marry, what's next? First cousins? Polygamists? Twelve-year-olds?*
- *Security measures at airports are already an infringement on our rights. Today we need to take off our shoes. Tomorrow it will be our clothes. Body-cavity searches are sure to follow.*

3. *Ad hominem: Attacking the person instead of the problem*

An **ad hominem fallacy** occurs when you attack the character of the person making an opposing argument rather than address the argument itself. It says, in effect, that to have a legitimate claim or argument, a person must be without fault. Yet each of us has made the occasional poor choice, has fallen prey to unfavorable circumstances, or has family members we cannot control. “Imperfect” people can still present relevant and strong arguments.

The fallacy first calls into question another person’s character or irrelevant actions and then takes them as evidence that his or her argument is weak or invalid. The fallacy follows this pattern:

Person A presents an argument or makes a claim.

Person B attacks the “person” of Person A.

Therefore, Person A’s argument or claim is weak or invalid.

Examples:

- *Can you really believe what Ms. X says? I remind you that she has a DUI on her record.*
- *Mr. Y screams regularly about this problem. But he’s a registered socialist. Need I say more?*
- *Her son was arrested this summer. Senator Z is obviously a poor parent and will undoubtedly make a poor legislator. She does not deserve your vote this fall.*

4. *Either/or: A false dilemma*

A true dilemma occurs when we are faced with a choice between two or more undesirable options. Yet speakers on occasion present an argument that forces listeners to choose between two options when, in reality, *more than two* exist. This is a false dilemma, also known as the **either/or fallacy**. The pattern looks like this:

Option A exists.

Option B exists.

The speaker advocates choosing one of the two (even though Options C, D, and so on also exist).

Examples:

- *In this fight on terrorism, you are either with us or against us.*
- *Elect Candidate A this November; otherwise, you are choosing to see the community you know and love go down the drain.*
- *This medicine is essential for anyone with Condition X. If you do not ask your doctor for a prescription, you may as well purchase a burial plot now because you will not live through the year.*

Essentials

Reasoning Fallacies

Common fallacies include:

- Appeal to fear: Believe me or beware!
- Slippery slope: You'll end up with this before you know it.
- Ad hominem: Attacking the person instead of the problem.
- Either/or: A false dilemma.
- Red herring: A distraction from the real issue.
- Bandwagon: Everybody's doing it!

5. Red herring: A distraction from the real issue

Also known as a smoke screen, the **red herring fallacy** occurs when you raise an irrelevant topic in order to divert attention away from an original issue you're having trouble arguing or defending. The red herring is a fallacy because changing the topic to something else does not constitute support for the original argument. When an audience detects a red herring, your credibility is questioned because it becomes clear that you have little to defend or did not plan out the argument very well. The pattern looks like this:

Argument A is being discussed or defended.

Topic B is introduced as if relevant to Argument A, but it is not.

Argument A is abandoned.

Examples:

- *Yes, we probably do need to add some additional upper-division math classes, but the increasing overall dropout rate on campus really has our attention these days. And it should have yours as well.*
- *I agree that my group's findings are not complete, but may I remind you that other groups had great difficulty when researching this problem.*
- *A lot of people are saying that we should make the application process tougher. But our CEO is under investigation, and several of us are nervous about keeping our jobs.*

6. Bandwagon: Everybody's doing it!

The **bandwagon fallacy** says that a claim or argument should be supported or rejected based solely on peer pressure. Just because "everybody" agrees with something, is doing it, isn't doing it, or rejects it lends no credence to whatever "it" is. This is not to say that loyalty to a group is not good policy. Sometimes conformity is the right thing to do for many reasons. The bandwagon is a fallacy, or poor reasoning, because doing (or not doing) things simply because everyone else is (or is not) does not constitute good *evidence*. The bandwagon pattern looks like this:

Claim A is made.

“Evidence” is provided wherein “everyone” supports or rejects the claim.

Therefore the claim must be valid.

Examples:

- *How can you not favor the president’s recent nominee for the Supreme Court? The justice has nothing but support from Congress, legal scholars, and past colleagues.*
- *This idea has been rejected time and time again when put before voters. I say we need to reject it again.*
- *More than 90 percent of people who tried Product X bought it again. Don’t be left out! Buy it today!*

Summary

- Reasoning is an important form of support in persuasive messages. To reason means to use a sufficient amount of true (or probable) and relevant evidence arranged logically so as to support a claim.
- Listeners more easily access and understand your reasoning when it is arranged in a familiar pattern. Four common patterns are inductive, deductive, causal, and analogical reasoning.
- Beware of the many reasoning fallacies, including the appeal to fear, the slippery slope, the ad hominem attack, the either/or dilemma, the red herring, and the bandwagon.



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS SUPPORT KEY

Show respect for your listeners’ intelligence by supporting your persuasive ideas with good reasoning. Learn what does—and doesn’t—make for a good argument.

EXERCISES

1. Study again the definition for reasoning (p. 461). Write about an instance when you fell prey to someone’s claim because you weren’t reasoning well. In retrospect, were the signs there? For example, was there an insufficient amount of evidence? Was the evidence irrelevant? Was the evidence not true or probable?
2. With a small group, come up with two examples each of arguments that follow an inductive, deductive, causal, and analogical pattern.

3. Find three or four examples of argument fallacies in an article, a video, on the web, or during an interaction with someone. Explain the argument the speaker was attempting to make and in what way the argument was fallacious. What kind of fallacy was committed?



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes "Real Students, Real Speeches," a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.



Chapter 30

Speaking on Special Occasions

REAL STUDENTS

REAL WORDS

“I’ve got two weddings, one commitment ceremony, and one retirement party to go to this summer. After taking this class, I plan to speak at all of them. I’ll be toasting the three couples and paying tribute to my boss at his retirement. I’ve already got a theme picked out for some of them. I want to do these, and now I know how.”

“I recently attended a celebration-of-life ceremony for a neighbor. I had no idea her life was so rich. I knew her in a neighborly sort of way, casual and friendly, but I was amazed to learn so much about her from the stories told by her family and friends. She was a fascinating person. She even flew planes for the military during World War II! I wish I had known these things about her while she was alive. It’s reminded me that people are so much more than what you see on the surface.”

KEYS TO LISTENABILITY IN THIS CHAPTER			
 STRATEGY Determine your speech purpose.	STRUCTURE	SUPPORT	STYLE

30A

Understand the Role of Special-Occasion Speaking

30B

Use General Strategies for Special-Occasion Speaking

1. *Do your homework*
2. *Be accurate*
3. *Be brief*
4. *Make emotional connections*
5. *Use elevated language*
6. *Avoid overused phrases and clichés*

30C

Recognize Common Types of Special-Occasion Speeches

1. *Toast*
2. *Speech of introduction*
3. *Speech of tribute*
4. *Speech of commemoration*
5. *Speech of acceptance*
6. *Speech to inspire*

30D

Prepare a Thesis Statement, and Organize the Ideas in Your Special-Occasion Speech

Key Terms

alliteration	▶ 481	speech of	
hyperbole	▶ 481	commemoration	▶ 483
metaphor	▶ 481	speech of	
onomatopoeia	▶ 481	introduction	▶ 482
repetition	▶ 481	speech of tribute	▶ 483
simile	▶ 481	speech to inspire	▶ 484
special-occasion		toast	▶ 481
speaking	▶ 477		
speech of			
acceptance	▶ 484		

This chapter looks at the last of the three general speech purposes, speaking to mark a special occasion. While effective and listenable special-occasion speeches may have informative and persuasive elements, they depart from the *feel* of those two types of speaking in that they tend to be shorter, more thematic in nature, and more emotionally significant to those present. And while a special-occasion speech still requires audience analysis, a specific purpose, organization, and support for your ideas, it affords increased room for your personality, heart, and creativity. Nearly all of us can speak at a special occasion because these events are a central part of our lives. This chapter first explores the role of special-occasion speaking. You'll then learn about general strategies to use when giving these speeches, the common kinds of special-occasion speeches you may give, and some ways to organize them.

30A

Understand the Role of Special-Occasion Speaking

Special occasions are a part of the human experience; we often gather to celebrate, reflect, mourn, and see each other through life's milestones. More often than not, public speaking plays an essential role in these events. Imagine a graduation ceremony without its roster of optimistic speakers, a wedding without congratulatory toasts, the Academy Awards without those unpredictable acceptance speeches, or a funeral without heartfelt words of loss. Without public communication, these occasions would indeed be less special. Perhaps they could not exist at all. **Special-occasion speaking** takes us into a separate, ceremonial space, one apart from the paces of daily life.

Chances are, your annual calendar is filled with special occasions. You may be invited to speak at one or more of them because of your role in an organization or relationship to someone. Recognize that when someone asks you to speak, they have done so for good reason, so this is not the time for shyness or comments like, *Aw shucks, what do I have to say?* Accept graciously. Take the challenge, and even if you think you don't have anything to say at the moment, you have time to come up with something. And you *will* be prepared when the day arrives.

It's also become quite common at many special occasions, especially weddings, parties, and funerals, for people other than the presiding speaker to have an opportunity to say a few words. If you're attending such an event and have something you'd like to share, plan on participating if the opportunity arises.

Messages communicated during special occasions are influential; your words and actions combine with emotions to produce a memorable experience for all. Anyone can give a special-occasion speech. You need not hold a fancy title, have performed any hard research, or be an expert on anything. You just need to be yourself. People who choose to share their words, sincerely and warmly, give the greatest of gifts. For honorees and their loved ones, your words are better appreciated and longer remembered than any crystal fruit bowl or commemorative pen. All listeners value your words for the personal contribution they make to the special occasion.

A special-occasion speech is, like any other speech, a listener-centered transaction. Your purpose is not to demonstrate your skills or publicly display your emotions or move your

A Speaker's Story Creating a Heart Connection, with a Dash of Humor

“

Steve VeGodsky of Charlottesville, Virginia, often volunteers or is asked to speak on various special occasions. In the last few years alone, he has toasted his father on his seventy-fifth birthday, spoken at a friend's wedding, offered words of reflection at a men's gathering, and eulogized his wife, Shalom, who died of cancer.

I see my speaking as a way of giving back to my family and my community for all the love and support I receive from them. When I speak, my main intention is to have a heart connection. I want the audience to feel something close to what I'm feeling. No matter the occasion, though, I like to punctuate my thoughts with humor. I think they're easier to listen to.

At Shalom's service, I wanted to share a full sense of who she was. Each of the 350 people there knew that Shalom had a clever and funny side. Even though we were gathered for a sad occasion, it felt right to have some lightness, to reflect her, the person being remembered. So amidst the more serious words, I told the story of how one day she taped a large, whole watermelon to a brand-new vine just to fake me out. I recounted how she used to call me at my office (I'm a chiropractor), disguise her voice, and ask things like, "Do you have any special treatments to help me get pregnant?" Shalom's name for the first half of her life was Penny, and many people still knew her as that. I knew it would be OK with this crowd to share a funny thought I had when I picked up her ashes earlier that week: a Penny saved is a Penny urned. Penny would have liked that!"

”

career forward. The audience is the main reason you are speaking. Your role is to tap *their* emotions, strengthen *their* bonds with one another, provide *them* with new insights, or help *them* reflect, cope, celebrate, or look to the future. Today's special-occasion speakers, like those of yesterday, undertake the venerable tradition of standing out from the crowd and communicating our humanity. The "Speaker's Story" box profiles one speaker who enjoys participating in special occasions.

30B

Use General Strategies for Special-Occasion Speaking

Each type of special-occasion speech has its own particular strategies. Let's look first at general strategies that are appropriate for *any* special occasion. Adopting these general

strategies increases the listenability of your message by meeting audience expectations and keeping them with you in the present moment.

Your listeners have experienced special occasions throughout their lives and have come to expect certain messages and emotions. For example, stories you tell need to be truthful. Your message should be relatively brief. You'll probably speak optimistically and close with an expression of hope for the future. Listeners almost feel cheated if their expectations about these elements of your speech are not met.

But meeting listener expectations doesn't mean that you can't be creative. The special-occasion speech is the perfect opportunity to add your own stamp. But first, know the basics so that you can balance your own flair with the expected fundamentals.

1. Do your homework

While special-occasion speeches may not demand as much hard research as informative and persuasive speeches, it always pays to do your homework.

- Educate yourself about the event at which you will be speaking.
- If applicable, know how long the event has been celebrated, what its purpose is, who will be attending, and why.
- Find out who else will be speaking and what they are likely to cover, or look into what other speakers at similar events have presented.
- Gather anecdotes and images.
- Practice.

Your special-occasion presentation *is* a speech, and you want to prepare for it as you would for any other speaking appearance.

2. Be accurate

Spend time during your research and preparation to ensure the accuracy of your information.

- **Names.** It's disrespectful to mispronounce another person's name.
- **Titles.** It can damage your career to refer to someone in your organization by the wrong title.
- **Other data.** Incorrect dates and other botched data can hurt your credibility and that of any organization you may be representing.

3. Be brief

Your special-occasion speech creates more impact when it's brief and to the point. Special occasions often include a full slate of speakers, and though each speaker is due his or her time, realize that the audience wants to hear your point and then move on to the next speaker. Listeners expect it to take two to three minutes to introduce an upcoming speaker or accept an award. Five to ten minutes are sufficient to commemorate or pay tribute. Speeches to inspire may take more time, but still, shorter is better when it comes to special-occasion speaking. Be succinct. Create your impact, and sit down.

4. Make emotional connections

Special occasions make people feel good because the speakers' words and delivery often evoke and release emotion. Successful special-occasion speakers use emotionally rich language, tell poignant stories, and share their feelings through their bodies and voices. Be careful of overdoing the emotional connection; look instead for authenticity. Ask a trusted friend to watch one of your practice sessions to let you know if any part of your content or delivery becomes histrionic or overemotive.

Also, consider your own emotional reactions. If the message or occasion is too emotionally charged for you, you may want to leave the speaking to others. If you choose to speak, be sure that you can maintain your composure. Practice speaking in front of others so that you can experience what it feels like to communicate such emotions and have them reflected back at you on the faces of your listeners. No matter how much they practice, some speakers are surprised to find their emotions bubbling over as they speak before audiences of equally emotional people. Should this happen to you, stop speaking until you feel ready to continue. Your audience will wait. On the very rare chance that you simply can't keep speaking, it's OK to sit down and let the next speaker take over.

5. Use elevated language

Special occasions are one of the few times when presenting your speech verbatim (word-for-word) is acceptable. Though the goal of any presentation is to communicate an idea to your audience, special-occasion speaking contains a secondary goal of taking your audience to a place of ceremony or ritual. A planned, elevated style of language helps you meet that secondary goal. Take time during your preparation to find just the right words and phrases. Look to your dictionary and thesaurus. Listen to the rhythm of your sentences. Choose words that carry emotional impact, and practice with your delivery so it's as fluent and smooth as possible.

Figures of speech also help elevate your language. Few speakers use figures of speech when speaking spontaneously, but you *can* include them when you have time to think about your language ahead of time. The "Did You Know?" box lists some figures of speech to consider including.

6. Avoid overused phrases and clichés

Though many special-occasion presentations are written out in elevated style, you still want to use language that sounds natural coming from you. Phrases like *It is with great pride and honor that I . . .* or *We are gathered here today to . . .* sound stuffy, if not corny. And clichés such as *Today is the first day of the rest of your life* or *Every cloud has a silver lining* are so familiar that they have essentially lost their meaning and import. Consider what words *your* own heart and mind want to use to express your ideas. Tap into your rich personal vocabulary. Use the words that mean something to you and will carry impact with your specific listeners.

30C

Recognize Common Types of Special-Occasion Speeches

There are many types of special-occasion speeches, the most common of which are these.

Did You Know?

Figures of Speech

Use these common figures of speech to elevate the language of your special-occasion presentations.

- **Alliteration** is the repeated use of an initial sound in a string of words. *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers* is a classic example of alliteration. In a tribute to her daughter, one speaker talked about how *caring, kind, and courageous* her daughter was. These three adjectives formed the main points of the tribute.
- **Repetition** is the use of a recurring word or phrase. Martin Luther King Jr.'s repeated use of *I have a dream* is a classic example of the power of repetition.
- **Hyperbole** is using a point for obvious exaggerated effect. The point is not literally true, but a speaker uses it to emphasize an emotion, an action, or a characterization. *We've all done that a million times* or *I was queen of the world that day* are examples of hyperbole.
- **Simile** compares two things by using the word *like* or *as* in the comparison. *Their love is like sunshine, radiating out and warming all in their presence* is an example of simile.
- **Metaphor** also compares two things, but by stating that one thing *stands for* (rather than *is like*) another. *His days of autumn* is a metaphor for the time before dying. *New Orleans was a toxic gumbo* is a perfect metaphor for the mess that was left after Hurricane Katrina.
- **Onomatopoeia** is the use of words that sound like what they describe. Such words enrich the imagery you can use when communicating. *Ker-plooeey* sounds like an egg dropped on the floor; *squish squirsh* sounds like what happens when you walk through the mess.

1. Toast

Of all the types of special-occasion speeches, the toast is the one you're most likely to have the opportunity to deliver. A **toast** is a brief speech of honor. Toasts celebrate

- a person (like your brother at his graduation or a friend who just landed her dream job).
- two or more people (like a couple at their engagement or a team that has won a big contract).
- an event (like a state championship or a high school reunion).

Many people mistakenly believe that a toast is easy to give; you just get up there and spout warm sentiments. While certainly not difficult, a meaningful, memorable toast requires at least some forethought and planning. Too many of us have experienced, for instance, the parade of unprepared speakers at a wedding who wish the couple well without really saying

anything—or, worse, say embarrassing and inappropriate things in the stress of the moment! Follow these tips for a successful toast:

- Keep it light. A toast celebrates a happy occasion. Listeners are expecting to laugh and smile and get in touch with pleasant, feel-good emotions. Give them something bright and sunny to work with.
- Prepare a theme. Even the briefest toast can be centered on a theme. Love, commitment, bravery, persistence, sacrifice, endurance, luck, and victory are all great choices. Themes tie the words of your toast together and help listeners remember them after the celebration.
- Incorporate quotes and humor. See page 231 for sources of quotes and pages 403–407 for a discussion on using humor.
- Keep your wits about you. Alcohol frequently accompanies events where toasts are given, and if the toasts come later in the party (as they often do), your thinking may not be as clear as you would like it to be. If you plan on giving a toast, monitor your intake of anything that may cause you to lose your inhibitions. You don't want to embarrass yourself or the honoree.

2. *Speech of introduction*

A **speech of introduction** prepares an audience for an upcoming speaker or event and motivates listeners to give their full attention. Here are some guidelines for giving a speech of introduction:

Introducing a Speaker

- Check with the speaker to find out what biographical information he or she would like you to share with listeners. Double-check the pronunciation of the speaker's name, and verify his or her title. You may also conduct some research to find additional and relevant facts and stories about the speaker.
- On the day of the speech, welcome all listeners.
- List the speaker's credentials. Include relevant details such as degrees, occupation, years of experience, and positions held. If appropriate, point out this person's speaking experience.
- Mention the speaker's topic. Don't reveal the thesis, but prime the audience in general for what they are about to hear.
- Tell listeners how long the speaker plans to speak and whether a question-and-answer session will follow.
- Warmly welcome the speaker to the gathering.

Introducing an Event

- Do your research on the event. Find out how long the event has been taking place, why it is happening, how many people are gathered, and what the expected outcomes are. The more you know about the event, the greater your confidence is and the more interesting and meaningful you can make your speech of introduction.
- Double-check the accuracy of any names and dates you'll mention.
- On the day of the event, welcome all listeners.
- Briefly prepare the audience for what they are about to hear or experience.
- Establish relevance. Tell listeners what outcomes to expect from the event.
- Acknowledge any relevant or important participants.

- Preview the agenda.
- Set an appropriate emotional tone, and get the event started.

If You Are Introduced

- Graciously thank the person introducing you and the organization hosting you.
- Comment on the event, and mention what the speaking opportunity means for you.
- Begin your presentation.

3. *Speech of tribute*

A **speech of tribute** pays honor or respect to another person, but it is more elaborate than a toast. You often hear tribute speeches at retirement parties, going-away parties, coming-of-age ceremonies, birthdays, funerals or celebrations of life, anniversaries, and award ceremonies. Here are some guidelines for giving a speech of tribute:

- As always, do your homework. Research the person's life, and gather stories from others who know the honoree. The richer your picture of the person, the more you have to work with and the more you can offer listeners.
- Provide some biographical data of the person being honored. Chances are, people in the audience know the honoree to varying degrees, and many will appreciate your filling in details that are new to them.
- Give the audience an appreciation for the honoree's special qualities, such as his expert trumpet playing or years of volunteer work or her personal integrity and commitment to bettering the environment.
- Provide rich examples of things the honoree has done or accomplished. Examples help create images for the audience to hold on to and help them better understand the person you are honoring.
- If photos of the honoree are available, consider projecting them onto a screen. Audiences tend to love these images.
- Make a thematic connection to the audience. Tell listeners how they can be instructed or inspired from the experiences of the honoree.
- Keep your emotions in check. Here again, practicing in front of a couple of friends may help you deal with your own emotions ahead of time.
- Be positive and optimistic. You can mention challenges and difficulties faced by the honoree, but you shouldn't dwell on them. Even if those challenges and difficulties still remain, mention how the person has positively dealt with them. At the same time, be accurate. Don't make up or exaggerate stories or events to make the honoree look better.
- Acknowledge the family and/or support network of the honoree. It's likely that their emotions are running high, and this day is as special for them as it is for the person being honored.

4. *Speech of commemoration*

A **speech of commemoration** honors and recognizes an event, a place, or an idea. Commemorative speeches are often heard on anniversaries of historic occasions, upon completion of a major task or campaign, at the unveiling of a new building or monument, and at special points in a social movement. Here are some guidelines for giving a speech of commemoration:

- Be specific about the event, place, or idea being commemorated. Remind the audience what has occurred in the past or what is happening now.



Simone, daughter of the late jazz singer Nina Simone, gives the eulogy at an official memorial honoring her mother.

- Bring the audience into the present moment. Tell why it is important for people to gather today and participate in this commemoration.
- Honor those involved, and express appreciation to them.
- Provide imagery-rich examples of courage, sacrifice, or hard work.
- Express the feelings this commemoration evokes in you and your audience.
- Provide glimpses into the future. Where should people go from here?

5. Speech of acceptance

A **speech of acceptance** is given by someone who receives an award or honor. Recipients of awards or honors are expected or required to publicly give thanks and express appreciation to the person or organization bestowing the special recognition. Here are some guidelines for giving a speech of acceptance:

- Be prepared. Recipients often know of their award or honor ahead of time. If you know in advance only that you are a finalist, still prepare. It's better to have an unused speech than to win and be speechless.
- Speak with pride *and* humility. Don't let your words or body show that the award or honor is undeserved. At the same time, be gracious and humble. This is not a time for boasting, no matter how significant your accomplishment.
- Provide rich examples. Create images for listeners to hold on to and have a better understanding of what you have achieved.
- Describe what this award or honor means for you. Look with hope and optimism into the future.
- Spend time thanking others (but limit your list) for making this award or honor possible. Few people accomplish anything by themselves.
- Stay focused. The purpose of this speech is to accept an award or honor. It is considered bad form to take advantage of the spotlight and go off in unexpected directions, launch new ideas, or bring up grievances.
- Be brief. Graciously accept your award or honor, and sit down.

6. Speech to inspire

A **speech to inspire** encourages, moves, or rouses the listeners in some way. People who overcome tremendous obstacles in their own lives often speak to lift others up. Coaches speak to stimulate or revive their teams. Managers speak to motivate employees. Honored guests speak to new college graduates to inspire them to give back to their families and

A Speaker's Story **Inspirational Speakers**



Here is a sampling of people who speak to inspire others:

- Christopher Gardner, whose journey from homeless single father to self-made millionaire financial broker was profiled in the book *The Pursuit of Happyness* and the film of the same name. Gardner speaks frequently, “addressing the keys to self-empowerment, beating odds, and breaking cycles.”
- Ann Bancroft, polar explorer and one of the first women in history to sail and ski across Antarctica’s landmass. Bancroft speaks to groups to shatter stereotypes about women and “to inspire women and girls around the world to unleash the power of their dreams.”
- Allison Bell, a former NFL cheerleader and real estate broker who changed her life upon having an epiphany that her real mission was to “make the world a better place.” She quit real estate and started a motivational speaking business, targeting the youth market and inspiring them with the message that “helping others can improve your own self-worth.”
- Ed Hearn, a former major league baseball player who overcame three life-threatening illnesses. Using the theme of “conquering life’s curves,” Hearn motivates audiences “to pursue victory in all areas of their lives no matter what the challenge or adversity.”
- Karen Karsh, a singer who was born blind. Karsh uses a unique combination of interactive song and spoken word as she “provides audiences with the opportunity to discover answers to their long unspoken questions about diversity, adversity, and coping with blindness in a sighted world.” Her ultimate message is that “life’s battles can be more than faced; they can be won.”

Sources: <http://www.chrisgardnermedia.com/main/biography.htm>; http://www.annbancroftfoundation.org/index.php?content_id=123; <http://www.embracetodayconcepts.com/diva.php>; <http://www.edhearn.com/bio350.html>; and http://www.brooksinternational.com/Karen_Karsh_342.htm (all accessed April 28, 2007).



communities after leaving school. See the “Speaker’s Story” box for some examples of today’s inspirational speakers.

Here are some guidelines for giving a speech of inspiration:

- Be listener-centered. Speeches of inspiration are not given to satisfy your own needs; they are given for the needs of the audience. Use your own experience as an example of human capabilities, but relate the themes of your experience to the listeners. What’s in it for them?
- Tell stories. The narrative structure of setup, conflict, and resolution provides a natural device for inspiring others to overcome their own challenges or difficulties.
- Use real examples. The honest quality of real life carries more inspirational impact than the hypothetical.

Essentials

Types of Special-Occasion Speeches

- A toast is a brief speech of honor.
- A speech of introduction prepares an audience for an upcoming speaker or event and motivates listeners to give their full attention.
- A speech of tribute pays honor or respect to another person; it is more elaborate than a toast.
- A speech of commemoration honors and recognizes an event, a place, or an idea.
- A speech of acceptance is given by someone who receives an award or honor.
- A speech to inspire encourages, moves, or rouses the listeners in some way.

- Reveal your humanity; there is no need to sugarcoat the scenario. Audiences are more likely to be inspired by your words if they sense that you are a real person, complete with complexities and frailties. They may not trust a speaker who appears too perfect.
- Be confident. Listeners need to sense your certainty that challenges and difficulties can be overcome.
- Build the emotional journey, and end with high impact. Stress the optimistic future you foresee for your listeners.

30D

Prepare a Thesis Statement, and Organize the Ideas in Your Special-Occasion Speech

All speeches, as you know, must have a thesis, and special-occasion speeches are no exception. Also, although your special-occasion speech may or may not follow one of the patterns described in Chapter 12, it should still follow *some* sort of organization. Because every special-occasion event has its own unique qualities, analyze the audience and the context before deciding where to place your thesis and how to organize your ideas. Here are some examples.

- In his tribute, a student designed a speech centered on one theme: “My grandfather has lived his life as a man of his word, and for this reason, among others, he is worthy of the tribute we pay him today.” Wanting to plant the theme firmly in his listeners’ minds, the speaker stated the thesis in the introduction. He then used a topical pattern of organization as he presented several examples of how his grandfather *has* lived his life as a man of his word. The speaker gave these examples in chronological order—one from his grandfather’s teenage years, one from his early-adult years, another from his midlife years, and a final one from his later years.
- In her commemorative speech, a university official chose to place the thesis in the introduction, ensuring listeners’ immediate understanding of the purpose of the day’s

event: “We dedicate this new fine-arts building as a testament to the colorful and creative passions of the students and faculty of this fine university.” The speaker used a causal pattern in the body, wherein she showed how the new space (cause) will better serve the students, faculty, and community in modern and cutting-edge ways (effects).

- In his commitment ceremony toast, a best man chose an inductive-reasoning approach based on a simple classification structure of a series of small anecdotes. It soon became clear to listeners that the stories all centered on one theme. Sure enough, the speaker confirmed that theme as he built up to the thesis, which in this case was the final sentence of his speech: “Love knows no limits, and as you have heard, this couple, today newly committed to each other in front of family and friends, proves this beautifully.”
- One speaker used a problem-solution pattern to introduce a fund-raising event for earthquake survivors in El Salvador. The speaker knew that she didn’t need to spend much time arguing for a solution (money); listeners had come to the fund-raiser already motivated by that belief. Instead, she spent the majority of the presentation focusing on the problem, outlining the many difficulties the earthquake caused for the local people, and explaining to her listeners how the money raised that night would directly help the survivors. She thanked them for being part of the solution and then concluded with her thesis: “Your gift of time, money, and donated items for our silent auction will be felt one-hundred-fold by the earthquake survivors we are gathered here to support tonight.”

Summary

- **Special-occasion speeches, often heard during milestone events, take listeners into a separate, ceremonial space, one apart from the paces of daily life.**
- **General strategies to follow for any special-occasion presentation include doing your homework, ensuring accuracy, and using an elevated style of language.**
- **Toasts and speeches of introduction, tribute, commemoration, acceptance, and inspiration are among the common types of special-occasion speeches.**
- **Special-occasion speeches, like all speeches, need a thesis statement and must follow some semblance of structure.**



LISTENABILITY: REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY KEY

Take advantage of the many opportunities life provides to speak on special occasions. Choosing appropriate themes and using strategies that take listeners to a place of ceremony or ritual enrich your life and the social bonds you share with others.

EXERCISES

1. *If you were to pay tribute to your mother or your father, what theme would you use? What five examples would you use to support the theme?*
2. *Go online, and watch Olympic speed skater Apolo Ohno give a motivational speech to the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. Pay special attention to his use of pronouns, his body language, his pattern of organization, and his theme, as you analyze his speech. Find the speech on YouTube by typing in the key words Apolo Ohno Speaker Olympic.*
3. *YouTube is also filled with a variety of wedding toasts. Watch one with a partner, and analyze its effectiveness. Is the speaker prepared or speaking off the cuff? Is the speaker tailoring the words to the couple or speaking about commitment in general terms? Are the words respectful or embarrassing? Is the audience responding and, if so, how? Would you want someone to speak like that at your ceremony? Report your findings to the class.*
4. *Chances are, you will soon go to some sort of special occasion for family or friends. If you suspect or know that an opportunity will be provided for attendees to “say a few words,” challenge yourself to prepare a one-minute talk. Keep it brief and make a point!*



The Online Learning Center for *A Speaker's Resource* includes “Real Students, Real Speeches,” a set of student speech videos with author commentary. These and other online resources for students are available at <http://www.mhhe.com/obrien1e>.

Speaking in Groups

There's a good chance you've already participated in a few small groups, and it's almost guaranteed you'll find yourself working in more of them; small group interaction is a fact of life at school, on the job, and in your communities. This chapter explores techniques for maximizing the effectiveness of your public speaking skills in a group setting.

A Understand the Nature of Small Group Interaction

1. Groups Defined
2. Types of Small Groups

B Understand Your Job in a Small Group

1. Being an Effective Group Participant
2. Being an Effective Group Leader

C Ensure Productive Group Interaction

1. Step 1—Identify and Define the Problem
2. Step 2—Analyze the Problem
3. Step 3—Establish Criteria for Solving the Problem
4. Step 4—Generate Potential Solutions
5. Step 5—Choose the Best Solution

D Present Effectively

1. Planning the Presentation
2. Organizing the Presentation
3. Giving the Presentation

Key Terms

activity group R-4

agenda R-8

collectivistic culture R-5

committee R-4

consensus R-10

criteria R-9

designated leader R-8

distributed leadership R-5

educational group R-4

emergent leader R-8

expert power R-7

groupthink R-6

groupthink R-6

individualistic culture R-5

legitimate power R-7

personal-growth group R-4

problem-solving group R-4

referent power R-7

reflective-thinking

process R-9

relationship-oriented

role R-7

self-serving role R-7

small group R-4

task role R-7

A

Understand the Nature of Small Group Interaction

1. Groups Defined

A **small group** is a relatively small number of individuals who work together toward an identified goal while influencing each other during the process. Let's break down this definition for clearer understanding:

- Small number—typically three to fifteen people make up a small group.
- Identified goal—while a number of people may randomly assemble, talk for a while, and then disband, a small group gathers for a reason or a specific purpose. Members work to achieve a task or get something done.
- Influencing each other during the process—each member's presence affects the others in the group and shapes the outcome of the group's work.

People work together in groups because the power of the group is nearly always greater than that of any individual. Think about the human hand as an analogy. Though each finger has its strengths, it's ultimately limited when acting alone. When acting in concert, however, fingers can perform delicate surgery, sculpt a dramatic piece of art, create beautiful music, or even, if necessary, punch a hole in the wall. By thinking and learning about group dynamics, each of us can learn to work more effectively in groups.

2. Types of Small Groups

It helps to understand what kind of group you're working in and its purpose. Group members may meet face-to-face in classrooms, offices, conference rooms, cafés, and living rooms. Technology even allows many groups, whose members may be anywhere in the world, to meet virtually by connecting online. No matter how they communicate, here are some of the types of groups in which you may find yourself participating.

- An **activity group**, like a book club, hiking club, or fan club, where you share an interest or hobby with other people.
- A **personal-growth group**, where members provide support to each other as each seeks understanding, new skills, or comfort and strength during challenging times or difficult circumstances. New-parent groups, cancer-survivor groups, and Alcoholics Anonymous are examples of personal-growth groups.
- An **educational group**, where you volunteer or are assigned to work with others to better understand a subject or complete an assignment. Educational groups are sometimes referred to as cooperative or collaborative learning groups.
- A **problem-solving group**, where people need to address some sort of issue. Problem-solving groups often take the shape of a **committee**, a group of people brought together to perform work for a larger group or organization. Committees are either ongoing or come together for one specific task and are then disbanded.

Most activity groups and personal-growth groups are private and self-contained, while educational groups and problem-solving groups must often report their findings or outcomes

to other people. Some reports are written, while others are presented orally. Here are some examples of group presentations:

- Students team up to complete a large task and then share the process and findings with classmates.
- A collaborative learning group researches a topic and teaches it to fellow learning groups.
- A work team comes up with a proposal and presents it to potential clients.
- A committee is convened to study an issue, present its findings, and make a recommendation to the larger group.
- Neighbors organize and present their requests to city officials.

Much of what you've studied throughout this book, including audience analysis, message organization, audience engagement, speaker credibility, and delivery technique, is relevant for these group presentations. However, before we discuss the group presentation in detail, let's understand a little more about the inner workings of a group and your role in it.

B

Understand Your Job in a Small Group

One way to make group interaction more effective is for everyone in the group to understand and value his or her position in it. While it's common for us to think of group members as two general types—participants and leaders—many groups today actually operate under the principle of **distributed leadership**. Here, despite the presence of a recognized leader, *each member* bears responsibility for performing the communication behaviors necessary for moving a group toward its goal.¹ Distributed leadership thus blurs the lines between participation and leadership, making it incumbent on every group member to understand and value both roles.

1. Being an Effective Group Participant

You can probably guess that responsibility, willingness, and a good attitude set effective group members apart. Here's how to make the most of these qualities, even if it's a challenge.

Feel a Sense of Responsibility for the Group's Success. Ideally, each group member feels an equal sense of responsibility for the group's success. But this is not always easy. If you come from a **collectivistic culture**, as you do if you were born and raised in many Asian or African cultures, by definition you tend to put the good of the group ahead of your individual concerns. But if you come from an **individualistic culture**, as you do if you were born and raised in the United States, it's sometimes a challenge to sacrifice individual needs and wants for the sake of a group.

There are many examples of successful groups in the United States, however, so feeling that sense of communal responsibility is well within our desires and capabilities. You can increase the effectiveness of your group participation in the following responsible ways:

- Be aware of yourself as a group member participating in a group process. Attend to your individual needs and concerns at another time.
- Expect from yourself what you expect from other group members.

- Recognize that many people love working in groups. They value the outcomes that result when a variety of people with varying strengths come together and concentrate on a particular focus.
- Acknowledge, too, that some people experience **grouphate**, or negative feelings toward group participation.² These feelings can result from prior experience; these individuals may have felt unwanted or undervalued as group members at one time or may have been involved in a group that was too easily distracted from its task or a group in which one or two members ended up carrying the bulk of the workload. But remember that past experience does not necessarily dictate future experience. When you work with others who understand and value the small group process, the chances increase that you'll enjoy yourself while getting things done.
- Be committed to the group's success. If you don't believe in the task put before the group, do what you can to change your attitude. Perhaps you can sleep on it overnight and wake up with a fresh perspective. Or talk to another group member who can help you see the group from a different angle. If in the end you still have a negative attitude, remove yourself from the group. You're doing yourself and the other group members no favor by remaining on board. If it's not possible to step aside, accept your group status, and remember that there are some compulsory aspects to adult life. Try to have a good attitude despite the circumstances, and avoid comments and actions that will bring fellow group members down.

Act on That Sense of Responsibility. Here are some responsible things you can do to make your group interaction run smoothly and effectively:

- Be dependable. Show up on time, be prepared, and if you agree to perform a task, see it through. If something happens and you can't be present or deliver on a promise, be honest and alert someone else in the group as soon as possible.
- Rather than individual pronouns like *I*, *me*, and *you*, use group-oriented pronouns like *we*, *us*, and *our* in your thinking and speaking. These inclusive, group-oriented pronouns accentuate the group members' bonds with one another.
- Speak up. If you have some helpful background information or come up with a creative idea that's relevant to the group's task, share it. If for some reason you don't feel comfortable expressing a particular idea publicly, share it with the group leader or another group member who can then communicate it to the larger group.
- Keep your comments centered on issues and the task at hand, rather than on personalities and behaviors of other group members.
- Remain open-minded, and respect what other group members say. Though you may feel strongly about the group's next step, for example, remember that you are one of many in the group. When you welcome new information and new ideas, remain curious, and subdue prejudice—essentially, when you're an effective listener—you contribute best to your group's success.³ Listen to others with an open mind, and recognize that they may have equally important and valuable things to say.
- Recognize the potential for **groupthink**, and speak up if you see it occurring. Groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs when groups want to reach agreement so badly that they fail to fully analyze the situation, or they suppress confrontation and disagreement.⁴ Groupthink favors harmony and cohesiveness at the expense of well-thought-out solutions.

Identify and Fulfill Needed Group Roles. During your group interactions, you're most likely to perform some recognized roles.⁵ Two kinds—task and relationship-oriented roles—are required for effective group interaction. The third category, the self-serving role, is counterproductive, and you should avoid it.

- **Task roles** are those that help the group achieve its mission. When you offer to take notes, provide some needed background information, ask a clarifying question, provide an internal summary, or elaborate on a great idea you just had, you're making things happen and moving the group toward its goal.
- **Relationship-oriented roles**, sometimes known as interpersonal roles, are those that help group members work well together. Strong relationships between group members are important, because they directly and indirectly affect the group's ability to achieve its task. When you express support for someone else's idea, help a quieter member take the floor, help avoid a potential conflict between other group members, recognize when everyone needs a ten-minute break, or make positive comments on the group's progress, you're facilitating relationships.
- **Self-serving roles** are those that serve the individual at the expense of the group. When a group member interrupts someone else, refuses to take a stand, makes negative comments, talks too much, repeatedly raises objections, or constantly draws undue attention, he or she negatively impacts the group's relationships and its ability to meet its goal. Obviously, these roles are undesirable during group interaction. It's difficult to control someone else's behavior in a self-serving role, but by learning about self-serving roles and how they are displayed, you will be able to monitor and alter your own behavior in groups.

2. Being an Effective Group Leader

While groups can operate without an identified leader, they can't operate without leadership. Leadership is a natural part of group communication. It may reside in the hands of one person, or it may be distributed among several or all group members. In any case, it consists of words and actions that persuade others in positive ways and help the group move toward its goal.

Know the Sources of Leadership Power. Leadership is a form of power, yet successful group leaders don't seek power for its own sake. Rather, they recognize that they have talents and abilities that can help others, and they choose to use them for beneficial reasons. Your leadership power may come from one or more of the following sources:

- **Legitimate power** comes from a position you hold that others acknowledge and respect. If you're a club president, a committee chairperson, or manager of an office, you hold legitimate power.
- **Referent power** comes from qualities you display that others find attractive. When you're admired and respected for being positive, charismatic, confident, and genuinely concerned for others' well-being, you hold referent power.
- **Expert power** stems from others' belief in your knowledge and abilities. When you're the only one who knows how to use a needed piece of technology, when you have experience doing something the group needs done, or when you know someone the group needs to talk to, you have expert power.

Understand the Different Types of Leadership. Leaders are designated at the start of group interaction or emerge once group interaction has gotten underway.

- A **designated leader** is elected or appointed to the leadership position. Groups with designated leaders tend to be more stable, have fewer interpersonal conflicts, and often produce better outcomes.⁶ Should you find yourself the designated leader of your group, you'll immediately enjoy legitimate power. However, you must still earn, through intentional deeds, the respect and goodwill of your group members to be ultimately effective in your leadership role. While all members bear responsibility for the group's success, the designated leader faces extra pressures. Group members and outside parties often hold the designated leader accountable for the group's inner workings and final outcome. If you're the designated leader, know what makes a group function well, and be confident in your abilities to fulfill the leadership responsibilities (explained shortly).
- An **emergent leader** starts out as a group participant but, through his or her referent and/or expert power, surfaces as a leader. The point of emergent leadership is not to steal power from the designated leader, though that could be necessary if the designated leader is unwilling or unable to perform the required leadership tasks. Instead, all group members are capable of emergent leadership when they use group-oriented communication skills. Emergent leaders are socially perceptive and able to respond flexibly to the apparent needs of the group. They're willing to speak up early in the group interaction, helping members interpret events and their own capabilities in a positive way.⁷

Fulfill These Leadership Responsibilities. Designated and emergent leaders alike perform these tasks of leadership:

- **Take care of procedural needs.** Leaders need to see to the logistics of group interaction. Such housekeeping duties include:
 - Securing a time and place for the group to meet and communicating that information to all group members.
 - Creating a list of things to be accomplished during the meeting—known as an **agenda**—and sending it out to all members ahead of time.
 - Preparing and distributing any relevant handouts.
 - Starting the meeting on time.
 - Summarizing the meeting and leading the discussion of the group's next steps.
 - If applicable, ensuring that all group members receive minutes from the meeting.
- **Communicate actively and clearly.** Leaders need to be mindful and present during the group interaction. They're engaged listeners and speak up and out in ways that others can understand.
- **Understand and communicate the group's task.** Leaders must have an especially strong sense of the group's charge, be able to communicate it clearly to the members, and keep the group moving toward its goals.
- **Facilitate interaction.** Leaders are good at keeping the group on track, helping everyone participate, recognizing and handling any roadblocks or barriers, communicating with relevant outside parties, and making sure that everyone understands the current situation before the group moves forward.
- **Respect and support others.** Leaders pay attention to the interpersonal relationships among the group, making sure that everyone is introduced, helping quieter members

participate, being positive, inspiring confidence in the group's abilities, and helping to resolve conflicts among members.

- **Recognize yet don't abuse leadership power.** Leaders recognize the power they hold and are careful not to abuse it. Because they know people tend to listen when they talk, leaders don't talk more than they need to, and they actively encourage participation from others. Because they know their opinions often hold extra weight, leaders hold back on giving them. They actively seek opinions from others and often express their own as possibilities only, rather than as supreme.
- **Share credit.** Finally, leaders don't steal the limelight; they outwardly recognize the group's accomplishments, both to the group itself and to outside parties. They also share responsibility for the group's outcome even if it's not a complete success.

C

Ensure Productive Group Interaction

The ultimate goal of many educational groups and problem-solving groups is to look at a problem or issue and make a decision about how to solve it. The decision usually includes recommendations for some kind of action that the group itself or an outside party should take. The **reflective-thinking process** offers well-defined steps for making a meaningful group decision.⁸ As enticing as it may be to follow one's intuition and immediately start coming up with solutions for a perceived problem, groups that follow the full five-step process have higher-quality discussions and produce better decisions.⁹

1. Step 1—Identify and Define the Problem

Group members must first fully understand exactly what problem the group needs to solve. This step sounds obvious, but it's essential to complete if the rest of the process is to work. The time it takes to get everyone on the same page and fully comprehend the task at hand is time well spent.

2. Step 2—Analyze the Problem

Once the group can articulate the problem it faces, it's time to dig in and examine it from multiple angles. Your group may need to conduct research, explore terms, question causes or effects, uncover the scope of the problem, learn some history behind it, determine who is affected by it, or consider what would happen if the problem weren't solved. Take your time here. The more completely you analyze the problem, the greater the likelihood you'll eventually choose the best solution for it.

3. Step 3—Establish Criteria for Solving the Problem

Now that your group has analyzed the problem, it's tempting to dive into formulating solutions. But how are you going to know which solution is best? Will it be the solution offered by the loudest group member? the most charming? the tallest? Probably not, so you want to take some time to establish appropriate **criteria**, or measurements you'll use to evaluate the solutions once you come up with them. These criteria will help you recognize the right solution. Again, be willing to spend group time on this step. Keep working until all group members understand and feel comfortable with the criteria.

4. Step 4—Generate Potential Solutions

You're now ready to brainstorm on some potential solutions. This is the fun part. Here are some guidelines for effective group brainstorming:

- Set aside any evaluation at this step; your goal is simply to generate as many solutions as possible. Avoiding judgment is the most important part of brainstorming.
- Be as freewheeling as possible. Every group member has permission to let his or her creativity loose and offer ideas, no matter how ridiculous they may seem at first.
- Piggyback on each other's ideas. You never know when one idea spurs another idea that spurs another idea that ends up being the perfect solution.
- Write all ideas down. It's easy to think you'll remember them all, but you probably won't. Find the group member who can write or type quickly.
- Keep going until your group is completely out of ideas.

While most groups like to brainstorm together during a face-to-face meeting, some groups, due to geographic distance or choice, brainstorm individually and then send their ideas to a central location. This process works well, too.

5. Step 5—Choose the Best Solution

Now that your group has its inventory of potential solutions, it's time to choose the best one. Many groups like to decide how the selection will work before they begin evaluating. Some groups decide they'll designate each solution with a "yes," "maybe" or "no" and then return to the yes and maybe lists and repeat the process as many times as necessary. Some groups choose to operate on a "majority rules" voting basis. Still others agree to seek **consensus**, wherein every member must agree on the final solution. Your group might use a combination of these ideas or come up with one of its own.

Once all group members have agreed on voting procedures, it's time to retrieve the list of criteria you established in Step 3 and begin using them as a measuring stick. While it can be appealing to select the first idea that meets the criteria, don't fall victim to groupthink. Give each potential solution its fair shake, and get through the whole list. As your group works through each idea—and this may take some time—it should soon become clear which solution best fits your problem or, at least, is a solution every group member can live with.

D

Present Effectively

Now that your group has a decision in hand, there's a good chance you'll need to communicate it to some other people. Your group must plan your presentation, organize it, and present it.

1. Planning the Presentation

Planning the group presentation is similar to planning an individual public speech. Follow these group presentation Strategy Keys:

- **Identify exactly what your group needs to present.** Know whether the goal of the presentation is to report on your group's progress, share your findings, offer a recommendation, or some combination of these.

- **Analyze your audience and the occasion.** You want to know as much as possible about the people in attendance and the purpose of the occasion. Know who will be there and whether there's a certain someone you need to address. Identify whether this is an information-sharing session or a persuasive presentation. Find out whether money or someone's reputation is on the line. Get a sense of whether this is a formal presentation or an informal gathering.
- **Identify the type of presentation.** Determine whether one person will report for the whole group or whether each group member will participate in the presentation. If the whole group participates, decide now exactly what each person's role is. Perhaps one person will introduce the project, another will report on the decision-making process, another will summarize the recommendation, and another will discuss proposed implementation of the action. Whatever your group decides, things are bound to go more smoothly when each group member clearly understands his or her marching orders.
- **Delegate duties.** Any group presentation entails some logistical decisions. Who will reserve the presentation space? Who will reserve audiovisual equipment if needed? Who best knows how to make a slideware presentation? Who will purchase any necessary items? Who will be the main contact person should outside parties need to communicate with the group? If necessary, who will do the advertising for the group presentation?

2. Organizing the Presentation

It's now time to get to work on these group presentation Structure and Support Keys:

- **Gather supporting materials.** If your group needs to add more supporting material such as statistics, examples, or testimony, be sure to allow for additional research time. If the group chooses to incorporate visuals, ensure formatting consistency by selecting a central point person to whom everyone will send their images. Perhaps someone needs to prepare a handout.
- **Organize the presentation.** Your presentation needs a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Have a thesis, and organize the main points according to one of the patterns of organization discussed in Chapter 12. Don't forget to plan for transitions between the parts of the presentation.
- **Plan to engage the audience.** Keep your listeners engaged by relying on the audience-engagement techniques discussed in Chapter 25. Use audience-centered pronouns, consider calling for audience participation, and if appropriate, incorporate some humor.
- **Ensure the group's credibility.** Make sure that all group members are prepared and are committed to an ethical presentation. If relevant, communicate the group's education, experience, research, personal connections, and any other characteristics the audience may respect and admire. Many groups like to have a dress plan. Will everyone wear business attire or jeans and a white button-up shirt, or whatever they prefer?

3. Giving the Presentation

Use the following group presentation Style Keys to your group's advantage:

- **Practice the presentation.** Practice must be part of every group presentation. Allow time for all group members to get together at least once—ideally, three to five times—to go over the presentation repeatedly. Practice is required to make sure that all parts of the

presentation are accounted for, all visuals are ready to go, and all group members know what they need to do and when. These practice sessions go a long way toward building everyone’s confidence for presentation day.

- **Monitor your language and nonverbals.** Look for consistency in your language and nonverbal displays. Ensure that everyone is using the same terms and defining them the same way. Have a discussion about inclusive language, and encourage everyone to use it. Also encourage group members to use eye contact and natural gestures and facial expression. Know how the group will position itself in front of the audience, and have a plan for what group members will do when they’re not actively presenting. It can be distracting for an audience to watch nonspeaking group members fidget and stand around self-consciously. One idea is to have nonspeaking group members sit at a table in the speaking space or in chairs in the front row.

Table A.1 sums up the keys to giving a great group presentation.

Figure A.1 Keys to Listenability—Group Presentations

 KEYS TO LISTENABILITY			
STRATEGY KEYS	STRUCTURE KEYS	SUPPORT KEYS	STYLE KEYS
Ensure listener-centered choices in advance of your presentation about the topic, audience, and occasion.	Organize your presentation, and communicate it in a way that your listeners can follow and understand.	Substantiate, enhance, and reinforce your message to engage your listeners and help them understand, believe, or act.	Deliver your group presentation in a listener-friendly manner.
Identify exactly what your group needs to present.	Identify and communicate the thesis.	Gather supporting materials.	Practice the presentation.
Analyze your audience and the occasion.	Have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion.	Plan to engage the audience.	Monitor your language and nonverbals.
Identify the type of presentation.	Arrange the main points according to a pattern of organization.	Ensure the group’s credibility.	
Delegate duties.	Transition between the main points.		

Given all that you’ve learned about group dynamics and making a good presentation, know that you have the necessary tools to ensure enjoyable and constructive group interaction and that the hard work of your group will be well communicated.

Summary

- A small group is a relatively small number of individuals who work together toward an identified goal while influencing each other during the process.
- Group members are identified as one of two general types—participants and leaders. Participants must feel a sense of responsibility to the group, act on that sense of responsibility, and fulfill needed group roles. Leaders should understand the source of their power, understand the different types of leadership, and fulfill their leadership responsibilities.
- The reflective-thinking process offers five well-defined steps for making a meaningful group decision. Groups end up with a better decision when they take time to identify and define the problem, analyze the problem, establish criteria for solving the problem, generate potential solutions, and choose the best solution.
- Many groups need to communicate their decision to other people. Groups can follow clear steps for planning, organizing, and giving the presentation.

Guide to Documentation Styles

Public speeches include information, ideas, figures, and quotations from other sources that must be cited within the context of the presentation. Chapter section 10D provides advice about verbally citing your sources for listener comprehension. In addition, your instructor might require you to provide written documentation in the form of a bibliography to acknowledge the sources used in your speech. This appendix provides guidelines to the most commonly used styles of written documentation.

Before creating a bibliography, be sure to ascertain whether your instructor prefers one style of documentation over another. To create a bibliography using any of these styles, you first need to know what kind of sources you are citing. The guidelines below provide examples of citations for different kinds of sources as defined by the major documentation styles. Each documentation style provides rules for making **in-text citations** and creating a **works cited list**. In-text citations are applicable only for a complete written manuscript of a speech, which is not likely going to be required. More commonly, an instructor will require a complete list of sources for some speeches. You should refer to the rules for creating a works cited list for this purpose.

A.—MLA Documentation

B.—APA Documentation

C.—Chicago Documentation

D.—CSE Documentation

A. MLA DOCUMENTATION

The Modern Language Association has created its own documentation style. For a more detailed discussion of its guidelines, consult the sixth edition of Joseph Gibaldi's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (New York: MLA, 2003).

In-Text Citations

As in the other documentation styles, you can use citations in MLA style within the text to let readers know they can find more detailed information about the sources of your quotes or paraphrases in the list of works cited at the conclusion of your manuscript.

1. Author named in a sentence If you cite the name of the author within the sentence itself, the parenthetical citation should indicate the page number from which you are quoting or paraphrasing. The citation comes after the closing quotation mark but before the period.

Watts asserts that Marceline, Missouri, “held a key to the boundless creativity that fueled the enormous Disney cultural enterprise” (4).

2. Author named within a parenthetical citation

Disney returned to Marceline in 1956 to find that city officials had named a local swimming pool after him (Watts 3).

3. Two or more works by the same author If you cite multiple works by the same author, you must specify which work you are referring to in each parenthetical citation.

Disney developed a friendship with Henry Ford during the 1920s (Watts, *The People's Tycoon* 35).

The Works Cited List

MLA guidelines require speakers to include a list of works cited.

1. Book with One Author Provide the author's name—last name first—followed by a period. Underline the title of the work, and follow it with a period. Capitalize the first word of the title and any subtitle as well as all proper nouns and adjectives. In the publication information, include the city of publication followed by a colon and then the publisher's name. If you are citing two or more books by the same author, in the second entry replace the author's name with three hyphens and a period. List the books in alphabetical order by title.

Watts, Steven. *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life*. Columbia: U of Missouri, 1997.

---. *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*. New York: Knopf, 2005.

2. Book with Two or More Authors List the authors' names in the order they appear on the title page. Invert the last and first names for the first author only, and place a period after the author's name. When there are more than three authors, use the abbreviation *et al.* after listing the first author. Follow the book title with a period, then provide the city of publication, followed by a colon, the publisher, and the year of publication.

Neal, Julie R., and Mike Neal. The Complete Guide to Walt Disney World 2008. Sanibel Island: Coconut, 2008.

3. Article in a Reference Work List the author of the article if one is given (last name first), and indicate the title of the article in quotation marks, capitalizing the first word of the article title and any subtitle and all proper nouns and adjectives. Underline the title of the reference work. Give the edition (if provided) and the date of publication. Follow each item with a period. When entries are listed alphabetically, no page numbers are needed.

Fulton, Roger, and John Betancourt. "Bionic Woman." The Sci-Fi Channel Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction. 1998.

4. Government Document List the name of the government office, followed by the agency or any subdivision as the author, using standard abbreviations. Underline the title of the document. Indicate the congressional number, session, house, and type of document, using abbreviations and the number of the material. Close with the publication information, which is usually the Government Printing Office (GPO). Follow the use of periods, comma, and colon in the example.

United States. Federal Communications Commission. Telecommunications Act of 1996. Pub. L. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56. Washington: GPO, 1996.

5. Magazine Article List the author's name, last name first, followed by a period. Give the title of the article in quotation marks and title of the magazine, underlined. Include the complete date of publication with the day first, followed by the month and the year with no commas between them. If no day is given, provide the month and year only. Use three-letter abbreviations for all months with the exception of May, June, and July. Place a colon after the date, and add the page number(s) of the article.

Jefferson, Davis. "An Incredible Marriage? Disney and Pixar's CEO Steve Jobs Talk of Joining Forces." Newsweek 30 Jan. 2006: 42.

6. Journal Article List the author's name, last name first, followed by a period. Give the title of the article in

quotation marks, followed by a period and then the title of the journal, underlined and followed by a space and the volume number. Identify the year in parentheses and use a colon to separate that from the page numbers.

Sadoff, Ronald H. "Mouse Tracks: The Story of Walt Disney Records." Popular Music 26 (2007): 537-39.

7. Newspaper Article Give the author of the article, if provided, with last name first and followed by a period. Write the title of the article in quotation marks. Underline the title of the newspaper, but do not include any articles such as *A*, *An*, or *The*. If the newspaper is from an unknown or small city, provide the name of the city in brackets. List the date the article was printed—day, month, year—and the edition (if any). Place a colon after the date, followed by the section number or letter and the page number(s). If the article appears on non-consecutive pages, place a + sign after the letter.

Robertson, Campbell. "Disney Wonders if a Mermaid Can Follow a Trail Blazed by a Lion." New York Times 20 Dec. 2007: A1+.

8. Newspaper Editorial Provide the author's name (if given), with last name first and an ending period. If not, begin with the title in quotation marks and an ending period. Add the word "Editorial" after the title. Then use the same format as for a newspaper article (above).

"When You Wish Upon a Merger." Editorial. New York Times 2 Feb. 2006: A23.

9. Work from a Library or Personal Subscription Service If you are accessing material through a library subscription service such as EBSCO, InfoTrac, or LexisNexis, list the author, last name first, the title of the article in quotation marks, the title of the journal underlined, the volume number, the date in parentheses, followed by a colon, and the page numbers. Underline the name of the database used, followed by the name of the service, the library's name, the date of access, and if provided, the URL of the site's home page, enclosed in angle brackets, followed by a period.

Hinkins, Jillian. "'Biting the Hand That Feeds': Consumerism, Ideology, and Recent Animated Film for Children." Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature 17 (2007): 43-51. Expanded Academic ASAP. InfoTrac. Perry Casteneda Lib., U of Texas. 13 Feb. 2008 <<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>>.

10. Article in an Online Newspaper Provide the author's name, if given, with last name first and a closing period. Then, list the title of the piece in quotation marks, the title of the newspaper underlined, the date of

publication (day, month, year), and the URL, enclosed in angle brackets, followed by a period.

Burr, Ty. "‘Oswald’ Tells Story of Disney’s Start." *Boston Globe* 7 Jan. 2008. 17 Feb. 2008 <http://www.boston.com/ae/movies/articles/2008/01/07/oswald_tells_story_of_disneys_start/>.

11. Online Government Publication Except the Congressional Record Separate items with periods. Give the name of the country, the name of the sponsoring department, the title of the document. Then write *By*, followed by the authors’ names (if listed), first name first. Follow with the date of publication, the date accessed, and the URL, enclosed in angle brackets and ending with a period.

United States. Federal Trade Commission. *Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children*. By Robert Pitofsky et al. Sep. 2000. 10 Feb. 2008 <<http://www.ftc.gov/reports/violence/vioreport.pdf>>.

12. Online Congressional Record Abbreviate the title, and include the date, followed by a colon and then the page numbers.

Cong. Rec. 4 Dec. 2007: H14415–H14456.

13. Film, Videotape, or DVD Provide the title, underlined. If the medium is a film, cite the director (*Dir.*) and the lead actors or narrator (*Perf.* or *Narr.*). Then list the distributor and year. For videotapes or DVDs, list the medium (*Videocassette* or *DVD*) before the name of the distributor.

The Little Mermaid. Dirs. Ron Clements and John Musker. Perf. Jodi Benson. DVD. Silver Screen Partners IV, 1989.

14. Sound Recording Begin by listing the name of the composer, conductor, or performer, depending on your focus, last name first with ending period. Include the work’s title (underlined), the medium (e.g., *LP* or *Audio-cassette*—unnecessary if it is a compact disc), and the artist(s) if not already indicated. Separate these with periods. End with the name of the manufacturer, a comma, and the date of release.

Coltrane, John. *A Love Supreme*. Impulse Records, 1964.

B. APA DOCUMENTATION

Social scientists, such as psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, and those in communication, business, and education use the documentation guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA). The information presented here is based on the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The most current information

about APA documentation guidelines can be found on the organization’s website at <http://www.apastyle.org>.

In-Text Citations

1. List the author’s last name in the sentence immediately followed by the date of publication in parentheses.

According to Leahy (2004), psychological trauma can be eased through a series of mental exercises.

2. Or, list the author’s last name and the date and page number (if called for) in parentheses.

For decades, psychologists were more concerned with behavior than with the way people think (Kellogg, 2007, p. 3).

The References List

1. Book by One Author Provide the author’s last name, followed by a comma and his or her initials. Place a period after each initial, and separate first and second initials with a space. Then indicate the date of publication in parentheses, followed by a period. List the book’s title in italics, capitalizing the first word of the title and any subtitle. Finally, write the location of publication and the publisher’s name.

Kellogg, R. T. (2007). *Fundamentals of cognitive psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

2. Book by More than One Author or Editor Provide the authors’ last names and initials, separate authors by adding a comma and, before the last name, an ampersand (&). Then list the date of publication in parentheses, provide the book’s title in italics, and conclude with the location of publication and the publisher’s name.

Hunt, R. R., Ellis, H. C., & Ellis, H. (2004). *Fundamentals of cognitive psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

3. Article in a Reference Work Provide the author’s last name and initials, the publication date, and the title of the article (capitalize only the first word of the article title and any subtitle as well as all proper nouns and adjectives), and end with a period. Then, write the word *In*, and indicate the title of the reference work in italics. Follow this information with the volume number (if any), the inclusive page numbers in parentheses, the place of publication followed by a colon, and the publisher. When citing the location of articles in reference works, use the abbreviation *p.* or *pp.*

Craighead, W. E., & Nemeroff, C. B. (2004). Anxiety disorders. In *The concise Corsini encyclopedia of psychology and behavioral science* (pp. 72–74). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

4. Government Document List the governmental office or department as the author, then provide the publica-

tion year in parentheses, the title of the document in italics, and the place of publication and the publisher.

National Institutes of Mental Health. (2008). *Anxiety disorders*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

5. Journal Article Provide the author's last name and initials, then indicate the year of publication in parentheses and the title of the article; (capitalize only the first word of the article title and any subtitle as well as all proper nouns and adjectives). In italics, write the title of the journal in which the article appeared (capitalize the first word of the journal's title and any subtitle as well as all major words). List the volume number in italics and, if the journal is paginated by issue, list the issue number in parentheses. Conclude by identifying the page numbers of the article.

Stein, D. J. (2006). Evidence based treatment of anxiety disorder. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Clinical Practice*, 10, 16–21.

6. Magazine Article Provide the author's last name and initials, followed by the date of publication (the year first, then the month) in parentheses, followed by a period. Identify the title of the article (capitalizing only the first word of the title and any subtitle or proper nouns or adjectives), and italicize the title of the magazine (capitalizing all the major words in the title). Indicate the volume number, italicized, and conclude by listing the page numbers of the article.

Kallen, B. (2008, January). Peace of mind. *Natural Health*, 38, 57–63.

7. Newspaper Article Provide the author's last name and initials, list the date of publication in parentheses, indicate the title of the article (capitalizing only the first word of the title and any subtitle or proper nouns and adjectives), and italicize the title of the newspaper (capitalizing all major words) in which the article appeared. Identify the section and pagination of the article. If there is no author listed, begin the entry with the title of the piece.

Dobbs, D. (2006, April 20). A depression switch? *The New York Times*, p. A50.

8. Online Article or Abstract from a Database When you access journal articles from databases such as PsycINFO, Sociological Abstracts, General Business File ASAP, and LexisNexis, list the author, date of publication, title of the article, title of the journal and volume number in italics, issue number in parentheses, and page number(s). Then write *Retrieved*, followed by the access date and the name of the database.

McLean, A. & Broomfield, N. M. (2007). How does thought suppression impact upon beliefs about uncontrollable worry? *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 45(12), 2945, Retrieved February 12, 2008, from EbscoHost Research Databases.

9. Article in an Online Newspaper List the author's last name and initials (if given), the year and date of publication in parentheses (year, month, day), and the title of the newspaper in italics. Give the retrieval date and the URL address. Note that no punctuation follows the URL.

O'Brien, K. (2006, November 26). A phobia fix. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved February 9, 2008, from http://www.boston.com/yourlife/health/diseases/articles/2006/11/26/a_phobia_fix/

10. Document on a Website Provide the author's last name and initials (if listed on the website), the sponsoring organization, date of publication in parentheses, title of the document in italics, the date you accessed the site, and the URL address with no closing punctuation.

National Institutes of Mental Health. (2007, December 17). *Behavioral therapy effectively treats children with social phobia*. Retrieved February 10, 2008, from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/2007/behavioral-therapy-effectively-treats-children-with-social-phobia.shtml>

11. Online Government Document Except the Congressional Record List the title of the government agency as the author, and provide the date of publication in parentheses. Indicate the title of the report in italics, and then give the retrieval date and the URL address with no ending period.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2007, September). *Summary health statistics for U.S. children: National health interview survey, 2006*. Retrieved February 12, 2008, from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_234.pdf

12. Congressional Record (Online or in Print) When citing enacted resolutions or legislation, provide the number of the congress after the number of the resolution or legislation, the *Congressional Record* volume number, the page number(s), the year, and then (*enacted*). Provide the complete name of the resolution or legislation if you are citing the source within your sentence, but abbreviate the source if you are using a parenthetical in-text citation: for example, (*Pub. L. 110–134, 2007*).

Pub. L. 110–134, 110th Cong., 153 Cong Rec. 120–121 (2007) (*enacted*).

13. Film, DVD, Videotape, CD-ROM, Recording List the person's name and initials, and, if appropriate, his or her

role in the creation of the media in parentheses (e.g., *Director*). Provide the date of release in parentheses. Indicate the title in italics and the medium in brackets, followed by the country, a colon, and the name of the distributor.

Redford, R. (Director). (1980). *Ordinary people* [DVD]. United States: Paramount Pictures.

C. CHICAGO DOCUMENTATION

The Chicago Manual of Style, fifteenth edition (2003) delineates two systems of documentation. Public speakers, journalists, and humanities scholars most often use the first, which requires authors to provide footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography of their sources. The second system utilizes an author-date system of in-text citations and a reference list of full bibliographic information. Many writers in the sciences use this system. For more information about each system, consult the print version of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, fifteenth edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) or go online to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

Here is how you should format information that would appear in your footnotes and endnotes.

1. Book by One Author Begin by indenting four to five spaces. In endnotes, provide the author's full name, first name first. Place a comma after the name, and follow this with the book's title in italics. Next, in parentheses, indicate the city of publication. A colon separates this information from the publisher's name. Then identify the publication date. Close the parentheses and add a comma. Finally, provide the page number from which you are paraphrasing or quoting.

1. Thomas de Zengotita, *Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005), 42.

If you quote or paraphrase from the same source consecutively, use the abbreviation *ibid.* in the footnote following the complete source line.

2. *Ibid.*, 50.

If you quote or paraphrase from the same source in a later footnote, simply use the author's last name and page number.

12. Zengotita, 23.

These rules apply for all sources, not only books.

2. Book with More Than One Author Provide each author's complete name, first name first (using commas in between authors' names and the word *and* before the final author's name), followed by the book title in italics,

the publication information in parentheses, and the page number(s) you cited or paraphrased.

4. Fred Fedler, John R. Bender, Lucinda Davenport, and Michael W. Drager, *Reporting for the Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 559.

3. Edited Book Provide the editor's name, first name first, and follow it with a comma and the abbreviation *ed.* If there are two or more editors, show all their names, and use the abbreviation *eds.* Place another comma after the abbreviation, and list the title in italics, followed by the publication information in parentheses and the page number(s) you cited or paraphrased.

5. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner, eds., *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 439.

4. Encyclopedia or Dictionary Provide the title of the work in italics and follow it with a comma, the edition of the text (if given), the letters *s.v.* (Latin for *sub voce*, or "under the word"), and the phrase or term you are referencing in quotation marks. Close with a period.

6. *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, *s.v.*, "Journalism."

5. Article in a Magazine Provide the author's complete name, first name first, the title of the article in quotation marks (capitalizing the first word of the title and any subtitle as well as all proper nouns and adjectives), the magazine title in italics, the publication date (month, day, year), and the page(s) you are referencing.

7. Eric Alterman, "What's Really Wrong with the Mainstream Media?" *The Nation*, December 24, 2007, 10.

6. Article in a Journal Provide the author's complete name, first name first, the title of the article in quotation marks, the title of the journal in italics, the volume and issue numbers, the year of publication in parentheses, a colon, and the page(s) you reference.

8. Ed Fouhy, "Television and National Politics: a Shotgun Marriage," *Television Quarterly* 31, (2000): 4–10.

7. Article in a Newspaper Provide the author's complete name, first name first, the title of the article in quotation marks, the title of the newspaper in italics, the date of publication, the edition, and the section in the paper in which the article appeared. Because newspapers publish in multiple editions, do not give a page number. Instead, provide the section number or title if it is indicated.

9. Howard Kurtz, "Critiquing the Press," *Washington Post*, November 5, 2007, sec. A.

8. Website Provide the complete name of the author (if listed), first name first, the title of the webpage in quotation marks, the title of the website in italics, and the site's URL, or address. You may or may not choose to provide the date you accessed the site; if you do, enclose it in parentheses and preface the date with the word *accessed*.

10. "Media History," *On the Media*, http://www.onthemedial.org/topics/media_history/1 (accessed February 3, 2007).

9. E-Mail Message Document e-mail messages the same way you would a personal communication. Provide the sender's full name, the phrase *e-mail message to author*, and the date you received the message.

11. Elena Past, e-mail message to author, February 10, 2008.

10. E-Mail Discussion List Message Provide the author's complete name, then write the phrase *e-mail to*, followed by the name of the discussion list in italics, the date the message was posted, and the URL of the list. Including the date of access is optional.

12. Terry Ginberg, e-mail to *Humanities-Net List for American Studies* mailing list, January 21, 2008, <http://www.h-net.org/announce/show.cgi?ID=160469&keyword=film> (accessed February 10, 2008).

11. Newsgroup Message Provide the author's complete name, followed by the phrase *message to* and the name of the newsgroup in italics. Include the date the message was posted and the URL of the newsgroup. Including the date of access is optional.

13. Sofia Jarrin, e-mail to *IndyMedia.Org*, January 14, 2008, <http://lists.indymedia.org/pipermail/boston-radio/2008-January/0105-p8.html> (accessed February 8, 2008).

12. Electronic Database Provide the author's complete name, the title of the article in quotation marks, the title of the periodical in italics, the periodical's publication information, the page(s) you are citing or paraphrasing, and the URL of the database. Including the date of access is optional.

14. Matt Carlson, "Order Versus Access: News Search Engines and the Challenge to Traditional Journalistic Roles," *Media, Culture and Society* 29, no. 6 (2007): 1014–1030, <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/ehost/detail?vid=6&hid=112&sid=cc75eb9f-b623-418b-9aa0-0a8b373c4138%40sessionmgr108> (accessed February 15, 2008).

13. Government Document The author is the governmental body or office (e.g. "U.S. Senate," "U.S. Senate

Committee on Appropriations"). After listing the author, indicate the title of the article or publication in italics, followed by the publication information and the page(s) you are citing or paraphrasing.

15. U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Broadcasting Board of Governors: Finding the Right Media Message for the Middle East* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003), 45.

14. Published Interview Provide the name of the interviewee, interviewer, the program or forum where the interview took place, the publication information, and the date. If the interview cited is unpublished or has not yet been broadcast, describe the type of interview (e.g., *VHS recording*) and include the location where it took place.

16. Mark Crispin Miller, *Frontline: The Merchants of Cool*, PBS, Feb. 27, 2001.

15. Visual Media Provide the title of the film or other medium in italics, the format (e.g., *VHS, DVD*), and the name of the director. In parentheses, indicate the location and title of the distribution company and the year of release.

17. *Network*, DVD, directed by Sydney Lumet (Burbank, CA: Howard Gottfried, 1976).

D. CSE DOCUMENTATION

The Council of Science Editors (CSE, formerly known as the Council of Biology Editors, or CBE) publishes a style manual for authors, editors, students, and so on in all areas of science and related fields. For more detailed information on this documentation style, consult the publication *Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers*, seventh edition.

In-Text Citations

The CSE supports three systems of in-text references: citation-sequence, name-year, and citation-name. Each system has its advantages and drawbacks, which are outlined in detail in CSE's publication *Scientific Style and Format*.

1. In the citation-sequence system, superscripts inserted throughout the text denote the numerical order of entries in the references. If the first in-text citation refers to a work by Doe, the superscript and corresponding reference will be numbered 1, and *all subsequent references to that specific work* will be numbered 1. (Another work by Doe would be numbered differently, depending on where it fell sequentially in the text.)
2. The name-year system uses in-text parenthetical citations consisting of the last name of the author and the year of publication; for example, (*Doe 1978*).

Unlike the citation-sequence system, the name-year system arranges the references alphabetically.

3. The citation-name system is a hybrid of the two previous systems. The in-text citations consist of superscripts, and the references are arranged alphabetically (according to the author's last name). In other words, a reference to a work by Andrews may be number 1; a work by Butler, number 2; and a work by Williams, 78. All in-text references to the same work carry the same superscript.

References

1. Book by One Author Provide the author's name, last name first, followed by his or her initials (with no comma after the last name and no space or period in between each initial) and a closing period. Write the title, capitalizing only the first word and any proper nouns or adjectives. Close with a period. Include the edition (if given), also followed by a period. Then list the location of publication (with a two-letter abbreviation of the state in parentheses), followed by a colon, the name of the publisher, a semicolon, and the year of publication. If including a page number, place a period after the year of publication and then give the page number(s), preceded by a lowercase *p*. (for singular *and* multiple page numbers).

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

1. Oliver EJ. Fat politics: the real story behind America's obesity epidemic. 5th ed. New York (NY): Oxford University Press; 2006. P. 228.

Name-Year Style

Provide the author's name, last name first, followed by his or her initials (with no comma following the last name and no space or period in between each initial) and a closing period. Then write the year of publication, followed by a period. Format the remaining publication information as done in the citation-sequence/citation-name example, omitting the year after the name of the publisher and placing a period instead of a semicolon after the publisher's name.

Oliver EJ. 2006. Fat politics: the real story behind America's obesity epidemic. 5th ed. New York (NY): Oxford University Press. p. 228.

As you can see from the preceding examples, the biggest difference between the citation-sequence/citation-name and name-year reference style is the location of the date. For simplification, the following directions describe the formatting of citation-sequence/citation-name references; the examples, however, illustrate first the formatting of citation-sequence/citation-name references and then the formatting of name-year

references. In general, to convert references from the citation-sequence/citation-name style to the name-year style, simply move the date of publication to immediately follow the author's name.

2. Book by Two or More Authors For books with two to ten authors, list all the authors' names and initials. If the number of authors exceeds ten, list the first ten authors, and after the tenth name write the abbreviation *et al*. Format the remaining publication information as shown in the examples for a book by one author.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

2. Finkelstein EA, Zuckerman L. The fattening of America: how the economy makes us fat, if it matters, and what to do about it. Hoboken (NJ): Wiley, 2008. p. 274.

Name-Year Style

Finkelstein EA, Zuckerman L. 2008. The fattening of America: how the economy makes us fat, if it matters, and what to do about it. Hoboken (NJ): Wiley. p. 274.

3. Organization as Author Begin with the name of the organization. If a government organization is the author, indicate its nationality, abbreviated and in parentheses, at the end of the organization's name; e.g., *Department of Agriculture (US)* (as shown with the name of the publisher in the example below). Complete the reference according to the guidelines outlined in the preceding examples.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

3. Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Calories count: report of the working group on obesity. College Park (MD): Food and Drug Administration (US); 2004. p. 513.

Name-Year Style

Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. 2004. Calories count: report of the working group on obesity. College Park (MD): Food and Drug Administration (US). p. 513.

4. Book with Editor Begin the reference with the name of the editor, last name first, followed by his or her initials, a comma, and then the word *editor*. (If there are multiple editors, separate their names by commas.) Format the remainder of the reference according to the guidelines outlined in the preceding examples.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

4. Matzoros CS, editor. Obesity and diabetes. Totowa (NJ): Humana Press; 2006. p. 555.

Name-Year Style

Matzoros CS, editor. 2006. Obesity and diabetes. Totowa (NJ): Humana Press. p. 555.

5. Selection in an Edited Book When citing a portion of a book written by someone other than the authors or compilers of the book, give the name(s) of the contributing author(s), last name first, followed by his or her (their) initials and a closing period. Then provide the title of the contributed work, followed by a period. After that, write the word *In*, followed by a colon, the name(s) of the book's author(s)/editor(s) and a closing period. Give the title of the book, and continue formatting the publication information as previously described.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

5. Sedlak MW, Schlossman S. The public school and social services: reassessing the progressive legacy. In: Lavizzo-Mourey R, Lear GJ, Isaacs SL, Knickman JR, editors. School health services and programs. Princeton (NJ): Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; 2006. p. 42–55.

Name-Year Style

Sedlak MW, Schlossman S. 2006. The public school and social services: reassessing the progressive legacy. In: Lavizzo-Mourey R, Lear GJ, Isaacs SL, Knickman JR, editors. School health services and programs. Princeton (NJ): Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. p. 42–55.

6. Journal Article Give the name of the author, last name first, followed by his or her initials. If there are multiple authors, list all their names and initials; if there are more than ten authors, provide the names and initials of the first ten, followed by the abbreviation *et al*. Next write the name of the article, capitalizing only the first word and any proper nouns or adjectives; close with a period. Then provide the name of the journal. Include only the significant words of the journal title, capitalized and in abbreviated form; the title omits words such as articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. In the following example, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* is shortened to *J Nut Educ Behav*. (Note that CSE abbreviates journal titles according to ISO [International Organization for Standardization] guidelines. For more information on this, refer to CSE's publication *Scientific Style and Format*.) After the

journal's title, provide the year of publication, followed immediately by a semicolon, the volume number, the series number in parentheses (if given), a colon, and the page numbers. Note that there are no intervening spaces between the year of publication, volume number, series number, and page numbers.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

6. Gaillard L. Big as life: obesity in America. *J Nut Educ Behav*. 2004;36(12):344–347.

Name-Year Style

Gaillard L. 2004. Big as life: obesity in America. *J Nut Educ Behav*. 2004;36(12):344–347.

7. Newspaper Article Begin with the name of the author (if given), first name last, followed by his or her initials. Then provide the title of the article, capitalizing only the first word and any proper nouns and adjectives. Give the title of the newspaper, in full; however, omit *the* from the title (e.g., *New York Times*, not *The New York Times*). Following the newspaper's title, provide the edition (if given) in parentheses (e.g., *Home Ed.*, *Late Ed.*, etc.). Then list the date (year, month, day), using a three-letter abbreviation for the month (e.g., *Jan*, *Mar*, etc.). Immediately following the date, insert a semicolon, (with no intervening space) the section of the paper in which the article is found, a colon, and (with no intervening space) the first page number only.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

7. Nocera J. Food makers and critics break bread. *New York Times* (National Ed.). 2006 Mar 25;Sect. C:1.

Name-Year Style

Nocera J. 2006 Mar 25. Food makers and critics break bread. *New York Times* (National Ed). Sect. C:1.

8. Online Journal Article List the author(s) name(s), last name(s) first, followed by his or her (their) initials and a closing period. Give the title of the article, again closing with a period and capitalizing only the first word of the title and any proper nouns and adjectives. Next write the name of the journal, abbreviating and capitalizing it as shown earlier in section "6. Journal Article." In brackets, write *Internet*, to indicate that the article was accessed online. Then provide the year of publication, and in brackets, write the word *cited*, followed by the retrieval date (year, month, day). Immediately after the closing bracket, insert a semicolon, followed immediately by the journal's volume number, issue number (if given) in parentheses, a colon, and the page numbers

on which the article appears; end with a period. Finally, write the words *Available from*;, and give the URL with no closing period.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

8. Cassel JA. Social anthropology and nutrition: a different look at obesity. J Am Diet Assoc [Internet]. 1995 [cited 2008 Feb 10];95(4):424–428. Available from: <http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/schg/ada/hs.xsl/index.html>

Name-Year Style

Cassel JA. 1995. Social anthropology and nutrition: a different look at obesity. J Am Diet Assoc [Internet]. [cited 2008 Feb 10];95(4):424–428. Available from: <http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/schg/ada/hs.xsl/index.html>

- 9. Article from an Online Database or Website** Give the author of the database or website, and close with a period. Provide the title of the article, and follow this with the word *Internet* in brackets, with a closing period

after the brackets. Indicate the location of publication, followed by a colon and the name of the publisher, followed by a semicolon and the date of publication. In brackets, following the word *cited*, provide the retrieval date (year, month, day); place a period after the closing bracket. Finally, write *Available from*;, and add the URL with no closing period.

Citation-Sequence/ Citation-Name Style

9. Department of Health and Human Services (US). FDA proposes action plan to confront nation's obesity problem [Internet]. Rockville (MD): Food and Drug Administration; 2004 [cited 2006 Feb 12]. Available from: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/initiatives/obesity/>

Name-Year Style

Department of Health and Human Services (US). 2004. FDA proposes action plan to confront nation's obesity problem [Internet]. Rockville (MD): Food and Drug Administration; [cited 2006 Feb 12]. Available from: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/initiatives/obesity/>

Speaker Evaluation Form

Use any or all of the following questions when evaluating another person's speech.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 as the highest), I would rate your degree of listenability as a _____. Here are the measurements I used to come to that conclusion:

STRATEGY KEYS

How effective were your listener-centered choices in advance of the presentation in regard to topic, audience, and occasion?

- You were *clear/unclear* in your intention to *inform/persuade/mark a special occasion*.
- You *appropriately/did not appropriately* analyze this audience and context.
- Your chosen topic *was/was not* appropriate for this audience and occasion.
- Your overall intention seemed *ethical/somewhat ethical/unethical*.
- You appeared to manage your speaker's energy *effectively/ineffectively*.
- Overall, you *made/did not make* good strategic choices. Comments: _____

STRUCTURE KEYS

How well did you order and communicate your ideas so that I could follow along and understand?

- Introduction
 - o Your attention material *drew/did not draw* me in.
 - o You *worked/did not work* to show me the relevance or usefulness of your ideas.
 - o You *did/did not* give me confidence that you were the right person to speak about these ideas.
- Thesis (check one)
 - ☐ I understood your thesis to be: _____.
 - ☐ I'm not sure what your thesis was.
- I detected these as your main points:
 - o 1. _____.
 - o 2. _____.
 - o 3. _____.
- I understood your main points as arranged in the following pattern of organization:
 - o Informative: classification, chronological, causal, comparison/contrast, or spatial
 - o Persuasive: why, how, problem-solution, or Monroe's motivated sequence
 - o Other: _____
- It *was/was not* obvious when you transitioned from point to point.
- Conclusion
 - o You *successfully/unsuccessfully* summarized your thesis.
 - o You *successfully/unsuccessfully* summarized your main points.
 - o You *provided/did not provide* me with a take-away.
 - o You *successfully/unsuccessfully* closed your presentation with an effective clincher.
- Overall, your message *was/was not well* organized. Comments: _____

SUPPORT KEYS

How successfully did you substantiate, enhance, and reinforce your ideas in ways that engaged me and helped me understand your message?

- Research sources
 - You *cited/did not cite* your research sources in a way that gave me confidence in those researched ideas.
 - You chose research sources that *added to/detracted from* your credibility.
 - You *successfully/unsuccessfully* used a variety of tools (narrative, facts, examples, statistics, etc.) to support your ideas.
 - Visual support
 - Your visual support *successfully/unsuccessfully* enhanced your ideas.
 - It *was/was not* well designed.
 - You *used/did not use* it well during the presentation.
 - Listener engagement
 - You *engaged/did not engage* me with your use of personal pronouns.
 - You *did/did not* do a few extra things to keep me engaged during your presentation.
 - You *worked/did not work* to maintain your credibility throughout the presentation.
 - Overall, you *supported/did not support* your speech successfully. Comments: _____
-

STYLE KEYS

How successfully did you use your language, voice, and body movements during delivery?

- You *maintained/did not maintain* a conversational tone throughout the presentation.
 - You *successfully/unsuccessfully* used your notes as a support while speaking.
 - You seemed to *have/have not* practiced.
 - Language:
 - Your language *was/was not* inclusive.
 - You *took/did not take* the time to define or explain any technical terms or difficult language.
 - You *properly/improperly* pronounced your words.
 - Voice
 - You spoke at an *appropriate/inappropriate* tempo.
 - I could *easily/not easily* hear you.
 - Your emotional tone *complemented/contradicted* your words.
 - You *avoided/did not avoid* fillers like “um,” “y’know,” and “like.”
 - Body
 - Your eye contact *made/did not make* me feel included.
 - Your body movements *successfully/unsuccessfully* complemented your message.
 - Your body placement *successfully/unsuccessfully* complemented your message.
 - Overall, your style was *effective/ineffective*. Comments: _____
-

Speaker Self-Evaluation Form

Use any or all of the following questions when evaluating one of your speeches after you have given it.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 as the highest), I would rate my degree of listenability as a _____. Here are the measurements I used to come to that conclusion:

STRATEGY KEYS

How effective were my listener-centered choices in advance of the presentation in regard to my topic, audience, and occasion?

- I was *clear/unclear* in my intention to *inform/persuade/mark a special occasion*.
- I *spent/did not spend* the required time and energy to appropriately analyze this audience and context.
- My chosen topic *worked/did not work* for this audience and occasion.
- I *worked/did not work* hard to fulfill my ethical obligations.
- I felt that I *effectively/did not effectively* manage my speaker's energy.
- Overall, I *made/did not make* good strategic choices. Comments: _____

STRUCTURE KEYS

How well did I order and communicate my ideas so that my listeners could follow along and understand?

- Introduction
 - My attention material *was/was not* engaging.
 - I *told/forgot to tell* my listeners the relevance or usefulness of my ideas.
 - I *did/did not* talk about how I was the right person to speak about these ideas.
 - My thesis *was/was not* clearly communicated.
- It *was/was not* obvious when I transitioned from point to point in the body of the speech.
- Conclusion
 - I *successfully/unsuccessfully* summarized my thesis.
 - I *successfully/unsuccessfully* summarized my main points.
 - I *provided/did not provide* listeners with a take-away.
 - I *successfully/unsuccessfully* closed my presentation with an effective clincher.
- Overall, my message *was/was not* well organized. Comments: _____

SUPPORT KEYS

How successfully did I substantiate, enhance, and reinforce my ideas in ways that engaged my listeners and helped them understand my message?

- I *cited/did not cite* my research sources in a way that gave my listeners confidence in those researched ideas.
- I *successfully/unsuccessfully* used a variety of tools (narrative, facts, examples, statistics, etc.) to support my ideas.

- Visual support
 - o My visual support *successfully/unsuccessfully* enhanced my ideas.
 - o It *was/was not* well designed.
 - o I *used/did not use* it well during the presentation.
 - Listener engagement
 - o I *engaged/did not engage* my listeners with my use of personal pronouns.
 - o I *did/did not* do a few extra things to keep listeners engaged during my presentation.
 - I *worked/did not work* to maintain my credibility throughout the presentation.
 - Overall, I *supported/did not support* my speech successfully. Comments: _____
-

STYLE KEYS

How successfully did I use my language, voice, and body movements during delivery?

- I *successfully/unsuccessfully* maintained a conversational tone throughout the presentation.
 - I *used/did not use* my notes well.
 - My practice was evidently *enough/not enough*.
 - Language:
 - o My language *was/was not* inclusive.
 - o I *took/did not take* the time to define or explain any difficult terms.
 - o I *successfully/unsuccessfully* managed the pronunciation of my words.
 - Voice
 - o I spoke at an *appropriate/inappropriate* tempo.
 - o I *could/could not* easily be heard.
 - o My emotional tone *complemented/contradicted* my words.
 - o I *avoided/did not avoid* fillers like “um,” “y’know,” and “like.”
 - Body
 - o My eye contact *was/was not* with my audience.
 - o My body movements *successfully/unsuccessfully* complemented my message.
 - o My body placement *successfully/unsuccessfully* complemented my message.
 - Overall, my style was *effective/ineffective*. Comments: _____
-

Sample Speech Topics

INFORMATIVE SPEECH TOPICS

An informative speech helps your listeners understand new or useful ideas from the world around them. Informative topics examine objects, events, processes, people, concepts, and issues that broaden listeners' intellectual horizons.

An informative speaker frequently finds a topic by investigating the answer to a question, often posed in *who*, *what*, *why*, *where*, *when*, and *how* format. Here's a sample list of questions to get you started. Note that many of these could also be adapted for a persuasive speech topic.

Who . . .

Who is the architect of the Capitol building in Washington, DC?
Who is eligible to serve in the Peace Corps?
Who is prone to Usher syndrome?
Who is Craig of Craigslist?
Who were the early pioneers of jazz music?
Who is considered a member of Generation Y?
Who were the Black Pharaohs?
Who is more likely to lose weight and keep it off a year later?
Who is a good candidate for night-shift work?
Who can belong to the Red Hat Society?
Who first suggested campaign-financing rules?
Who was Zora Neale Hurston?
Who runs Google?
Who invented cloning?
Who tends to home school their children?
Who is the average soldier today as opposed to the average soldier of 100 years ago?
Who were Mason and Dixon?
Who discovered Sue, the *Tyrannosaurus rex* displayed at Chicago's Field Museum?
Who were The Who?
Who was Louis Braille?

What . . .

What is a sunspot?
What are the effects of stress on the brain?
What are the criteria used to label a child as "gifted"?
What is academic freedom?
What are the effects of binge drinking?
What are the evolutionary advantages of empathy?
What is a crop circle?
What do real estate agents actually do?
What is the role of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation?
What is meant by an *invasive species*?
What is the difference between an agnostic and an atheist?

What is a teacher-to-teacher initiative?
What is unique about the environment in the Pacific Northwest?
What is a web comic?
What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
What makes a champion ballroom dancer?
What is the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)?
What is a wildlife-population analysis?
What is dwarfism?
What was it like to live on the Nebraskan prairie in the nineteenth century?

Why . . .

Why was the Korean War fought?
Why do some birth defects get detected, whereas others do not?
Why do a soil survey?
Why do cats sleep so much?
Why does mood matter?
Why does the hair on our head keep growing, whereas the hair on our arms does not?
Why is air pollution worse in some cities than in others?
Why do tomatoes go rotten so quickly?
Why is bigamy practiced in some cultures?
Why is laughter considered the "best medicine"?
Why are rates of sickle-cell anemia higher in African American populations?
Why did the suit become the costume of choice for business people?
Why is pure oxygen toxic to humans?
Why do babies suck their thumbs?
Why is the international date line located where it is?
Why do some cultures find insects a delicacy?
Why is the Louisiana Purchase an important part of American history?
Why is it so hard to climb Mt. Everest?
Why do bones get brittle as people age?
Why does newspaper circulation keep dropping?

Where . . .

Where are presidential public papers housed?
 Where is the Acoma Pueblo?
 Where is the hypothalamus located?
 Where is the geographic center of the United States?
 Where do old computers go?
 Where do urban legends come from?
 Where is the deepest part of the ocean?
 Where do fish go to sleep?
 Where is the ozone layer?
 Where does oil come from?
 Where do the tallest trees tend to grow?
 Where did Native Americans originate?
 Where is the beginning of the Mississippi River?
 Where is Grant's Tomb?
 Where is the cost of living the highest in the world?
 Where do platypuses live?
 Where are iPods manufactured?
 Where do black widow spiders like to make their webs?
 Where are the edges of the Sahara Desert?
 Where did the Hawaiian Islands come from?

When . . .

When was the Nuclear Regulatory Commission established?
 When did the first Chinese come to California?
 When were the Salem witch trials?
 When were clocks invented?
 When was the first animated film made?
 When will there be a vaccine for malaria?
 When do children recognize themselves as individuals?
 When did Persia become Iran?
 When did acid rain become an environmental issue?
 When did the dinosaurs disappear?
 When did women wear poodle skirts?
 When were the first cases of AIDS diagnosed?
 When was the first personal computer put on the market?
 When should you change the oil in your car?
 When was the printing press invented?
 When was the Dust Bowl?
 When are sharks most likely to attack people?
 When did the Beatles break up?
 When is noon?
 When was the Black Plague?

How . . .

How does the Transportation Security Administration make decisions on airport-security policy?
 How do you apply for a patent?
 How did the women's suffrage movement ultimately succeed?
 How do you start a small business?
 How do you play Dungeons and Dragons?
 How much money has the United States spent on the war on drugs?

How does natural family planning work?
 How do table manners vary across cultures?
 How are video games being used in learning situations?
 How many light-years away is a visible solar flare?
 How did Monty Python get started?
 How are flood plains managed?
 How does chat-room technology work?
 How did the phrase "We shall overcome" become associated with the civil rights movement?
 How do you prevent fetal alcohol syndrome?
 How will the United States change as the baby boomers begin retiring in large numbers?
 How does one file a lawsuit?
 How has the legalization of civil unions impacted the Vermont economy?
 How many mice does an average research lab use in a year?
 How is *hate crime* legally defined?

PERSUASIVE SPEECH TOPICS

A persuasive speech aims to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. A persuasive speaker comes up with a topic by taking a stand on a question of fact, value, or policy. Here are some ideas in each category to get you started.

Questions of Fact

These speeches argue whether something is true or not true, whether something happened or did not happen, or whether something exists or does not exist.

Police officers frequently rely on racial profiling when apprehending suspects.
 Certain foods really can boost your immunity.
 Bilingual education works.
 Sixteen-year-olds are ready for the responsibilities of driving.
 Caffeinated drinks do not make you dehydrated.
 Anyone can grow orchids.
 Butter is better for you than margarine.
 Homeopathic remedies do not work as well as Western medicines.
 Entrepreneurs are made, not born.
 Princess Diana was pregnant when she died.
 Reading in dim light is bad for your eyes.
 Moore's law will hold for at least another two decades.
 Pain medications are effective in reducing pain from cancer.
 Low self-esteem is not a factor in drug or alcohol abuse.
 We use only 10 percent of our brain power.

Questions of Value

These speeches argue whether something is right or wrong, whether something is good or bad, how much something is worth, how fair something is, or how important or useful something is.

Sex education is the responsibility of parents, not schools.
Gambling is enjoyable adult entertainment.
Parents should be able to choose the sex of their child if they can pay for the technology.
Arts education is just as important in our schools as are high test scores in reading and math.
The county attorney was right to post pictures on billboards of citizens arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.
Treasure your right to vote.
Carrying credit-card debt is perfectly fine.
Volunteering keeps communities alive.
Happiness is overrated.
Cosmetic surgery does not make for more beautiful bodies.
It's not fair to mentally challenged students to mainstream them into regular classrooms.
Doctors have an ethical obligation to do what's right for patients, not for drug companies.
No one should be able to hunt whales, even if it's part of one's traditional culture.
Colleges and universities have no right banning certain types of speech from campus.
The family dinner hour is something we should never lose.

Questions of Policy

These speeches argue programs of action—how things should or should not happen, proceed, or get done for an individual or a group or at a societal level.

Every city should have taxpayer-supported recycling efforts.
Become a blood donor.
The United States should conduct diplomatic relations with Hamas.
Genetically modified foods must be labeled as such.
Interracial adoptions should be freely allowed.
Farmers should be reimbursed with state funds for crops damaged by natural disasters.
The federal government should tax goods and services purchased over the Internet.
Reduce your carbon footprint.
America should ban religious clothing and symbols in classrooms, just as France did.
We must provide health insurance for any child whose parent cannot afford it.
Cameras should be allowed in courtrooms.
The number one priority for child welfare workers should be to keep children with their parents.
It should be illegal to drive while talking or texting on your cell phone.
Junk food should be slapped with a fat tax.

Glossary

absolute claim: An assertion that asks people to accept that something is permanent, complete, or in no way conditional. (p. 464)

action: The part of a narrative that explains what is happening. (p. 367)

active listening: A type of listening that requires a high level of energy to stay engaged in the communication interaction. (p. 67)

activity group: A type of group in which members share an interest or hobby. (p. R-2)

ad hominem fallacy: An occurrence of unsound reasoning wherein one person launches an irrelevant personal attack on the character of a person with an opposing point of view rather than addressing the competing argument itself. (p. 471)

adrenaline: A natural hormone that helps the body adjust to sudden stress; increased levels of adrenaline are what make the body feel “nervous” prior to a public speech. (p. 35)

agenda: A list of things to be accomplished during a group meeting. (p. R-6)

alliteration: A figure of speech that repeats an initial sound in a string of words. (p. 481)

analogical reasoning: A form of reasoning that considers the similarities between two things and then presumes that an unknown quality about one of them must be true because of a known quality in the other. (p. 467)

anecdotal evidence: A kind of evidence that is only one case in point and does not necessarily support a larger body of evidence. (pp. 180, 366)

appeal to fear fallacy: An occurrence of unsound reasoning that presents a claim in a way to produce fear, thereby gaining support for a different and perhaps unrelated claim; also known as a scare tactic. (p. 470)

appreciative listening: A level of listening wherein people listen for personal pleasure. (p. 70)

articulation: The clarity with which a speaker produces individual speech sounds. (p. 335)

assertion of fact: The thesis of a persuasive speech that argues whether something is true or not true,

whether something happened or did not happen, or whether something exists or did not exist. (p. 449)

assertion of policy: The thesis of a persuasive speech that argues programs of action—how things should or should not happen, proceed, or get done for an individual or a group or at a societal level. (p. 450)

assertion of value: The thesis of a persuasive speech that argues whether something is right or wrong, whether something is good or bad, how much something is worth, how fair something is, or how important or useful something is. (p. 449)

atmospheric visual: A piece of visual support that aims to create a mood or feeling. (p. 375)

attention material: The opening words of a speech used to capture the attention of the audience and draw them into the topic; it must be appropriate and relevant to the audience, topic, and occasion. (p. 228)

attitudinal data: Information about listeners’ attitudes, values, and beliefs that a speaker gathers prior to the speech as part of the audience analysis. (p. 117)

audience analysis: The process of gathering and analyzing demographic and attitudinal data about the audience with the intention of shaping the speech for that specific group of listeners. (pp. 21, 112)

audience connection: The technique of openly relating the content of a speech to the needs and wants of the listeners; it engages audience members and convinces them that the speech is worth their listening time. (p. 233)

auditory appeal: Something that engages an audience’s sense of hearing. (p. 411)

bandwagon fallacy: An occurrence of unsound reasoning that relies on peer pressure as the basis for supporting or rejecting a claim. (p. 472)

bar graph: A type of graph that uses vertical or horizontal lines on an x- and y-axis. (p. 381)

bibliography: A written list of all research sources used for a speech project. (p. 221)

blog: Web log; an Internet source that contains dated entries of commentary, opinion, or news on a given subject in reverse chronological order; it typically combines text, images, videos, and links to other relevant websites. (p. 154)

body: The middle section of the speech; the place where the thesis is developed. (p. 23)

body orientation: The position of the speaker's body in relation to the group of listeners. (p. 353)

brainstorming: A technique for generating a large number of ideas; it can be used for finding a speech topic or a solution to a problem. (p. 137)

brief example: One or two sentences that provide an instance of a larger idea. (p. 175)

causal pattern: A pattern of organization that focuses on either the causes or effects of something. (p. 194)

causal reasoning: A form of reasoning that attempts to connect two events according to a cause-and-effect relationship. One event is known, doable, or generally assumed, while the other event is unknown but assumed. (p. 466)

channel: The means by which messages and feedback are transmitted between speaker and audience. (p. 13)

character: A person in a narrative who creates action or to whom action happens. (p. 367)

charisma: A speaker's great personal charm or magnetic personality that draws the attention of listeners. (p. 419)

chart: A visual display that tracks or groups detailed information in summary form using words, numbers, and figures. (p. 379)

chronological pattern: A pattern of organization that follows a time arrangement and shows how events or ideas occur over time, either forward or backward. (p. 193)

civility: A code of decency based on showing respect, honesty, fairness, and tolerance to others; it enhances the speaker's relationship with the listeners. (pp. 20, 59)

claim: An assertion about a fact, value, or policy; the conclusion a speaker wants the listeners to draw and accept. (p. 461)

climax: The part of a narrative representing the peak of tension or the most exciting moment; it is followed by a resolution or conclusion. (p. 368)

clincher: The last set of words a speaker leaves with the audience; it is most effectively planned in advance and delivered with warmth and confidence. (p. 244)

closed question: A kind of question that is answered with a yes or a no. (p. 408)

coercion: Getting others to do things in a way that relies on threats, raw power, or the use of force. (p. 454)

collectivistic culture: A type of culture in which members tend to put the good of the group ahead of individual concerns. (p. R-3)

committee: A group of people brought together to perform work for a larger group or organization. (p. R-2)

communication orientation: An approach to public speaking that relies on the familiar goal of conveying ideas to other people; this approach is in contrast to a performance orientation, wherein speakers perceive the speech as a performance and the audience as a group of critics. (p. 37)

comparison pattern: A pattern of organization that teaches something new by showing the similarities between two seemingly unlike things, at least one of which is already familiar to the listener. (p. 196)

comprehensive listening: A level of listening at which people listen to learn or understand. (p. 72)

concept speech: A speech that looks at the intangibles of life—theories, ideas, impressions, attitudes, beliefs, and values that people cannot see or touch but nonetheless perceive, suppose, or imagine. (p. 439)

conclusion: The final part of the speech that summarizes the ideas communicated in the speech body and suggests a take-away. (pp. 24, 240)

conflict: The part of a narrative that introduces actions or complications leading to the climax. (p. 367)

consensus: A kind of voting in which every group member agrees on the final decision. (p. R-8)

considerateness: The goal of minimizing the information-processing demands on one's listeners. (p. 107)

context: The specific environment or situation in which the public speaking transaction takes place. (pp. 13, 123)

contrast pattern: A pattern of organization that teaches something new by showing the differences between two seemingly similar things, at least one of which is typically already familiar to the audience. (p. 196)

criteria: Measurements used by group members to evaluate potential solutions or decisions. (p. R-7)

critical listening: A level of listening at which people listen to analyze and evaluate the speaker's ideas. (p. 73)

database: An electronic collection of data on a single topic or variety of topics organized so the content can be easily accessed and managed. (p. 154)

decoder: A listener who assigns and creates meaning from the speaker's words and behaviors. (p. 11)

deductive reasoning: A form of reasoning that starts with a general principle and moves toward a specific instance. (p. 464)

definition: An explanation or clarification of a word, condition, idea, or expression. (p. 171)

demographic data: Statistics about the makeup of a given audience including, but not restricted to, information such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, income level, religious views, and education. (p. 117)

demographics: The characteristics of the audience, such as age, socioeconomic status, education level, and gender. (p. 113)

description: Words that bring an idea to life or create an image through expanded details. (p. 177)

designated leader: A group leader who is elected or appointed to the leadership position. (p. R-6)

dialect: Most often, a regional speech pattern used by a subgroup within a given population of speakers of the same language; represents a consistent pattern of pronunciation and syntax, word choice, pacing, rhythm, and expressions associated with such a subgroup. (p. 324)

discussion group: An Internet source that allows users to discuss topics of mutual interest; they are a good first place to go for researching attitudes and opinions. (p. 154)

disfluency: A disruption in the flow of words; includes stumblings, hesitations, and utterances such as *uh*, *like*, *um*. (p. 332)

distributed leadership: A type of leadership that is shared by several or all members of the group, each potentially contributing a skill or service to further the objectives of the group. (p. R-3)

doublespeak: Language that serves to intentionally hide, distort, or manipulate ideas. (p. 53)

educational group: A type of group in which people volunteer or are assigned to work with others to better understand a subject or complete an assignment. (p. R-2)

either/or fallacy: An occurrence of unsound reasoning that forces listeners to choose between two options when, in reality, more than two exist. (p. 471)

electronic eloquence: A contemporary persuasive theory that suggests that in the electronic (i.e., TV) age, successful speakers typically use narrative, self-disclosure, and visuals. (p. 455)

emblems: Movements or positions of the hands, head, and other body parts that have precise meaning and are immediately understood by others in the communicator's culture or co-culture. (p. 350)

emergent leader: A type of leader who starts out as a group participant but ultimately surfaces as a leader. (p. R-6)

emotional proof: A form of support that references human emotions. (p. 179)

emotional tone: The quality of a speaker's voice that communicates his or her feelings. (p. 332)

empathic listening: A level of listening at which people listen to identify and relate to another person's feelings. (p. 71)

encoder: The speaker who creates meaning by taking ideas and translating them into various perceptible codes such as words, gestures, facial expressions, pictures, and tone of voice; the sender. (p. 11)

enhancing visual: A piece of visual support that shows in images information that a speaker is already discussing through language. (p. 375)

enthymeme: A form of deductive reasoning that claims probable or likely relationships between the major premise and minor premise; a kind of a syllogism. (p. 465)

ethics: Standards of right and wrong, according to a particular society; a speaker who is perceived as ethical is more likely to enjoy the audience's trust, respect, and confidence. (pp. 20, 47)

ethnocentrism: A tendency to judge other cultures primarily from the viewpoint of one's own culture, often reflecting an attitude of superiority. (p. 113)

ethos: A perceived quality based on a speaker's character that directly influences the listeners' willingness to receive and accept the speaker's ideas. It's one of three classical persuasive strategies identified by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. (pp. 416, 454)

event speech: A speech describing an occasion or event that has happened, is happening, or will happen. (p. 438)

evidence: Material that supports or backs up a claim. (p. 462)

example: A form of support that provides a particular illustration of a broader concept; it is a specific instance of a general case. (p. 175)

expectancy-outcome values theory: A contemporary persuasive theory that says that people consciously evaluate the potential costs and benefits—the value—of taking or not taking a particular action. (p. 455)

expectancy-violation theory: A contemporary persuasive theory that notes that people can attract attention when their words or actions catch others by surprise (or violate their expectations). (p. 456)

expert power: A type of power earned by one's knowledge and abilities. (p. R-5)

expert testimony: Direct words from people with authority on a topic or in a field. (p. 181)

extemporaneous method: A method of delivery wherein the speaker talks conversationally from prepared key words and phrases in his or her speaking notes. (p. 267)

extended example: A well-developed and possibly lengthy illustration of a broad concept; it often has a plot and some characters. (p. 177)

fact: Something that can be proven to be true or to have happened; raw verifiable data, as opposed to an interpretation of data. (p. 170)

fair use: A doctrine of U.S. copyright law that permits the limited use of copyrighted materials—as for criticism, commentary, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research—without the granted permission from the rights holder; the distinction between copyright infringement and fair use may be ambiguous and not easily defined. (p. 58)

fallacy: An occurrence of unsound reasoning. (p. 469)

false thesis: A sentence that appears to be a thesis statement but fails to narrow the topic and provide a clear direction for how the body of the speech will be developed. (p. 142)

feedback: Verbal and nonverbal messages sent from a listener, or listeners, to the speaker. (p. 13)

feed-forward: A message that tells listeners that an important message, such as the thesis or a main point, is about to occur. (p. 235)

fighting words: Intimidating speech directed at a specific individual in a face-to-face confrontation; in particular, speech that inflicts injury or incites an immediate breach of the peace. (p. 49)

First Amendment: A section of the United States Constitution that provides, in part, protection for free, uncensored speech. (p. 49)

flow chart: A type of chart that shows the sequence of operations in a process. (p. 379)

fluency: The smoothness of a speaker's delivery; the ease with which the words and sentences flow together. (p. 334)

frame of reference: An individual worldview based on background, age, education, gender, values, politics, economic status, culture, occupation, health, and ethnicity that influences the creation of the speaker's message and the listener's interpretation of the message. (p. 12)

frames: Mental constructs that shape the way people see the world. (p. 456)

framing: A speaker's purposeful use of language that intends to capitalize on particular images or other kinds of knowledge that listeners possess; also known as loaded language. (p. 456)

Freedom of Information Act: Enacted in 1966, it ensures access to federal documents outside the boundaries of nine specific exemptions. (p. 160)

general speech purpose: The broad intention of the speech—to inform, to persuade, or to mark a special occasion. (p. 21)

global plagiarism: Stealing another person's work in its entirety and passing it off as one's own. (p. 55)

graph or data-driven graph: A diagram that communicates numerical relationships; typically a data graph calculated by a software program. (p. 380)

grouphate: Negative feelings toward group participation. (p. R-4)

groupthink: A kind of thinking in which the desire for unanimity discourages group members from taking a realistic look at a group task or problem; groupthink may cause group members to suppress confrontation, disagreement, and full analysis of the situation. (p. R-4)

gustatory appeal: Something that engages an audience's sense of taste. (p. 411)

hate speech: Words that harass or promote discrimination or violence against social or ethnic groups of people or a member of such a group. (p. 49)

hearing: An involuntary, biological process that occurs when a person's ears detect a sound. (p. 67)

heckler: A person in the audience who draws attention away from the speaker by interrupting with inappropriate or rude questions or comments. (p. 251)

heterosexist language: Words or phrases that lead a listener to perceive the speaker as organizing his or her world based on the premise that all people are heterosexual. (p. 315)

hierarchy of needs: See **Maslow's hierarchy of needs**.

homogeneous audience: A group that shares one or more important demographic or attitudinal characteristic. (p. 120)

homophobic language: Words or phrases that use homosexuality as a target of humor or disgust. (p. 315)

how pattern: A pattern of organization that persuades listeners to follow (or abandon) certain ways of thinking or behavior. (p. 203)

hyperbole: A figure of speech using obviously exaggerated statements for emphasis. (p. 481)

hypothetical example: An illustration that looks into an unknown past or future; it shows what could have been or could be. (p. 177)

hypothetical narrative: An invented story that conceptualizes past or future events or outcomes. (p. 368)

idiolect: An individual's way of speaking that makes him or her stand out among other speakers of a dialect. (p. 326)

I-language: A way to engage the audience through the use of first-person pronouns such as *me*, *I*, and *our*. (p. 418)

illustrative support: Forms of support that clarify, expand on, or provide more information for listeners; includes examples, descriptions, and explanations. (p. 169)

illustrators: Movements of the hands, head, and other body parts that accompany speech but have no meaning in and of themselves (as opposed to emblems); illustrators make a speaker more animated and thus appealing to listeners. (p. 350)

immediacy: A measure of closeness or intimacy, displayed through nonverbal behaviors, between a speaker and the listeners. (p. 346)

important conversation: The style of conversation used when talking to someone you respect; it is the style of conversation preferred for most public speaking situations. (pp. 40, 103)

impromptu method: A method of delivery wherein the speaker presents with little or no preparation; also known as improvising, ad-libbing, or speaking off the cuff. (p. 269)

inclusive language: Words and phrases that act as a bridge to an audience, thereby increasing the speaker's chances of making a connection; this kind of language tells an audience that all listeners are welcomed and respected. (p. 314)

incremental plagiarism: Including parts of another person's work into your own without citing the original source. (p. 55)

individualistic culture: A type of culture in which members tend to value the individual over the group. (p. R-3)

inductive reasoning: A form of reasoning that starts with a specific instance and moves to a general principle. (p. 463)

inflection: The manipulation of vocal pitch to communicate a specific meaning. (p. 337)

informative speaking: See **speech to inform**.

internal preview: A type of transition that forecasts the next idea in the body of the speech. (p. 258)

internal summary: A type of transition that points to the importance of an idea just discussed. (p. 258)

interpersonal communication: The exchange of messages between two people who have some sort of relationship with one another. (p. 10)

introduction: The first major part of the speech wherein the speaker prepares the listeners for the body of the speech. (p. 24)

jargon: Language of a technical nature, specific to a profession or hobby, that might have little meaning outside of that group. (p. 317)

kinesics: A category of nonverbal communication encompassing body movements; it includes eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and gestures. (p. 344)

lay testimony: Words from people who have first-hand knowledge or experience but are not considered experts in their field. (p. 181)

lead feet: A mental trick whereby speakers imagine that their feet are made of lead so heavy that they could not move even if they wanted to; it helps keep feet planted at the conclusion of a speech. (p. 246)

legitimate power: A type of power enjoyed when a person holds a particular position or office. (p. R-5)

line graph: A type of graph that uses single or multiple lines to show trends over time. (p. 381)

linking transition: A type of transition that takes listeners from one part of the structure to the next, such as from the introduction to the body or from one idea to the next; also known as a bridge. (p. 258)

listenability: The degree to which a speech is easy to listen to; achieved through speaker actions that make it easier for the audience to listen. (pp. 20, 100)

listening: A voluntary, mental process wherein a person receives a stimulus, chooses to attend to it, assigns it meaning, and responds to it. (p. 67)

literal question: A concrete question that requests an actual answer. (p. 229)

literate (or written) style: A style of language appropriately used when expressing ideas through the written word; this style is in contrast to the oral (or conversational) style people use when talking with one another. (p. 101)

logos: An appeal to the logical mind; one of three classical persuasive strategies identified by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. (p. 461)

main point: A major idea within the speech that supports the thesis; main points are related to one another, are organized according to a recognizable pattern, and comprise the body of the speech. (pp. 23, 212)

major premise: A general principle containing a relationship between two terms; part of a deductive argument. (p. 464)

manuscript method: A method of delivery wherein the speaker reads from a fully prepared text. (p. 272)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs: A theory by Abraham Maslow that says that people are motivated by a range of needs; speakers can apply this theory for persuasive effect. (p. 455)

mass communication: The delivery of a message from one source to a large audience through a form of mass media. (p. 10)

memorized method: A method of delivery wherein the speaker commits a prepared manuscript to memory and then recites it. (p. 276)

message: The verbal and nonverbal content that the speaker transmits to listeners. (p. 12)

meta-listener: A listener who is consciously aware of himself or herself engaging in the listening process. (p. 71)

metaphor: A figure of speech that compares two things by stating or suggesting that one thing represents (rather than is like) another. (p. 481)

mind map: A developmental technique for illustrating, linking, and documenting ideas and showing how they are connected. (p. 137)

minor premise: A specific instance about one of the terms in the major premise; part of a deductive argument. (p. 464)

mnemonic device: A memory trick or aid that need only make sense to an individual; it can help a speaker memorize key words for an outline. (p. 279)

model: A three-dimensional piece of visual support that shows a scaled-down version of an object too large or too dangerous to bring to the speaking event. (p. 386)

monopitch (or monotone): A speaking voice with little variety in tone or inflection. (p. 337)

Monroe's motivated sequence: A format for persuasive speakers who want listeners to reconsider a predisposition, firm up a present commitment, or move to action; the sequence relies on five steps—attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action. (p. 205)

muscle memory: An ability to carry out a well-practiced motion; it illustrates that practice binds the material to the body, helping the speaker remember what to say and do while presenting. (p. 298)

narrative: A story that a speaker tells to engage listeners and to support a point; the narrative may be one part of the speech or may comprise the entire speech. (p. 360)

narrowed topic: A limited angle on the general topic. (p. 189)

noise: Anything that prevents the audience and the speaker from understanding each other's messages. (p. 13)

noninclusive language: Words or phrases that rely on negative stereotypes, derogatory remarks, or offensive terms; it is language that makes others feel inferior. (p. 314)

nonverbal communication: A type of communication expressed without words. (p. 343)

objective support: Forms of support that are, for the most part, agreed on, measurable, observable, and consistent; includes facts, definitions, and statistics. (p. 170)

object speech: A speech that teaches the listeners about something visible, audible, or tangible. (p. 436)

olfactory appeal: Something that engages an audience's sense of smell. (p. 411)

onomatopoeia: A figure of speech that enriches imagery by using words that sound like what they describe. (p. 481)

open-source website: A type of website where any and all are invited to create or edit most entries. (p. 157)

oral (or conversational) style: The style of language people rely on when talking with one another; this style is in contrast to the literate style people use when expressing ideas through the written word. (p. 101)

oratory: A manner of speaking studied and practiced by Greek and Roman scholars; it focused on speaking with competence, style, and grace for persuasive purposes. Today, it refers to longer, more formal styled speeches of all kinds. (p. 435)

organizational chart: A type of chart that shows how authority and supervision are distributed within a company or organization. (p. 379)

organizing term: The word in the thesis that tells the listeners how the speaker plans to develop the narrowed topic. (p. 189)

ownership: An intimacy between the speaker and his or her ideas; it is displayed through familiarity with the content and confidence in delivery. (p. 298)

pace: The speed at which a speaker produces language. (p. 336)

paralanguage: The communicative qualities of the human voice; they include pace, pitch, volume, and emotional tone. (p. 331)

parallel idea: An idea within the speech that is equal in importance to another idea. (p. 214)

paraphrase: A rewording of another person's ideas in simpler terms; it changes the order of the other person's words but not the content. (pp. 183, 250)

passive listening: A type of listening that takes relatively little energy; paying half-hearted attention to incoming stimuli either by choice or by habit. (p. 67)

patchwork plagiarism: Taking parts of several research sources, patching them together as a new whole, and passing it off as one's own. (p. 55)

pathos: An appeal to an audience's emotions; one of three classical persuasive strategies identified by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. (p. 454)

pattern of organization: The arrangement of the main points in the speech body. (p. 190)

perception: The brain's process of gaining awareness through the organization and interpretation of sensory input; interpretation of the world that is based on such sensory input. (p. 34)

performance orientation: An approach to public speaking wherein the speaker perceives the speech as a performance and the audience as a group of critics; this approach is in contrast to a communication orientation, wherein the speaker relies on the familiar goal of conveying ideas to other people. (p. 36)

personal experience: A circumstance from someone's life that is shared to support a larger point. (p. 180)

personal-growth group: A type of group in which members provide support to each other as each seeks understanding, new skills, comfort, or strength during a challenging time. (p. R-2)

personal speaking goal: One specific, measurable skill that a speaker focuses on for a particular presentation for continued speaking improvement. (p. 83)

persuasion: The act of attempting to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. (p. 447)

persuasive speaking: See **speech to persuade**.

photo illustration: A created image from one or more photographs. (p. 381)

physical context: The physical characteristics of the speaking space such as location, size, lighting, and acoustical properties. (p. 124)

pie graph: A graph that shows how one-hundred percent of something is broken down into smaller segments. (p. 380)

pitch: The high or low tone of a speaker's voice, as on a musical scale. (p. 337)

plagiarism: Attempting to pass off another person's idea, or a close imitation of it, as one's own. (p. 55)

polled data: Information gathered, typically by a polling organization, about the opinions and habits of a group of people. (p. 118)

power of the podium: A symbol of truth and authority that speakers enjoy; speakers have a responsibility to use this power ethically throughout the speechmaking process. (p. 51)

practice: The act of getting one's language, voice, and body in sync with the speech organization and content; preferred to the term *rehearsal*, with its performative connotations. (p. 298)

preparation outline: An outline that presents a speaker's thoughts in one place; it lets the speaker plan the order of the ideas while ensuring that those ideas relate to one another logically, are well balanced, and are adequately supported. (pp. 23, 212)

primary research: Research that is collected directly from experiments, case studies, surveys, observation, and interviews. (p. 151)

problem-solution pattern: A persuasive pattern of organization that defines a problem and offers a feasible solution for it. (p. 204)

problem-solving group: A type of group in which people address some sort of issue or challenge. (p. R-2)

process speech: A speech that describes a series of actions or events that result in a specific outcome or end product. (p. 438)

pronunciation: The way a speaker forms the sound of a word—where the stress is and how many syllables there are. (p. 324)

proxemics: A category of nonverbal communication defined by interpersonal distance; how close or how far a speaker stands from the audience. (p. 352)

pseudo-listening: Having the appearance of listening without actually being engaged; hearing (physiological) without paying attention (psychological). (p. 69)

psychological context: The moods and frames of mind of the people engaged in the public speaking transaction. (p. 126)

public memory: A contemporary persuasive theory that points to the power of TV, music, radio, film, and memorials to persuade people about the past and the way they remember it. (p. 455)

public speaking: The exchange of messages between one speaker and an identified set of listeners for a specific purpose on a specific occasion. (p. 10)

Q&A: “Question-and-answer” session, wherein audience members query the speaker or make comments on the speaker’s content at the end of the speech. (p. 246)

racist language: Words and phrases that lead a listener to perceive the speaker as organizing his or her world in a racially prejudiced manner. (p. 315)

reasoning: Using a sufficient amount of true (or probable) and relevant evidence arranged logically to support a claim. (p. 461)

reasoning backward: Arguing from effect to cause during causal reasoning. (p. 466)

reasoning forward: Arguing from cause to effect during causal reasoning. (p. 466)

receiver: The person who receives the sender’s message; an audience member; a listener. (p. 11)

red herring fallacy: An occurrence of unsound reasoning that raises an irrelevant topic in order to divert attention from the original issue. (p. 472)

referent power: A type of power that comes from possessing qualities that others find attractive. (p. R-5)

reflective-thinking process: A well-defined five-step process for making a meaningful group decision. (p. R-7)

relationship-oriented role: A type of group role that helps group members work well together. (p. R-5)

repetition: A figure of speech that uses a recurring word or phrase. (p. 481)

resolution: The part of a narrative, after the climax, where the conflict is resolved. (p. 368)

rhetoric: Public speaking, especially for persuasive purposes. (p. 14)

rhetorical participation: The result of a speaker inviting listeners to contemplate an issue, consider a scenario, reflect on a value, or mull over a proposal without making a verbal response. (p. 410)

rhetorical question: A question that inspires thought without requiring an answer. (p. 229)

scene: The part of a narrative that explains where and when the action is taking place. (p. 367)

search engine: A software program that lets users access information about a given topic; Google, Yahoo! and MSN are among the most popular search engines. (p. 152)

secondary research: Research that is gathered, collected, or organized from existing sources. (p. 152)

self-deprecating humor: A type of humor that uses oneself as the object of the humor; it is one of the most successful types of humor for public speaking, especially for Western audiences. (pp. 229, 407)

self-serving role: A type of group role that serves the individual at the expense of the group. (p. R-5)

sender: A person motivated to send a message; the speaker. (p. 11)

setup: The part of a narrative where the character(s) and scene are introduced and the action starts. (p. 367)

sexist language: Words and phrases that lead a listener to perceive the speaker as organizing his or her world based on sex or gender. (p. 314)

signpost: A quick word or phrase that indicates to listeners where the speaker is in the speech or the relationship of one idea to the next; a signpost comes in the form of a number, a common transition word, a short phrase, or a question. (p. 258)

simile: A figure of speech that compares two things by using the word *like* or *as*. (p. 481)

slander: False statements that defame another person’s character, potentially harming that person’s standing in the community or at work. (p. 49)

slang: Words used and immediately understood within a specific group, be it a small collection of friends, a city, a region, a co-culture, or a country. (p. 317)

slideware: Presentation software, such as PowerPoint or Keynote. (p. 387)

slippery-slope fallacy: An occurrence of unsound reasoning that argues an inevitable connection from one event to another, bypassing possible or probable links that may or may not exist. (p. 470)

small group: A relatively small number of individuals who work together toward an identified goal while influencing each other during the process. (p. R-2)

small group communication: The exchange of messages between a small number of people gathered for a specific purpose. (p. 10)

spatial pattern: A pattern of organization that discusses the topic according to the way things fit together in a physical space of any size; the supporting points relate to each other according to a geographical pattern or a relative physical relationship such as top to bottom, east to west, inside to outside. (p. 198)

speaker credibility: A perceived quality a speaker earns through displaying knowledge, preparation, confidence, and a commitment to ethics and civility. (pp. 234, 416)

speaker's energy: The preferred label (rather than "nervousness" or "anxiety") for the rush of adrenaline many speakers feel prior to a public speech. (p. 39)

speaking logistics: The details of the speaking event, including the date, time, and schedule of events and speakers. (p. 300)

speaking notes: The set of notes prepared from a preparation outline a few days in advance of the presentation; they consist of the words, phrases, and symbols the speaker needs to remember what to say while speaking. (p. 284)

speaking outline: A briefer version of the preparation outline from which the speaker practices and perhaps even presents; it contains only notations of the speech ideas in the order they'll be presented. (p. 25)

special-occasion speaking: See **speech to mark a special occasion**.

speech of acceptance: A special-occasion speech given by someone receiving an award or honor. (p. 484)

speech of commemoration: A special-occasion speech that recognizes an event, a place, or an idea. (p. 483)

speech of introduction: A special-occasion speech that prepares an audience for an upcoming speaker or event. (p. 482)

speech of tribute: A special-occasion speech that pays honor or respect to another person. (p. 483)

speech to inform: One of three general kinds of speeches; it helps listeners understand new or useful ideas from the world around them. (pp. 132, 435)

speech to inspire: A special-occasion speech that encourages, moves, or rouses listeners to create positive change. (p. 484)

speech to mark a special occasion: One of three general kinds of speeches; examples include the celebration of important people, places, or events and speeches of inspiration. (pp. 133, 477)

speech to persuade: One of three general kinds of speeches; it aims to create, change, or reinforce the thinking or actions of others. (p. 132)

statistics: Numerical data that describe some sort of relationship. (p. 172)

Strategy Keys: One category of listenability keys; listener-centered choices a speaker makes in advance of the presentation about the topic, audience, and occasion. (p. 27)

Structure Keys: One category of listenability keys; speaker actions that organize the speech ideas and communicate them in a way that listeners can follow and understand. (p. 27)

Style Keys: One category of listenability keys; speaker actions that create the delivery of the speech. (p. 27)

subjective support: Forms of support that are based on thoughts, opinions, experience, or feelings; includes emotional proof and personal experience. (p. 179)

subordinate idea: An idea within the speech that supports another idea; it has less weight than a superior idea. (p. 214)

subpoint: A point within the speech outline that supports a main point. (p. 212)

substituting visual: A piece of visual support that takes information a speaker could discuss through language but instead shows only through images. (p. 375)

sub-subpoint: A point within the speech outline that supports a subpoint. (p. 212)

superior idea: An idea within the speech that needs other ideas to support it; it has more weight than a subordinate idea. (p. 214)

Support Keys: One category of listenability keys; speaker actions that substantiate, enhance, and reinforce the message in a way that engages listeners and helps them understand, believe, or act. (p. 27)

SWOT analysis: A tool that businesses and organizations use to distinguish themselves from their competitors and successfully compete in their markets according to their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Public speakers can use a version of this tool to help identify talents and opportunities in public speaking. (p. 81)

syllogism: A form of deductive reasoning that claims absolute relationships between the major premise and minor premise. (p. 464)

tactile appeal: Something that engages an audience's sense of touch. (p. 411)

take-away: A suggestion for further thesis-related thought or action, given in the conclusion. (pp. 24, 240)

task role: A type of group role that helps the group achieve its mission. (p. R-5)

teleprompter: A device displaying a prepared text on a screen at the speaker's eye level, giving listeners the impression of eye contact; the speaker reads his or her speech from the teleprompter. (p. 272)

temporal context: The point at which a speech is given, relative to the time of day, to the time in history, or to other presentations on the same topic. (p. 125)

testimony: Words from other people that support an idea a speaker is trying to make. (p. 181)

thesis: The one or two sentences typically offered in the introduction of a speech that state exactly what the listeners should know, do, or believe by the end of the speech; the point the speaker is trying to make and how he or she intends to make it. (pp. 22, 141)

time limit: The allotted window of time a speaker has to present. (p. 300)

timeline: A kind of chart that shows key events arranged chronologically. (p. 380)

time management: Making effective use of time when faced with conflicting priorities or limited time in which to act. (p. 303)

toast: A special-occasion speech that briefly honors a person or an event. (p. 481)

topic: The subject matter of the speech. (pp. 21, 131)

topical pattern: A pattern of organization that divides the topic into subclasses or subtopics based on their similarity; also known as classification or division pattern. (p. 191)

transactional communication: A communication situation in which messages flow in two directions simultaneously, with the speaker and the listeners both acting as senders and receivers. (p. 10)

transition: Overt verbal cues that help listeners follow the progression and relationship of ideas within the speech. (p. 256)

triggers: The key words and phrases on speaking notes that prompt the speaker; used in extemporaneous and impromptu speaking. (p. 267)

uptalk: A pattern of uttering statements with an upward inflection, as if asking a question. (p. 338)

urban legend: Stories that many or most people believe to be true but are not. (p. 368)

verbal junk: Utterances such as *uh*, *like*, *um*. (p. 332)

verbatim: Corresponding to something word-for-word; in public speaking, it typically refers to reading or memorizing a manuscript word-for-word. (p. 272)

visual appeal: Something that engages an audience's sense of sight. (p. 411)

volume: How loud or how soft a speaker's voice is. (p. 333)

why pattern: A persuasive pattern of organization that justifies the thesis by arguing reasons why listeners should adopt, reject, or reinforce beliefs or do what the speaker is attempting to convince them to do (or not do). (p. 201)

You-language: A way to engage the audience through the use of listener-centered pronouns such as *you* and *yours*. (p. 403)

Chapter Notes

Chapter 1

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