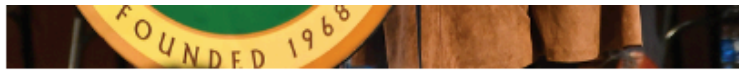


CHAPTER 9

Page 154

Organizing the Body of the Speech





Paras Griffin/Getty Images

- 📄 **Organization Is Important**
- 📄 **Main Points**
- 📄 **Supporting Materials**
- 📄 **Connectives**

Think about shopping in a store such as IKEA, Target, or Best Buy. Many of the items for sale are *organizers*—drawer organizers, desk organizers, closet organizers, kitchen organizers, bathroom organizers, office organizers, audio and video organizers. There is even a nationwide retail chain—The Container Store—devoted entirely to keeping things organized.

Why all this quest for organization? Obviously, when the objects you possess are well organized, they serve you better. Organization allows you to see what you have and to put your hands immediately on the garment, the tool, the piece of paper, the video you want without a frenzied search.

Much the same is true of your speeches. If they are well organized, they will serve you better. Organization allows you—and your listeners—to see what ideas you have and to put mental “hands” on the most important ones.

Organization Is Important

In a classic study, a college professor took a well-organized speech and scrambled it by randomly changing the order of its sentences. He then had a speaker deliver the original version to one group of listeners and the scrambled version to another group. After the speeches, he gave a test to see how well each group understood what they had heard. Not surprisingly, the group that heard the original, unscrambled speech scored much higher than the other group.¹

A few years later, two professors repeated the same experiment at another school. But instead of testing how well the listeners comprehended each speech, they tested to see what effects the speeches had on the listeners' attitudes toward the speakers. They found that people who heard the well-organized speech believed the speaker to be much more competent and trustworthy than did those who heard the scrambled speech.²

These are just two of many studies that show the importance of organization in effective speechmaking.³ Listeners demand coherence. Unlike readers, they cannot flip back to a previous page if they have trouble grasping a speaker's ideas. In this respect a speech is much like a movie. Just as a director must be sure viewers can follow the plot of a film from beginning to end, so must a speaker be sure listeners can follow the progression of ideas in a speech from beginning to end. This requires that speeches be organized **strategically**. They should be put together in particular ways to achieve particular results with particular audiences.

Speech organization is important for other reasons as well. As we saw in  **Chapter 1**, it is closely connected to critical thinking. When you work to organize your speeches, you gain practice in the general skill of establishing clear relationships among your ideas. This skill will serve you well throughout your college days and in almost any career you may choose. In addition, using a clear, specific method of speech organization can boost your confidence as a speaker and improve your ability to deliver a message fluently.

The first step in developing a strong sense of speech organization is to gain command of the three basic parts of a speech—introduction, body, and conclusion—and the strategic role of each. In this chapter we deal with the body of the speech. The next chapter will take up the introduction and the conclusion.

There are good reasons for talking first about the body of the speech. The body is the longest and most important part. Also, you will usually prepare the body first. It is easier to create an effective introduction after you know exactly what you will say in the body.

The process of organizing the body of a speech begins when you determine the main points.

Main Points

The **main points** are the central features of your speech. You should select them carefully, phrase them precisely, and arrange them strategically. Here are the main points of a student speech about the uses of hypnosis:

Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about some of the major uses of hypnosis.

Central Idea:

Three major uses of hypnosis today are to control pain in surgery, to help people stop smoking, and to help students improve their academic performance.

Main Points:

- I. Hypnosis is used in surgery as an adjunct to chemical anesthesia.
- II. Hypnosis is used to help people stop smoking.
- III. Hypnosis is used to help students improve their academic performance.

Try to Use the Same Pattern of Wording for Main Points

Consider the following main points for an informative speech about the benefits of karate:

Ineffective

- I. Karate gives you better mental discipline.
- II. You will become physically stronger through karate.
- III. Taking karate lessons will teach you self-defense.

More Effective

- I. Karate improves your mental discipline.
- II. Karate increases your physical strength.
- III. Karate teaches you self-defense.

The set of main points on the right follows a consistent pattern of wording throughout. Therefore, it is easier to understand and easier to remember than the set on the left.

You will find that it is not always possible to use this kind of parallel wording. Some speeches just don't lend themselves to such a tidy arrangement. But try to keep the wording parallel when you can; it's a good way to make your main points stand out from the details surrounding them.

Balance the Amount of Time Devoted to Main Points

Because your main points are so important, you want to be sure they all receive enough emphasis to be clear and convincing. This means allowing sufficient time to develop each main point. Suppose you discover that the proportion of time devoted to your main points is something like this:

- I. 85 percent
- II. 10 percent
- III. 5 percent

A breakdown of this sort indicates one of two things. Either points II and III aren't really *main* points and you have only one main point, or points II and III haven't been given the attention they need. If the latter, you should revise the body of the speech to bring the main points into better balance.

This is not to say that all main points must receive exactly equal emphasis, but only that they should be roughly balanced. For example, either of the following would be fine:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| I. 30 percent | I. 20 percent |
| II. 40 percent | II. 30 percent |
| III. 30 percent | III. 50 percent |
-

The amount of time spent on each main point depends on the amount and complexity of supporting materials for each point.

Supporting Materials

By themselves, main points are only assertions. As we saw in [Chapter 8](#), listeners need supporting materials to accept what a speaker says. The following outline demonstrates how **supporting materials** can be integrated into the body of a speech. In [Chapter 11](#), we'll look at requirements for a complete speech outline. For now, concentrate on how the supporting materials relate to the main points.

I. Hypnosis is used in surgery as an adjunct to chemical anesthesia

Page 165

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A. Hypnosis reduces both the physical and psychological aspects of pain.

1. Hypnosis can double a person's pain threshold.
2. It also reduces the fear that intensifies physical pain.

B. Hypnosis is most useful in cases when the patient is known to have problems with general anesthesia.

1. Quotation from Dr. Harold Wain of the Mayo Clinic.
2. Story of Linda Kuay.
3. Statistics from *Psychology Today*.

II. Hypnosis is used to help people stop smoking.

A. Many therapists utilize hypnosis to help people break their addiction to cigarettes.

1. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services considers hypnosis a safe and effective means of stopping smoking.
2. Success rates are as high as 70 percent.
 - a. Story of Alex Hamilton.
 - b. Quotation from New York psychiatrist Dr. Herbert Spiegel.

B. Hypnosis does not work for all smokers.

1. A person must want to stop smoking for hypnosis to work.
2. A person must also be responsive to hypnotic suggestion.

III. Hypnosis is used to help students improve their academic performance.

A. Hypnosis enables people to use their minds more effectively.

1. The conscious mind utilizes about 10 percent of a person's mental ability.
2. Hypnosis allows people to tap more of their mental power.

B. Studies show that hypnosis can help people overcome many obstacles to academic success.

1. It improves ability to concentrate.
2. It increases reading speed.
3. It reduces test anxiety.

In  **Chapter 8**, we discussed the major kinds of supporting materials and how to use them. Here, we need stress only the importance of *organizing* your supporting materials so they are directly relevant to the main points they are supposed to support. Misplaced supporting materials are confusing. Here's an example:

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points they are supposed to support. Misplaced supporting materials are confusing. Here's an example:

I. There are several reasons why people immigrate to the United States.

- A. Over the years, millions of people have immigrated to the United States.
- B. Many people immigrate in search of economic opportunity.
- C. Others immigrate to attain political freedom.
- D. Still others immigrate to escape religious persecution.

The main point deals with the reasons immigrants come to the United States, as do supporting points B, C, and D. Supporting point A ("Over the years, millions of people have immigrated to the United States") does not. It is out of place and should not be included with this main point.

If you find such a situation in your own speeches, try to reorganize your supporting points under appropriate main points, like this:

Page 166

I. Over the years, millions of people have immigrated to the United States.

- A. Since the Civil War, 75 million people have immigrated to the United States.
- B. Today there are 45 million Americans who were born in other countries.

II. There are several reasons why people immigrate to the United States.

- A. Many people immigrate in search of economic opportunity.
- B. Others immigrate to attain political freedom.
- C. Still others immigrate to escape religious persecution.

Now you have two supporting points to back up your "millions of people" point and three supporting points to back up your "reasons" point.

Once you have organized your main points and supporting points, you must give attention to the third element in the body of a speech—connectives.



Checklist

Main Points

YES	NO
-----	----

- ☐ ☐ 1. Does the body of my speech contain two to five main points?
- ☐ ☐ 2. Are my main points organized according to one of the following methods

- ☐ ☐ 2. Are my main points organized according to one of the following methods of organization?
 - Chronological order
 - Spatial order
 - Causal order
 - Topical order
 - Problem-solution order
 - ☐ ☐ 3. Are my main points clearly separate from one another?
 - ☐ ☐ 4. As much as possible, have I used the same pattern of wording for all my main points?
 - ☐ ☐ 5. Have I roughly balanced the amount of time devoted to each main point?
 - ☐ ☐ 6. Is each main point backed up with strong, credible supporting materials?
 - ☐ ☐ 7. Do I use connectives to make sure my audience knows when I am moving from one main point to another?
-

If you find such a situation in your own speeches, try to reorganize your supporting points under appropriate main points, like this:

- I. Over the years, millions of people have immigrated to the United States.
 - A. Since the Civil War, 75 million people have immigrated to the United States.
 - B. Today there are 45 million Americans who were born in other countries.
- II. There are several reasons why people immigrate to the United States.
 - A. Many people immigrate in search of economic opportunity.
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Checklist
Main Points

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YES

NO

several times, had a well-defined central idea, three sharp main points, and strong evidence to support her position. But when Sierra delivered the speech, she said “All right” every time she moved from one thought to the next. After a while, her classmates started counting. By the end of the speech, most were too busy waiting for the next “All right” to pay attention to Sierra’s message. Afterward, Sierra said, “I never even thought about saying ‘All right.’ I guess it just popped out when I didn’t know what else to say.”

We all have stock phrases that we use to fill the space between thoughts. In casual conversation they are seldom troublesome. But in speechmaking they distract listeners by calling attention to themselves.

Page 167

What Sierra’s speech lacked were strong *connectives*—words or phrases that join one thought to another and indicate the relationship between them. Without connectives, a speech is disjointed and uncoordinated—much as a person would be without ligaments and tendons to join the bones and hold the organs in place. Four types of speech connectives are transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

Transitions

Transitions are words or phrases that indicate when a speaker has just completed one thought and is moving on to another. Technically, transitions state both the idea the speaker is leaving and the idea she or he is coming up to. In the following examples, the transitional phrases are underlined:

Now that we have a clear understanding of the problem, let me share the solution with you.

I have spoken so far of César Chávez the community organizer, but it was his work as a labor leader that truly etched his name into American history.

Keeping these points in mind about sign language, let's return to the sentence I started with and see if we can learn the signs for "You are my friend."

Notice how these phrases remind the listener of the thought just completed, and reveal the thought about to be developed.

Internal Previews

Internal previews let the audience know what the speaker will take up next, but they are more detailed than transitions. In effect, an internal preview works just like the preview statement in a speech introduction, except that it comes in the body of the speech—usually as the speaker is starting to discuss a main point. For example:

In discussing how Asian Americans have been stereotyped in the mass media, we'll look first at the origins of the problem and second at its continuing impact today.

After hearing this, the audience knows exactly what to listen for as the speaker develops the “problem” main point.

Internal previews are often combined with transitions. For example:

[*Transition*]: Now that we have seen how serious the problem of faulty credit reports is, let's look at some solutions. [*Internal Preview*]: I will focus on three solutions—instituting tighter government regulation of credit bureaus, holding credit bureaus financially responsible for their errors, and giving individuals easier access to their credit reports.

Summary

Clear organization is vital to speechmaking. Listeners demand coherence. They get only one chance to grasp a speaker's ideas, and they have little patience for speakers who ramble aimlessly from one idea to another. A well-organized speech will enhance your credibility and make it easier for the audience to understand your message.

The process of planning the body of a speech begins when you determine the main points. You should choose them carefully, phrase them precisely, and organize them strategically. Because listeners cannot keep track of a multitude of main points, most speeches should contain no more than two to five. Each should focus on a single idea, should be worded clearly, and should receive enough emphasis to be clear and convincing.

You can organize main points in various ways, depending on your topic, purpose, and audience. Chronological order follows a time pattern, whereas spatial order follows a directional pattern. In causal order, main points are organized according to their cause-effect relationship. Topical order results when you divide your main topic into subtopics. Problem-solution order breaks the body of the speech into two main parts—the first showing a problem, the second giving a solution.

Supporting materials are the backup ideas for your main points. When organizing supporting materials, make sure they are directly relevant to the main points they are supposed to support.

Connectives help tie a speech together. They are words or phrases that join one thought to another and indicate the relationship between them. The four major types of speech connectives are transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts. Using them effectively will make your speeches more unified

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and coherent.

Key Terms

strategic organization ([🔗](#) 156)

main points ([🔗](#) 156)

chronological order ([🔗](#) 159)

spatial order ([🔗](#) 159)

causal order ([🔗](#) 160)

problem-solution order ([🔗](#) 161)

topical order ([🔗](#) 162)

supporting materials ([🔗](#) 165)

connective ([🔗](#) 167)

transition ([🔗](#) 167)

internal preview ([🔗](#) 167)

internal summary ([🔗](#) 168)

signpost ([🔗](#) 168)

- What is the most important thing to remember when organizing supporting materials in the body of your speech?
- What are the four kinds of speech connectives? What role does each play in a speech?

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CHAPTER 10

Page 172

Beginning and Ending the Speech



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 **The Introduction**

 **The Conclusion**

Amid silence, the famous line fades up on-screen—“A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. . . .” Then the title *Star Wars* appears, accompanied by an orchestral blast from the musical score. As the title recedes, three paragraphs of backstory—known as the “opening crawl”—slide past viewers, and the music transforms into notes that sound like echoes of space.

Since the original *Star Wars* movie debuted in 1977, subsequent installments have had practically the same opener—same line of text, title effect, music, and three-paragraph crawl. Why? The opener indicates to audiences that they are about to watch a *Star Wars* movie. It captures their attention and orients them to the story about to unfold. Without it, the movie would seem incomplete, and viewers would not be “primed” for the experience.

Similarly, almost every *Star Wars* movie ends the same way. Fresh from a battle against forces of the dark side, the protagonists stand together and stare heroically into the distance. The music—a variation on the theme that played at the beginning—swells to a triumphant climax. Then the film quickly transitions to the name of the director and the credits roll. If there were no such conclusion, if the action suddenly stopped and the screen went blank, the audience would be left unsatisfied.

Just as movies like *Star Wars* need appropriate beginnings and endings, so do speeches. The

Page 173

The Introduction

First impressions are important. A poor beginning may so distract or alienate listeners that the speaker can never fully recover. Moreover, getting off on the right foot is vital to a speaker's self-confidence. What could be more encouraging than watching your listeners' faces begin to register interest, attention, and pleasure? A good introduction, you will find, is an excellent confidence booster.

In most speech situations, the introduction has four objectives:

- Get the attention and interest of your audience.
- Reveal the topic of your speech.
- Establish your credibility and goodwill.
- Preview the body of the speech.

We'll look at each of these objectives in turn.

Get Attention and Interest

“Unless a speaker can interest his audience at once, his effort will be a failure.” So said the great lawyer Clarence Darrow. If your topic is not one of extraordinary interest, your listeners are likely to say to themselves, “So what? Who cares?” A speaker can quickly lose an audience if she or he doesn’t use the introduction to get their attention and quicken their interest.

Getting the initial attention of your audience is usually easy—even before you utter a single word. After you are introduced and step to the lectern, your audience will normally give you their attention. If they don’t, wait patiently. Look directly at the audience without saying a word. In a few moments all talking and physical commotion will stop. Your listeners will be attentive. You will be ready to start speaking.

Keeping the attention of your audience once you start talking is more difficult. Here are the methods used most often. Employed individually or in combination, they will help get the audience caught up in your speech.

Relate the Topic to the Audience

People pay attention to things that affect them directly. If you can relate the topic to your listeners, they are much more likely to be interested in it.

Suppose, for example, that one of your classmates begins his speech like this:

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Today I am going to talk about dreams, a subject that has always fascinated me. I will look first at why we dream and then at how psychologists interpret the meaning of dreams.



A good introduction will get your speech off to a strong start. To be most effective, it should gain attention, relate the topic to the audience, and be delivered with strong eye contact.

Derek White/Getty Images

This is certainly a clear introduction, but it is not one to get you hooked on the speech. Now what if your classmate were to begin his speech this way—as one student actually did:

You're being chased by an object of unspeakable horror, yet your legs can only move in slow motion. Each step takes unbearably long, and your frantic struggle to run faster is hopeless. Your pursuer gets closer, and your desperation turns to terror. You're completely helpless—eye to eye with death.

Then you wake up, gasping for air, your heart pounding, your face clammy with sweat. It takes a few minutes for your heart and breathing to slow down. You reassure yourself that it was “just a dream.” Soon you drift back to sleep.

Even when you use other interest-arousing lures, you should always relate your topic to the audience. At times this will test your ingenuity, but it is imperative for an effective introduction.

Page 175

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View the beginning of “In Your Dreams” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.1).

State the Importance of Your Topic

Presumably, you think your speech is important. Tell your audience why they should think so, too. Here is how António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, used this method in a speech about climate change at the One Planet Summit:

Climate change is moving much faster than we are. Atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide are higher than they have been for 800,000 years. . . . The past five years have been the hottest period on record. We are in a war for the very existence of life on our planet as we know it.

This technique is easy to use when discussing social and political issues, but it is appropriate for other topics as well. Here's how one student handled it in a speech about beach volleyball:

Beach volleyball has grown from summer fun to an intensely competitive international sport, with 5 million participants in the United States alone. It's the fastest growing sport in NCAA history, with more than 75 sanctioned programs in its first decade. At the Summer Olympics, tickets to beach volleyball often sell out sooner than any other sport.

Today, we'll look at the history of beach volleyball and some of the reasons for its spectacular growth.

Whenever you discuss a topic whose importance may not be clear to the audience, you should think about ways to demonstrate its significance in the introduction.

Page 176

Startle the Audience

One surefire way to arouse interest quickly is to startle your listeners with an arresting or intriguing statement. Everyone in the audience paid close attention after this speaker's introduction:

Take a moment and think of the three women closest to you. Who comes to mind? Your mother? Your sister? Your girlfriend? Your wife? Your best friend? Now guess which one will be sexually assaulted during her lifetime. It's not a pleasant thought, but according to the U.S. Department of Justice, one of every three American women will be sexually assaulted sometime during her life.

Notice the buildup to the speaker's arresting statement, "Now guess which one will be sexually assaulted during her lifetime." This statement startles the audience—especially the men—and drives home at a personal level the problem of sexual assault against women.

This technique is highly effective and easy to use. Just be sure the startling introduction relates directly to the subject of your speech. If you choose a strong opening simply for its shock value and then go on to talk about something else, your audience will be confused and possibly annoyed.

Arouse the Curiosity of the Audience

People are curious. One way to draw them into your speech is with a series of statements that progressively whet their curiosity about the subject of the speech. For example:

This past month, more than 1 billion people around the world skipped lunch every day. They ate no food of any kind and drank no liquid of any kind from sunup to sunset. They did this every day during the month, and they do the same thing every year. I myself did it.

Why? Last month was a time for tending to the mind, the body, and the spirit. Last month was the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

By building suspense about her subject, the speaker pulls her audience into the speech. Notice how much less effective the introduction would have been if she had simply said, “Today I am going to talk about Ramadan.”

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View the beginning of “Ramadan” and “Phony Pharmaceuticals” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.2).

Question the Audience

Asking a **rhetorical question** is another way to get your listeners thinking about your speech. Sometimes a single question will do:

How would you respond if a loved one was the victim of terrorism?

What would you think if you went to the doctor because you were ill and she told you to watch *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* as part of your treatment?

In other circumstances, you may want to pose a series of questions, each of which draws the audience deeper and deeper into the speech. Here is how one speaker used this method:

Page 177

Have you ever gone fishing and lost a lure? Do you think about what happens to the lure? Do you wonder what happens when large fishing boats lose their equipment? What do you think happens to the nets, buoys, hooks, and lines that they leave in the ocean every day?

The problem of equipment abandoned at sea by commercial fishermen is wreaking havoc on our environment. A recent study in *Scientific Reports* found that this “ghost gear” is responsible for destroying habitats, spreading harmful microplastics, and aiding invasive animal species.

When using this technique, be sure to pause for just a moment after each question. This adds dramatic impact and gives the question time to sink in. The audience, of course, will answer mentally—not aloud.

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Begin with a Quotation

Another way to arouse the interest of your audience is to start with an attention-getting quotation. You might choose your quotation from Shakespeare or Confucius, from the Bible or Talmud, from a poem, song, or film. Here is how one student used a humorous quotation to begin a speech about the need for political reform in the U.S. Congress:

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Mark Twain once said, "It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly American criminal class except Congress."

You need not use a famous quotation. The following made an effective introduction for a speech about birdwatching:

"It is a moment I will never forget. I glimpsed a flash of color in the thicket, and then I saw it—a Bachman's Warbler, one of the rarest birds in all of America. I was so excited I could barely keep my binoculars from shaking."

This statement was made by my father. He is just one of the millions of people who have discovered the joys of birdwatching.

Notice that both of the quotations used here as examples are relatively short. Opening your speech with a lengthy quotation is a sure way to set your audience yawning.

Tell a Story

We all enjoy stories, especially if they are provocative, dramatic, or suspenseful. When it comes to speech introductions, stories are sometimes about well-known events or public figures. But they can also be based on the speaker's personal experience. Here is how one pre-med student used such a story. She began by recounting the first time she observed doctors performing surgery in the operating room:

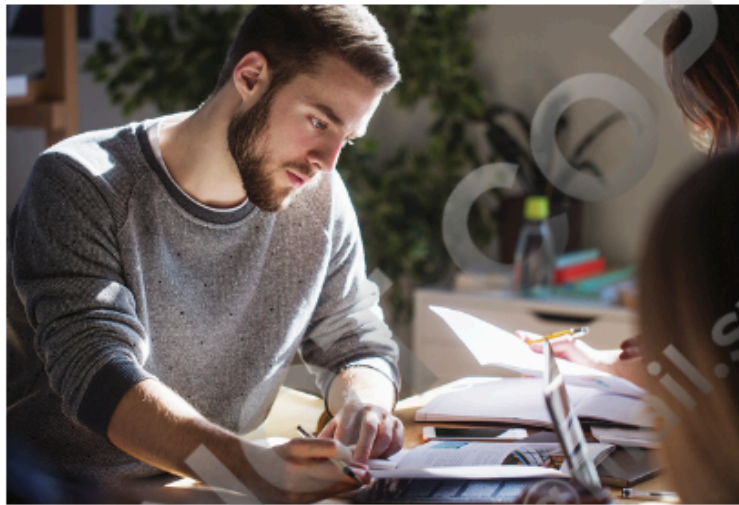


Checklist

Speech Introduction

YES	NO	
☐	☐	1. Do I gain the attention and interest of my audience by using one or more of the methods discussed in this chapter?
☐	☐	2. Do I relate the speech topic to my audience?
☐	☐	3. Do I clearly reveal the topic of my speech?
☐	☐	4. Do I establish my credibility to speak on this topic?
☐	☐	5. If my topic is controversial, do I take steps to establish my goodwill toward the audience?
☐	☐	6. Do I define any key terms that will be necessary for the audience to

- ☐ ☐ 6. Do I define any key terms that will be necessary for the audience to understand the rest of my speech?
 - ☐ ☐ 7. Do I provide a preview statement of the main points to be covered in the body of the speech?
 - ☐ ☐ 8. Is the introduction limited to 10 to 20 percent of my entire speech?
 - ☐ ☐ 9. Have I worked out the language of my introduction in detail?
 - ☐ ☐ 10. Have I practiced the delivery of my introduction so I can present it fluently, confidently, and with strong eye contact?
-



As you work on your speeches, keep an eye out for quotations, stories, and other materials you can use to craft an introduction that will capture the attention of your listeners.

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There I stood, wearing a surgical mask, in the middle of a large, brightly lit room. In the center of the room were five figures huddled over a table. I found it difficult to see since everything was draped in blue sheets, yet I didn't dare take a step toward the table.

Then one of the figures called to me, "Angela, get over here and take a closer look." My knees buckled as I walked through the sterile environment. But eventually I was there, standing over an unconscious body in the operating room.

The effectiveness of any story—especially a personal one—hinges on the speaker's delivery as well as the content. As you can see from the excerpt of this speech on Video 10.3, the speaker uses pauses, eye contact, and changes in her tone of voice to help draw her audience into the speech. See if you can do the same in your introduction.

Page 178

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View the beginning of "Hoping to Heal" in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.3).

Use Visual Aids

Visual aids are most often found in the body of a speech, but they can also be used in the introduction. They are most effective when they provide images that enhance the impact of the speaker's words.

Consider, for example, a speech on the subject of phony pharmaceuticals, drugs that look like legitimate prescription drugs but that have been illegally manufactured with counterfeit ingredients that can cause serious harm—perhaps even death—to a person who ingests them. Here is how one speaker opened her remarks on this topic:

Take a look at these two pills. Do you notice a difference between them? How about these two? Do you see a difference here? How about these?

As she talked, the speaker showed photographs of three sets of pills. Each set looked identical. But in fact they were far from identical, as the speaker explained:

Page 179

To the naked eye, these pills are indistinguishable. But at a chemical level, they are very, very different. In each case, the pill on the left is real; it will help you get better. The pill on the right is counterfeit; it will not help you get better. In some cases, it may even kill you.

As you can see from Video 10.4, it was a creative—and compelling—way to start. The speaker used questions to arouse curiosity. She related to the audience by addressing them as “you.” And she startled them by stating that a counterfeit pill could kill them. But it was her visual aids that pulled the whole introduction together and made it work.



View the beginning of “Phony Pharmaceuticals” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.4).

If you are thinking about using visual aids in your introduction, keep in mind that they are effective only when they are chosen strategically, relate directly to the speech topic, and are in good taste. Using visual aids for their own sake or purely for shock value is always counterproductive. (See [Chapter 14](#) for a full discussion of visual aids.)

The eight methods discussed in this section are those used most often by student speakers to gain attention and interest. Other methods include referring to the occasion, inviting audience participation, relating to a previous speaker, and using humor. For any given speech, try to use the method—or combination of methods—that is most suitable for the topic, the audience, and the occasion.

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—that is most suitable for the topic, the audience, and the occasion.

Reveal the Topic

In the process of gaining attention, be sure to state clearly the topic of your speech. If you do not, your listeners will be confused. And once they are confused, your chances of getting them absorbed in the speech are almost nil.

This is a basic point—so basic that it may hardly seem worth mentioning. Yet you would be surprised how many students need to be reminded of it. You may hear speeches in your own class in which the topic is not clear by the end of the introduction. So you will know what to avoid, here is such an introduction, presented in a public speaking class:

Imagine taking a leisurely boat ride along a peaceful waterway. The sun is high in the sky, reflecting brightly off

the ripples around you. The banks are lush with mangrove and cypress trees. You see a stately pelican resting on a low-lying branch. You grab your camera, snap a shot, and check the result. The picture is perfect. But will it be perfect in the future?

What is the topic of this speech? Nature photography? No. Birding? No. Tourism in the tropics? No. The student was talking about efforts to restore the natural beauty of the Florida Everglades. But she did not make that clear to her audience. Suppose, instead, she had begun her speech differently:

Alligators, panthers, otters, brown pelicans—these and other creatures have lost 50 percent of their habitat in south Florida over the past few decades. Now, however, there is a \$10.5 billion program to preserve their home in the Florida Everglades. The largest restoration effort in the history of the world, it will rejuvenate one of America's most diverse ecosystems and protect it for future generations.

This opening would have provided a way to get the audience's attention, but it also would have related directly to the speech topic. If you beat around the bush in your introduction, you may lose your listeners. Even if they already know your topic, you should restate it clearly and concisely at some point in the introduction.

Establish Credibility and Goodwill

Besides getting attention and revealing the topic, there is a third objective you may need to accomplish in your introduction—establishing your credibility and goodwill.

Credibility is mostly a matter of being qualified to speak on a given topic—and of being *perceived* as qualified by your listeners. Here is how one student established her credibility on the subject of meditation without sounding like a braggart:

I've been practicing meditation for about four years, since my junior year of high school, and it has truly changed my life. I also did a great deal of research for this speech, and I hope to persuade each of you to begin daily meditation.

It isn't a magic cure-all for every problem we face, but if your experience is like mine, you'll be pleasantly surprised by what it can do for you. Let's start by taking a closer look at the need to meditate.

View this excerpt from the introduction of “Mindfulness Meditation” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.5).



Telling a story is an excellent way to gain attention in a speech introduction. The story should be clearly relevant to the topic and should be delivered expressively and with strong eye contact.

FatCamera/Getty Images

Whether or not you have meditated yourself, you will probably be more interested in the speech when you realize that the speaker knows what she is talking about.

Your credibility need not be based on firsthand knowledge and experience. It can come from reading, from classes, from interviews, from friends—as in these cases:

I have been interested in the myth of Atlantis for several years, and I have read a number of books and articles about it.

The information I'm going to share with you today comes mostly from my criminal justice class and an interview with Aisha Bigsby of the public defender's office.

Whatever the source of your expertise, be sure to let the audience know.

Page 181

Establishing your *goodwill* is a slightly different challenge. It is often crucial outside the classroom, where speakers have well-established reputations and may be identified with causes that arouse hostility among listeners. In such a situation, the speaker must try to defuse that hostility right at the start of the speech.

Occasionally you may have to do the same thing in your classroom speeches. Suppose you advocate a potentially unpopular position. You will need to make a special effort to ensure that your classmates will consider your point of view. This is how one student tried to minimize her classmates' opposition in the introduction of a speech urging them to live without social media:

I understand this sounds extreme. Who doesn't like to see photos of friends and videos of cute animals? Before I tried turning off my social-media accounts, I was really anxious about missing out on all the fun. But it ended up being one of the best decisions I've made. If you don't believe me, try it yourself—turn off social media for one month. I'm convinced you'll see a difference in your outlook on life.

The speaker was clear about her intentions and reasonable in her expectations. By the end of the introduction, the audience knew she had their best interests at heart.

Preview the Body of the Speech

As we saw in [Chapter 3](#), most people are poor listeners. Even good listeners need all the help they can get in sorting out a speaker's ideas. One way to help your listeners is to tell them in the introduction what they should listen for in the rest of the speech. Here is an excellent example from a speech by Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations:

Page 182

Today, I'd like to talk about three aspects of the Middle East peace process: first, the United States' continued support for Israel; second, our desire to see both Israelis and Palestinians take steps toward a two-state solution; and third, our goal of delivering aid to the Palestinian people.

After this introduction, there was no doubt about Thomas-Greenfield's topic or the main points she would cover in her speech.

In some types of persuasive speeches, you may not want to reveal your central idea until later in the speech. But even in such a situation you must be sure your audience is not left guessing about the main points they should listen for as the speech unfolds. Nearly always, you should include a **preview statement** like the following:

I've been fascinated by the Statue of Liberty since I was a kid, but I never knew how amazing it is until I researched it for this speech. This morning, I'd like to tell you about its symbolism, its history, and its architecture.

I firmly believe in opening the doors of higher education to everyone. Today I hope to convince you that our state should make community college free for all residents. But before getting into the plan, let's look at the need to help more people attend college.

Preview statements such as these serve another purpose as well. Because they usually come at the very end of the introduction, they provide a smooth lead-in to the body of the speech. They signal that the body of the speech is about to begin.

There is one other aspect you may want to cover in previewing your speech. You can use your introduction to give specialized information—definitions or background—that your listeners will need if they are to understand the rest of the speech. Often you can do this very quickly, as in the following example:

A triathlon is a race made up of three different events completed in succession. The events are usually swimming, biking, and running, though canoeing is sometimes substituted for one of these.

In other circumstances, you may have to explain an important term in more detail. Here is how one student handled the problem in a speech calling for the creation of a living-wage policy to replace the current minimum wage:

What is the living wage, you ask? Well, it's not the same as the minimum wage. The minimum wage is set by Congress and is the same in every part of the country. The living wage goes beyond the minimum wage.

As the *Wall Street Journal* reports, the living wage is tied to the local cost of living and can vary from location to location. Its purpose is to help workers and their families meet a basic standard of living, even when that standard of living is higher than the minimum wage.

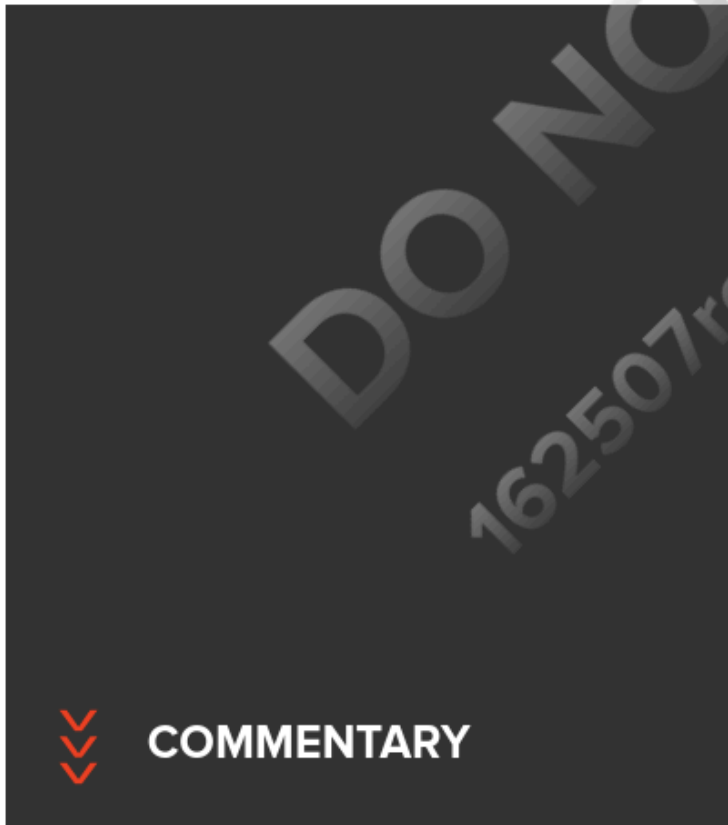


View this excerpt from “The Living-Wage Solution” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.6).

Sample Introduction with Commentary

So far we have seen many excerpts showing how to fulfill the various objectives of an introduction. Now here is a complete introduction from a student speech. The side comments indicate the principles used in developing the introduction.

Space Junk





SPEECH

The speaker begins by relating the topic to her audience. Then she arouses curiosity by referring to “something not so beautiful” that lurks just outside our atmosphere.

Tonight, after the sun goes down, I'd like you to step outside, lift your eyes to the heavens, and gaze at the night sky. If it's clear, you'll be able to see the moon, the stars, and distant planets. Yet right outside our atmosphere is something not so beautiful, something

that *Scientific American* calls “a minefield in Earth orbit.”

Now the speaker reveals her topic and defines what space junk is. The imagery of it as a floating landfill is very effective. Statistics from the European Space Agency quantify the amount of space junk.

Another name for this minefield is junk—space junk. Satellites that no longer work, pieces from spent rockets, debris from the collision of man-made objects—together they form a floating landfill that orbits the earth at speeds of over 18,000 miles per hour. The European Space Agency estimates that there are hundreds of thousands of pieces of space junk.

The speaker explains her interest in the topic and establishes her credibility.

I first learned about space junk last year in my physics class. Now, after doing research for this speech, I understand why there's an international effort to clean up the landfill whirling around our planet.

The introduction ends by previewing the main points to be discussed in the body.

Today we'll look first at the history of space junk, then at the way it's affecting space exploration, and finally at some proposals scientists have advanced to clean it up.

Tips for the Introduction

1. Keep the introduction relatively brief. Under normal circumstances it should not constitute more than 10 to 20 percent of your speech.
2. Be on the lookout for possible introductory materials as you do your research. File them with your notes so they will be handy when you are ready for them.
3. Be creative in devising your introduction. Experiment with two or three different openings and choose the one that seems most likely to get the audience interested in your speech.
4. Don't worry about the exact wording of your introduction until you have finished preparing the body of the speech. After you have determined your main points, it will be much easier to make final decisions about how to begin the speech.
5. Work out your introduction in detail. Some teachers recommend that you write it out word for word; others prefer that you outline it. Whichever method you use, practice the introduction over and over until you can deliver it smoothly from a minimum of notes and with strong eye contact.
6. When you present the speech, don't start talking too soon. Make sure the audience has quieted down and is focused on you before you begin. Establish eye contact, smile, and then launch into your opening words. Give yourself every chance to make sure your introduction has the desired impact.

The Conclusion

“Great is the art of beginning,” said Longfellow, “but greater the art is of ending.” Longfellow was thinking of poetry, but his insight is equally applicable to public speaking. Many a speaker has marred an otherwise fine speech by a long-winded, silly, or antagonistic conclusion. Your closing remarks are your last chance to drive home your ideas. Moreover, your final impression will probably linger in your listeners’ minds. Thus you need to craft your conclusion with as much care as your introduction.

No matter what kind of speech you are giving, the conclusion has two major functions:

- To let the audience know you are ending the speech.
- To reinforce the audience’s understanding of, or commitment to, the central idea.

Let us look at each.

Signal the End of the Speech

It may seem obvious that you should let your audience know you are going to stop soon. However, you will almost certainly hear speeches in your class in which the speaker concludes so abruptly that you are taken by surprise. Too sudden an ending leaves the audience puzzled and unfulfilled.

How do you let an audience know your speech is ending? One way is through what you say. “In conclusion,” “My purpose has been,” “Let me end by saying”—these are all brief cues that you are getting ready to stop.

You can also let your audience know the end is in sight by your manner of delivery. The conclusion is the climax of a speech. A speaker who has carefully built to a peak of interest and involvement will not need to say anything like “in conclusion.” By use of the voice—its tone, pacing, intonation, and rhythm—a speaker can build the momentum of a speech so there is no doubt when it is over.

One method of doing this has been likened to a musical **crescendo**. As in a symphony in which one instrument after another joins in until the entire orchestra is playing, the speech builds in force until it reaches a zenith of power and intensity.¹ (This does *not* mean simply getting louder and louder. It is a combination of many things, including vocal pitch, choice of words, dramatic content, gestures, pauses—and possibly loudness.)

A superb example of this method is the conclusion to Martin Luther King’s “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” the speech he delivered the night before he was assassinated in April 1968. Speaking to an audience of 2,000 people in Memphis, Tennessee, he ended his speech with a stirring declaration that the civil rights movement would succeed despite the many threats on his life. As the speech approached its climax, King stated that God had allowed him to climb the mountain and look over the Promised Land of equality and justice. Then, with soaring voice, he ended with the monumental words of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic”: “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!” The audience erupted in thunderous applause.²

Another effective method might be compared to the **dissolve ending** of a concert song that evokes deep emotions: “The song seems to fade away while the light on the singer shrinks gradually to a smaller and smaller circle until it lights only the face, then the eyes. Finally, it is a pinpoint, and disappears with the last note of the song.”³

Using Public Speaking in Your **CAREER**

Your degree in civil engineering has served you well and you are now the chief city planner for a major metropolis. After studying the issue for more than a year, you and the planning commission have decided that the best way to relieve the city's growing traffic congestion is to build a new downtown freeway. Unfortunately, there is no way to build the freeway without knocking down a number of houses and businesses.



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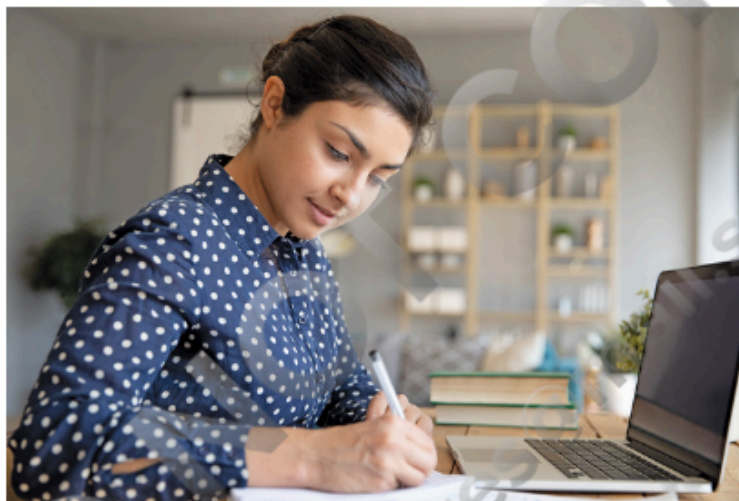
Not surprisingly, the neighborhood association that represents the area through which the new freeway will run has expressed a number of concerns about the proposal. Because of your excellent public speaking skills, you have been chosen to represent the city at a meeting of the neighborhood association. You know that if your speech is to be persuasive, you must use the introduction to establish your credibility and goodwill so your listeners will be willing to listen receptively to what you say in the body.

Write a draft of your introduction. Be sure to address all four functions of a speech introduction discussed in this chapter.

The dissolve ending brings a speech to an emotional close by fading to a dramatic final statement. That's what one student did with great effect in a speech about visiting her grandparents' family farm as a young girl. During the body of her speech, the student spoke about the sights and sounds of the farm, the love and laughter she shared there as a child. Then, in conclusion, she evoked the images and sentiments of the farm one last time to create a moving dissolve ending:

Now, as with so much of our childhood, the farm is no longer the same. Grandpa is gone. The barn has been rebuilt. The softball sits idly on the shelf. Grandma no longer cooks her huge family dinners. Going to the farm is different without these pleasures. But still the memories remain. I can still see the fields. I can still smell the hay. I can still hear the laughter. I can still feel the love.

Both the crescendo and dissolve endings must be worked out with great care. Practice until you get the words and the timing just right. The benefits will be well worth your time.



The conclusion is your last chance to drive home your ideas. As you develop your conclusion, try to finish on a strong note that reinforces your main points and leaves a positive impression on listeners.

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Reinforce the Central Idea

The second major function of a conclusion is to reinforce the audience's understanding of, or commitment to, the central idea. There are many ways to do this. Here are the ones you are most likely to use.

Summarize Your Speech

Restating the main points is the easiest way to end a speech. One student used this technique effectively in his persuasive speech about the resurgence of tuberculosis as a worldwide killer:

In conclusion, we have seen how tuberculosis has recently returned as a global health crisis. It is infecting and killing on an unprecedented scale. Especially in third-world countries, TB is decimating those who need the most help.

But there is hope. The World Health Organization and privileged countries like the United States can expand their efforts to treat and prevent TB. We have the money and we have the know-how. Now we just need to come together and put an end to this epidemic.



View the conclusion of “TB: An Ancient Plague Returns” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.8).

The value of a summary is that it explicitly restates the central idea and main points one last time. But as we shall see, there are more imaginative and compelling ways to end a speech. They can be used in combination with a summary or, at times, in place of it.

End with a Quotation

A quotation is one of the most common and effective devices to conclude a speech. Here is a fine example, from a speech on volunteering for Second Harvest Food Bank:

None of us have the extra time that we'd like. But when you spend the precious little time that you have helping others, you'll know it was time well spent. In the words of the great poet Maya Angelou, "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."

The closing quotation is particularly good because its hopeful tone is exactly suited to the speech. When you run across a *brief* quotation that so perfectly captures your central idea, keep it in mind as a possible conclusion.

Make a Dramatic Statement

Rather than using a quotation to give your conclusion force and vitality, you may want to devise your own dramatic statement. Some speeches have become famous because of their powerful closing lines. One is Patrick Henry's legendary "Liberty or Death" oration. It takes its name from the final sentences Henry uttered on March 23, 1775, as he exhorted his audience to resist British tyranny:

Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God!
I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

Although your classroom speeches are not likely to become famous, you can still rivet your listeners—as Henry did—with a dramatic concluding statement. What follows is a particularly striking example, from a speech on suicide prevention. Throughout the speech, the student referred to a friend who had tried to commit suicide the previous year. Then, in the conclusion, she said:

My friend is back in school, participating in activities she never did before—and enjoying it. I'm happy and proud to say that she's still fighting for her life and even happier that she failed to kill herself. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here today trying to help you. You see, I am my "friend," and I'm more than glad to say I've made it.



Checklist

Speech Conclusion

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Speech Conclusion

YES	NO
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- ☐ ☐ 1. Do I signal that my speech is coming to an end?
- ☐ ☐ 2. Do I reinforce my central idea by:
 - Summarizing the main points of my speech?
 - Ending with a quotation?
 - Making a dramatic statement?
 - Referring to the introduction?
- ☐ ☐ 3. Is the conclusion limited to 5 to 10 percent of my entire speech?
- ☐ ☐ 4. Have I worked out the language of my conclusion in detail?
- ☐ ☐ 5. Have I practiced the delivery of my conclusion so I can present it fluently, confidently, and with strong eye contact?

As you can imagine, the audience was stunned. The closing lines brought the speech to a dramatic conclusion. The speaker made it even more effective by pausing just a moment before the last words and by using her voice to give them just the right inflection.

Refer to the Introduction

An excellent way to give your speech psychological unity is to conclude by referring to ideas in the introduction. Here is how one student used the method in her speech about massive wildfires in the western United States:

Introduction

Toby Wait and his family saw the billowing smoke over the horizon, but it seemed far away from their home in Big Creek, California. That night, however, Toby woke up at 4 am to a pitch-black night vibrating with an intense orange. The wildfire was upon them. Toby, his family, and their three dogs hopped in their car and sped away, the hungry fire pursuing them down the mountain.

This was just one of countless scenes from the 2020 wildfire season in the western U.S. It was the biggest wildfire season on record, burning an estimated 10.3 million

acres. At least 43 people died directly from the fires and the number of indirect deaths topped 3,000. These numbers are going to get worse before they get better.

In the body of her speech, the student looked in detail at the problem of wildfires and explained steps for reducing them. Then, in her closing words, she tied the whole speech together by returning to the story described in her introduction:

Conclusion

Remember Toby Wait and his family from the introduction of my speech? They managed to escape the blaze with their lives, but their home and belongings went up in flames. So did the homes and belongings of over 10,000 other families that year.

We can't stop climate change in the short run. But we can reduce fire losses with better planning and regular management. It's up to us to create a future where devastating wildfires are the exception, not the norm.

View the beginning and ending of “Raging Wildfires” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.9).

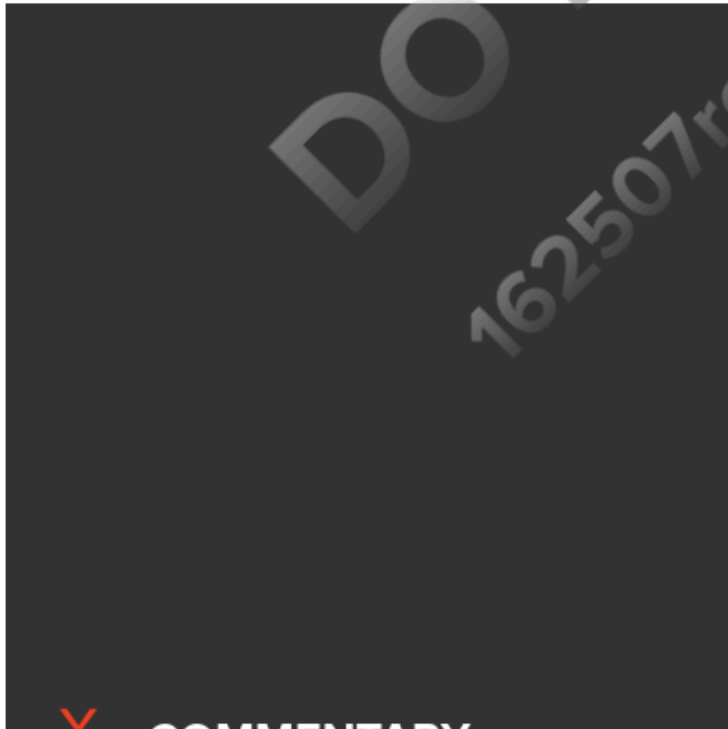
Summarizing the speech, ending with a quotation, making a dramatic statement, referring to the introduction—all these techniques can be used separately. But you have probably noticed that speakers often combine two or more in their conclusions. Actually, all four techniques can be fused into one—for example, a dramatic quotation that summarizes the central idea while referring to the introduction.

One other concluding technique is making a direct appeal to your audience for action. This technique applies only to a particular type of persuasive speech, however, and will be discussed in [Chapter 16](#). The four methods covered in this chapter are appropriate for all kinds of speeches and occasions.

Sample Conclusion with Commentary

How do you fit these methods together to make a conclusion? Here is an example, from the speech about space junk whose introduction we looked at earlier ([page 183](#)).

Space Junk





COMMENTARY



CONCLUSION

After signaling the end of her speech, the speaker gives an excellent summary of her main points. This is usually standard practice in an informative speech.

In conclusion, while humans have managed to boldly

go where no one has gone before, we've left a lot of garbage behind. Space junk is growing every day, and it poses serious problems for the future of space exploration. Fortunately, scientists from NASA and the international community are exploring ingenious ways of taking out the trash.

By echoing her opening scenario, the speaker unifies the entire speech. The final sentence provides a dramatic ending.

So the next time you're outside at night, lift your gaze upward. You'll see the moon, the stars, and perhaps a couple planets. But now you'll know there's a lot more up there than meets the eye.

Tips for the Conclusion

1. As with the introduction, keep an eye out for possible concluding materials as you research and develop the speech.
2. Conclude with a bang, not a whimper. Be creative in devising a conclusion that hits the hearts and minds of your audience. Work on several possible endings, and select the one that seems likely to have the greatest impact.
3. Don't be long-winded. The conclusion will normally make up no more than 5 to 10 percent of your speech.
4. Don't leave anything in your conclusion to chance. Work it out in detail, and give yourself plenty of time to practice delivering it. Many students like to write out the conclusion word for word to guarantee it is just right. If you do this, make sure you can present it smoothly, confidently, and with feeling—without relying on your notes or sounding wooden. Make your last impression as forceful and as favorable as you can.

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View the conclusion of “Space Junk” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 10.10).

Space Junk



COMMENTARY



CONCLUSION

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Summary

First impressions are important. So are final impressions. This is why speeches need strong introductions and conclusions.

In most speech situations you need to accomplish four objectives with your introduction—get the attention and interest of the audience, reveal the topic of your speech, establish your credibility and goodwill, and preview the body of the speech. Gaining attention and interest can be done in several ways. You can show the importance of your topic, especially as it relates to your audience. You can startle or question your audience or arouse their curiosity. You can begin with a quotation, a story, or visual aids.

Be sure to state the topic of your speech clearly in your introduction so the audience knows where the speech is going. Establishing credibility means that you tell the audience why you are qualified to speak on the topic at hand. Establishing goodwill may be necessary if your point of view is unpopular. Previewing the body of the speech helps the audience listen effectively and provides a smooth lead-in to the body of the speech.

Page 190

The first objective of a speech conclusion is to let the audience know you are ending, which you can do by your words or by your manner of delivery. The second objective of a conclusion is to reinforce your central idea. You can accomplish this by summarizing the speech, ending with a quotation, making a dramatic statement, or referring to the introduction. Sometimes you may want to combine two or more of these techniques. Be creative in devising a vivid, forceful conclusion.

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Be sure to state the topic of your speech clearly in your introduction so the audience knows where the speech is going. Establishing credibility means that you tell the audience why you are qualified to speak on the topic at hand. Establishing goodwill may be necessary if your point of view is unpopular. Previewing the body of the speech helps the audience listen effectively and provides a smooth lead-in to the body of the speech.

The first objective of a speech conclusion is to let the audience know you are ending, which you can do by your words or by your manner of delivery. The second objective of a conclusion is to reinforce your central idea. You can accomplish this by summarizing the speech, ending with a quotation, making a dramatic statement, or referring to the introduction. Sometimes you may want to combine two or more of these techniques. Be creative in devising a vivid, forceful conclusion.

- Think of a speech topic (preferably one for your next speech in class). Create an introduction for a speech dealing with any aspect of the topic you wish. In your introduction, be sure to gain the attention of the audience, to reveal the topic and relate it to the audience, to establish your credibility, and to preview the body of the speech.
- Using the same topic as in Exercise 2, create a speech conclusion. Be sure to let your audience know the speech is ending, to reinforce the central idea, and to make the conclusion vivid and memorable.

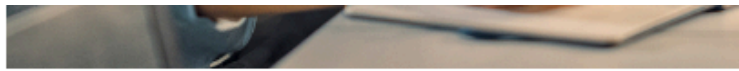
CHAPTER 11

Page 192

Outlining the Speech



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-  **The Preparation Outline**
-  **The Speaking Outline**

Think what might happen if you tried to build a house without a floor plan or an architect's blueprint. You install a cathedral ceiling so you can have big windows and a huge ceiling fan, but the roof is so high it blocks your bedroom window upstairs. You put in sliding doors to the yard, but they can't be opened because they're too close to the fireplace to slide back without hitting it. You think it's a wonderful idea to have almost no interior walls. But when the first snowfall comes, your (unsupported) roof collapses.

Plans and blueprints are essential to architecture. So, too, are outlines essential to effective speeches. An outline is like a blueprint for your speech. It allows you to see the full scope and content of your speech at a glance. By outlining, you can judge whether each part of the speech is fully developed, whether you have adequate supporting materials for your main points, and whether the main points are properly balanced. An outline helps you make sure that related items are together, that ideas flow from one to another, that the structure of your speech will "stand up"—and not collapse.

Probably you will use two kinds of outlines for your speeches—one very detailed, for the planning stage, and one very brief, for the delivery of the speech.

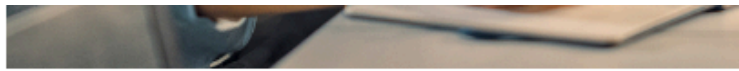
CHAPTER 11

Page 192

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 **The Preparation Outline**

 **The Speaking Outline**

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Probably you will use two kinds of outlines for your speeches—one very detailed, for the planning stage, and one very brief, for the delivery of the speech.

The Preparation Outline

This is the final bibliography. It lists the sources actually used in writing the speech and is shorter than the preliminary bibliography compiled in the early stages of research. (See [Chapter 7](#).)

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Courage, Katherine Harmon. "Prairies of the Sea."
Smithsonian, Dec. 2020,
www.smithsonianmag.com/science-

www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/seagrass-ocean-secret-weapon. Accessed 14 Sept. 2022.

“Importance of Seagrass.” Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, myfwc.com/research/habitat/seagrasses/. Accessed 12 Sept. 2022.

This bibliography follows the Modern Language Association (MLA) format. Check with your instructor to see what format you should use for your bibliography.

Jiang, Zhijian, et al. “Home for Marine Species: Seagrass Leaves as Vital Spawning Grounds and Food Source.” *Frontiers in Marine Science*, vol. 7, 2020, pp. 1–9.

McVeigh, Karen. “The Problem with Blue Carbon: Can Seagrass Be Replanted . . . by Hand?” *Guardian*, 5 Nov. 2021, www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/05/. Accessed 14 Sept. 2022.

“Seagrass Are Flowering Plants That Grow Entirely Underwater.” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Still have questions about outlining? If you log on to Connect, you will find additional resources to help you create effective preparation outlines. The Outline Tool will help you construct your own outlines from scratch following the guidelines in this chapter. There is also a program called EasyBib that can automatically format your speech bibliography in either APA or MLA format. Like many students before you, you can take advantage of these resources to improve your command of outlining principles and practices.

The Speaking Outline

“I was never so excited by public speaking before in my life,” wrote one listener in 1820 after listening to Daniel Webster. “Three or four times I thought my temples would burst with the gush of blood. . . . I was beside myself, and am so still.”¹

Such reactions were not unusual among Webster’s audiences. He thrilled two generations of Americans with his masterful orations. Incredible as it seems today, he did so while speaking for several hours at a time, often without using any notes! A reporter once asked how he managed this. “It is my memory,” Webster said. “I can prepare a speech, revise and correct it in my memory, then deliver the corrected speech exactly as finished.”²

Few people have Webster’s remarkable powers of memory. Fortunately, it is no longer customary to speak from memory. Today most people speak extemporaneously—which means the speech is carefully prepared and practiced in advance, but much of the exact wording is selected while the speech is being delivered (see [Chapter 13](#)). Your speeches will probably be of this type. You should know, then, about the *speaking outline*—the most widely recommended form of notes for extemporaneous speeches.

The aim of a speaking outline is to help you remember what you want to say. In some ways, it is a condensed version of your preparation outline. It should contain key words or phrases to jog your memory, as well as essential statistics and quotations that you don’t want to risk forgetting. But it should also include material *not* in your preparation outline—especially cues to direct and sharpen your delivery.

Most speakers develop their own variations on the speaking outline. As you acquire more

experience, you, too, should feel free to experiment. But for now, your best bet is to follow the basic guidelines in this section and to use the sample speaking outline on  **pages 205–206** as your model. These guidelines are useful whether you're speaking to an in-person audience or an online audience.

Guidelines for the Speaking Outline

Follow the Visual Framework Used in the Preparation Outline

Your speaking outline should use the same visual framework—the same symbols and the same pattern of indentation—as your preparation outline. This will make it much easier to prepare the speaking outline. More important, it will allow you to see instantly where you are in the speech at any given moment while you are speaking. You will find this to be a great advantage. As you speak, you will look down at your outline periodically to make sure you are covering the right ideas in the right order.

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Compare the following two versions of a partial speaking outline. They are from an informative speech about the history of the U.S. women’s rights movement.

Ineffective	More Effective
I. 1840–1860	I. 1840–1860
A. World Anti-Slavery Convention	A. World Anti-Slavery Convention
B. Seneca Falls convention	B. Seneca Falls convention
1. Lucretia Mott	1. Lucretia Mott
2. Elizabeth Cady Stanton	2. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
3. Declaration of Sentiments	3. Declaration of Sentiments
II. 1900–1920	II. 1900–1920
A. National American Woman Suffrage Association	A. National American Woman Suffrage Association
1. Founding	1. Founding
2. Objectives	2. Objectives
B. Nineteenth Amendment	B. Nineteenth Amendment

1. Campaign

2. Ratification

1. Campaign

2. Ratification

The wording of both outlines is exactly the same. But the visual framework of the one on the right makes it easier to take in at a glance and reduces the odds of the speaker losing her or his place.

Make Sure the Outline Is Legible

Your speaking outline is all but worthless unless it is instantly readable at a distance. When you make your outline, use large lettering, leave extra space between lines, provide ample margins, and write or type on only one side of the paper.

Some speakers put their notes on index cards. Most find the 3×5 size too cramped and prefer the 4×6 or 5×8 size instead. Other people write their speaking outlines on regular paper. Either practice is fine, as long as your notes are immediately legible to you while you are speaking.

Keep the Outline as Brief as Possible

If your notes are too detailed, you will have difficulty maintaining eye contact with your audience. A detailed outline will tempt you to look at it far too often, as one student discovered:

Khloe Nehls was speaking about America's opioid crisis. She had prepared the speech thoroughly and practiced it until it was nearly perfect. But when she delivered the speech in class, she referred constantly to her detailed notes. As a result, her delivery was choppy and strained. After the speech, Khloe's classmates remarked on how often she had looked at her notes, and she was amazed. "I didn't even know I was doing it," she said. "Most of the time I wasn't even paying attention to the outline. I knew the speech cold."



Many experienced speakers are more comfortable with a brief set of notes, or no notes at all, which allows them to

set of notes, or no notes at all, which allows them to communicate directly with the audience.

Xuanyu Han/Getty Images

Using Public Speaking in Your **CAREER**

As the defense attorney in a car theft case, you need to prepare your closing argument to the jury before members begin their deliberations. After reviewing evidence from the trial, you decide to stress the following points to demonstrate the innocence of your client:

- a. The stolen car was found abandoned three hours after the theft with the engine still warm; at the time the car was found, your client was at the airport to meet the flight of a friend who was flying into town.

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- b. Lab analysis of muddy shoe prints on the floor mat of the car indicates that the prints came from a size 13 shoe; your client wears a size 10.
- c. Lab analysis shows the presence of cigarette smoke in the car, but your client does not smoke.
- d. The only eyewitness to the crime, who was 50 feet from the car, said the thief “looked like” your client; yet the eyewitness admitted that at the time of the theft she was not wearing her glasses, which had been prescribed for improving distance vision.
- e. The car was stolen at about 1 P.M.; your client testified that he was in a small town 250 miles away at 11 A.M.
- f. In a statement to police, the eyewitness described the thief as blond; your client has red hair.



Stockbyte/Getty Images

As you work on the outline of your speech, you see that these points can be organized into three main points, each with two supporting points. Compose an outline that organizes the points in this manner.

Many students have had the same experience. “As long as I have plenty of notes,” they feel, “disaster will not strike.” In fact, most beginning speakers use too many notes. Like Khloe, they don’t need all of them to remember the speech, and they find that too many notes can actually interfere with good communication.

To guard against this, keep your speaking outline as brief as possible. It should contain key words or phrases to help you remember major points, subpoints, and connectives. If you are citing statistics, you will probably want to include them in your notes. Unless you are good at memorizing quotations, write them out fully as well. Finally, there may be two, three, or four key ideas whose wording is so important that you want to state them in simple complete sentences. The best rule is that your notes should be the *minimum* you need to jog your memory and keep you on track.

Give Yourself Cues for Delivering the Speech

A good speaking outline reminds you not only of *what* you want to say but also of *how* you want to say it. As you practice the speech, you will decide that certain ideas and phrases need special emphasis—that they should be spoken more loudly, softly, slowly, or rapidly than other parts of the speech. You will also determine how you want to pace the speech—how you will control its timing, rhythm, and momentum. But no matter how you work these things out ahead of time, no matter how often you practice, it is easy to forget them once you get in front of an audience.

The solution is to include in your speaking outline **delivery cues**—directions for delivering the speech. One way to do this is by underlining or otherwise highlighting key ideas that you want to be sure to emphasize. Then, when you reach them in the outline, you will be reminded to stress them. Another way is to jot down on the outline explicit cues such as “pause,” “repeat,” “slow down,” “louder,” and so forth. Both techniques are good aids for beginning speakers, but they are also used by experienced speakers.

Sample Speaking Outline with Commentary

Following is a sample speaking outline for a six-minute informative talk about seagrass. By comparing it with the preparation outline for the same speech on [pages 199–201](#), you can see how a detailed preparation outline is transformed into a concise speaking outline.

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COMMENTARY



OUTLINE

These comments remind the speaker to establish eye contact and not to race through the speech.

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*Eye Contact!!
Slow Down*

Introduction

Including the main points of the introduction helps keep the speaker on track at the start of the speech.

- I. Oldest living organism—116,000 square miles.
 - A. What is it?
 - B. Ordinary seagrass.
- II. From ecological perspective—not ordinary.
 - A. Emmett Duffy of Smithsonian Marine Observatories: seagrass vs Serengeti plain.
 - B. Productive, vital ecosystems.
- III. Learned in oceanography; did additional research.
- IV. Today: what seagrass is, role in oceans, and combatting climate change.

It's usually a good idea to pause briefly before launching into the first main point. This is another way of signaling that you are moving from the introduction to the body.

(Start with what seagrass is.)

-Pause-

Most speakers label the body in the speaking outline as well as in the preparation outline.

Notice how the body of the speech follows the same visual format as the preparation outline. This makes the outline easy to read at a glance.

Throughout the outline, key words are used to jog the speaker's memory.

Because the final wording of an extemporaneous speech is chosen at the moment of delivery, it will not be exactly the same as that in the preparation outline.

Body

- I. Not actually grass, but flowering plant.
 - A. Roots, stems, leaves; produces flowers, fruits.
 - B. Only flowering plant totally submerged.
 - 1. Absorbs oxygen, nutrients from water.
 - 2. Pollinates, reproduces w/o touching air.

(What it is—what it does.)

II. Vital to life in oceans.

A. First: food source.

1. Some animals feed directly on seagrass.
2. Others on organisms in seagrass.

Underlining reminds the speaker to stress key words.

Quotations are usually written out in the speaking outline.

B. Second: refuge for animals.

1. Fish, sea horses, clams—live in it.
2. Eggs, larvae—protection.

Inserting transitions makes sure the
speaker doesn't forget them.

(Importance not limited to life in oceans.)

III. Combats climate change.

A. Traps carbon dioxide in seafloor.

Sources of statistics or testimony should be included in the speaking outline to make sure the speaker identifies them in the speech.

1. "Carbon sequestration."
2. *Guardian*: seagrass sequesters 35 times faster.
3. 18 percent total, 1 percent of ocean floor.

B. Scientists working to spread seagrass.

1. Robert Orth, Virginia Institute

1. Robert Orth, Virginia Institute.
 - a. *Smithsonian*: Orth seeding areas.
 - b. 13 new square miles of seagrass.
2. Increasing seagrass combats climate change.

It's usually a good idea to pause before entering the conclusion.

-Pause-

Conclusion

Including key ideas and phrases from the conclusion jogs the speaker's memory and ensures that the speech will end as planned.

- I. In conclusion, meadows of seagrass in oceans.
 - A. Essential to ocean life.
 - B. Help combat climate change.
- II. Next time at beach—remember seagrass
beneath surface.

Summary

Outlines are essential to effective speeches. By outlining, you make sure that related ideas are together, that your thoughts flow from one to another, and that the structure of your speech is coherent. You will probably use two kinds of outlines for your speeches—a detailed preparation outline and a brief speaking outline.

In the preparation outline, you state your specific purpose and central idea; label the introduction, body, and conclusion; and designate transitions, internal summaries, and internal previews. You should identify main points, subpoints, and sub-subpoints by a consistent pattern of symbolization and indentation. Your instructor may require a bibliography with your preparation outline.

The speaking outline should contain key words or phrases to jog your memory, as well as essential statistics and quotations. Make sure your speaking outline is legible, follows the same visual framework as your preparation outline, and includes cues for delivering the speech.

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Exercises for Critical Thinking

1. In the left-hand column below is a partially blank outline from a speech about chocolate. In the right-hand column, arranged in random order, are the subpoints to fill in the outline. Choose the appropriate subpoint for each blank in the outline.

Outline	Subpoints
I. Chocolate has a long and fascinating history. Second, chocolate is a very popular food product. Third, chocolate is a very healthy food product. Fourth, this chocolate liquor product is used in making	

I. Chocolate has a long and fascinating history.

A.

1.

2.

B.

1.

2.

C.

II. There are four basic steps for turning cocoa beans into chocolate.

A.

B.

C.

D.

Fourth, this chocolate liquor product is used in making all genuine chocolate products.

The new heated and sweetened beverage soon became the rage of Europe.

In the 1500s, Spaniards introduced chocolate to Europe after returning from Central America.

Second, cocoa beans are then roasted, shelled, and cracked into small pieces called nibs.

The Maya used seeds of the cacao tree to brew a cold, bitter drink.

Chocolate was first used in Central America by the Maya and then by the Aztecs.

In the 1800s, chocolate became a popular candy as well as a beverage.

Third, nibs are ground to produce a rich brown liquid called chocolate liquor.

In Europe, Spaniards changed the beverage by heating it and adding sugar.

The Aztecs brewed a similar drink called "chocolatl."

First, cacao seeds are dried and fermented to become what are called cocoa beans.

2. From the preparation outline on chocolate you constructed in Exercise 1, create a speaking outline that you might use in delivering the speech. Follow the guidelines for a speaking outline discussed in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 12

Page 208

Using Language



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- 📄 **Meanings of Words**
- 📄 **Using Language Accurately**
- 📄 **Using Language Clearly**
- 📄 **Using Language Vividly**
- 📄 **Using Language Appropriately**

Contrary to popular belief, language does not mirror reality. It does not simply describe the world as it is. Instead, language helps create our sense of reality by giving meaning to events. The words we use to label an event determine to a great extent how we respond to it.

For example, if you see the current war on drugs as “socially beneficial,” as “worth the cost,” and as “fitting the crime,” you will likely support it. However, if you see the current war on drugs as “socially harmful,” as “a waste of money,” and as “disproportionate to the crime,” you will likely oppose it.

What separates these two viewpoints? Not the legality of street drugs; not the effects of drugs on individuals. Both are the same regardless of one’s viewpoint. The difference is in the *meaning* given to them by the words that label them.¹

Words are the tools of a speaker’s craft. They have special uses, just like the tools of any other profession. Have you ever watched a carpenter at work? The job that would take you or me a couple of hours is done by the carpenter in 10 minutes—with the right tools. You can’t drive a nail

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Meanings of Words

Words have two kinds of meanings—denotative and connotative. **Denotative meaning** is precise, literal, and objective. It describes the object, person, place, idea, or event to which the word refers. One way to think of a word's denotative meaning is as its dictionary definition. For example, denotatively, the noun “school” means “a place, institution, or building where instruction is given.”

Connotative meaning is more variable, figurative, and subjective. The connotative meaning of a word is what the word suggests or implies. For instance, the connotative meaning of the word “school” includes all the feelings, associations, and emotions that the word touches off in different people. For some people, “school” might connote personal growth, childhood friends, and a special teacher. For others, it might connote frustration, discipline, and boring homework assignments.

Connotative meaning gives words their intensity and emotional power. It arouses in listeners feelings of anger, pity, love, fear, friendship, nostalgia, greed, guilt, and the like. Speakers, like poets, often use connotation to enrich their meaning. For example:

Terrorists neither listen to reason nor engage in reasoning with others. Their aim is to generate fear—to frighten people into submission. They measure success by the magnitude of the fear they generate through brutal, savage acts of violence. Terrorists are prepared to kill to further whatever cause they claim to be pursuing. And the heinousness of these murders is accentuated by the fact that terrorists murder without passion. They murder with cool deliberation and deliberate planning. They are utterly amoral.

The underlined words in this passage have powerful connotations that are almost certain to produce a strong emotional revulsion to terrorism.

Here, in contrast, is another version of the same statement—this time using words with a different set of connotations:

Terrorists do not seek to negotiate with their opponents. They seek victory by using political and psychological pressure, including acts of violence that may endanger the lives of some people. To the terrorist, ultimate objectives are more important than the means used to achieve them.

With the exception of “terrorist,” the words in this statement are less likely to evoke an intensely negative response than those in the first statement.

Which statement is preferable? That depends on the audience, the occasion, and the speaker’s purpose. Do you want to stir up your listeners’ emotions, rally them to some cause? Then select words with more intense connotative meanings. Or are you addressing a controversial issue and trying to seem completely impartial? Then stick with words that touch off less intense reactions. Choosing words skillfully for their denotative

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Then stick with words that touch on less intense reactions. Choosing words skilfully for their connotative and connotative meanings is a crucial part of the speaker's craft.



Words are the tools of the speaker's craft. Good speakers use them accurately and correctly. They also use language that will be clear, vivid, and appropriate for their listeners.

Mark Mitchell/Getty Images



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Mark Mitchell/Getty Images

Using Language Accurately

Using language accurately is as vital to a speaker as using numbers accurately is to an accountant. One student learned about this the hard way. In a speech about the U.S. legal system, he referred several times to evidence that would “collaborate” the guilt or innocence of a defendant. What he meant, of course, was “corroborate.” When this was pointed out to him afterward, he was noticeably embarrassed; worse, the error diminished his credibility and reduced the effectiveness of his speech.

Fortunately, such outright blunders are relatively rare among college students. However, we all commit more subtle errors—especially using one word when another will capture our ideas more precisely. Every word has shades of meaning that distinguish it from every other word. As Mark Twain said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

If you look in a [thesaurus](#), you’ll find the following words given as synonyms:

knowledge

expertise

education

All mean roughly the same thing—special grasp of a subject matter or skill. But all these words have different shades of meaning. See if you can fill in the best word to complete each of the following sentences:

1. Because he won a scholarship to a top university, Enrique received an excellent

_____.

2. Sophie acquired her _____ of Chinese history by reading a number of books on the

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The best answers for the three statements are:

1. education

2. knowledge

3. expertise

Each of the words means something a little different from the others, and each says something special to listeners.

As you prepare your speeches, ask yourself constantly, “What do I *really* want to say? What do I *really* mean?” When in doubt, consult a dictionary or thesaurus to make sure you have the best words to express your ideas.

Using Language Clearly

People are different. What makes perfect sense to some may be gobbledygook to others. You cannot assume that what is clear to you is clear to your audience. Listeners, unlike readers, cannot turn to a dictionary or reread an author's words to discover their meaning. A speaker's meaning must be *immediately* comprehensible; it must be so clear that there is no chance of misunderstanding. You can ensure this by using familiar words, by choosing concrete words over abstract words, and by eliminating verbal clutter.

Use Familiar Words

One of the biggest barriers to clear speech is using big, bloated words where short, sharp ones will do the job better.² This is especially true when it comes to technical language that may be familiar to the speaker but not to the audience. Yet, if you work at it, you will almost always be able to translate even the most specialized topic into clear, familiar language.

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Here, for instance, are two passages explaining the devastating effects of a pregnant woman's drinking on her unborn child. The first passage is technically accurate, but it contains too many obscure words.

The deleterious effects of alcohol on the unborn child are very serious. When a pregnant mother consumes alcohol, the ethanol in the bloodstream easily crosses the placenta from mother to child and invades the amniotic fluid. This can produce a number of abnormal birth syndromes, including central-nervous-system dysfunctions, growth deficiencies, a cluster of facial aberrations, and variable major and minor malformations.

Well-informed listeners can probably figure out “deleterious effects,” “central-nervous-system dysfunctions,” and “facial aberrations.” But these terms don't create sharp mental images of what the speaker is trying to say.

Here, in contrast, is the second passage. It is utterly clear and shows what can be done with work, imagination, and a healthy respect for everyday words:

Notice how much cleaner and easier to follow the revised version is. No longer are the speaker's ideas hidden in a thicket of wasted words.

This kind of pruning is easy once you get the knack of it. The hardest part—and it is often very hard—is recognizing clutter and forcing yourself to throw away the unnecessary words. Watch for clutter when you write your speech outlines. Be prepared to revise the outline until your ideas emerge clearly and crisply.



Even when discussing technical subjects, effective speakers such as renowned scholar Henry Louis Gates look for ways to communicate their ideas in clear, familiar language.

Amy Sussman/Getty Images

You can also help eliminate clutter by practicing your speeches with a digital recorder. As you play back the speech, keep an ear out not just for flabby phrases but for verbal fillers such as “you know,” “like,” and “really.” Practice delivering the speech again, this time making a special effort to trim it of wasted or distracting words. This will not only make you a better public speaker, it will

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trim it of wasted or distracting words. This will not only make you a better public speaker, it will also help you present ideas more effectively in meetings, conversations, and group discussions.⁴

Using Language Vividly

Just as you can be accurate without being clear, so you can be both accurate and clear without being interesting. Here, for example, is how Barack Obama *might* have phrased part of his acclaimed presidential speech commemorating the 1965 civil rights march across Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama:

We are very proud of the people who acted in support of civil rights. They were brave, patriotic, and religious. They suffered greatly, but they remained committed to their principles.

Here is what Obama *actually* said:

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We gather here to honor the courage of ordinary Americans willing to endure billy clubs and the chastening rod; tear gas and the trampling hoof; men and women who despite the gush of blood and splintered bone would stay true to their North Star and keep marching toward justice.

They did as Scripture instructed: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." And in the days to come, they went back again and again. When the trumpet call sounded for more to join, the people came—Black and white, young and old, Christian and Jew, waving the American flag and singing the same anthems full of faith and hope.

Page 216

Much more stirring, isn't it? If you want to move people with your speeches, use vivid, animated language. Although there are several ways to do this, two of the most important are imagery and rhythm.

Imagery

One sign of a good novelist is the ability to create word pictures that let you "see" the haunted house, or

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One sign of a good novelist is the ability to create word pictures that let you “see” the haunted house, or “hear” the birds chirping on a warm spring morning, or “taste” the hot enchiladas at a Mexican restaurant.

Speakers can use **imagery** in much the same way to make their ideas come alive. Three ways to generate imagery are by using concrete words, simile, and metaphor.

Concrete Words

As we saw earlier in this chapter, choosing concrete words over abstract words is one way to enhance the clarity of your speeches. Concrete words are also the key to effective imagery. Consider the following excerpt from Ronald Reagan’s famous address commemorating the 40th anniversary of D-Day. Speaking at the scene of the battle, Reagan dramatically recounted the heroism of the U.S. Rangers who scaled the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc to help free Europe from Hitler’s stranglehold:

We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France. The air is soft, but 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, and the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannon.

At dawn, on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 Rangers jumped off the British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. . . . The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers—at the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and began to pull themselves up.

When one Ranger fell, another would take his place. When one rope was cut, a Ranger would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed, shot back, and held their footing. Soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top, and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs, they began to seize back the continent of Europe.⁵

Concrete words call up mental impressions of sights, sounds, touch, smell, and taste. In Reagan's speech, we do not merely learn that the U.S. Rangers helped win the battle of D-Day. We visualize the Rangers landing at the foot of the cliffs. We see them fighting their way up the cliffs in the face of enemy grenades and machine guns. We hear the crack of rifle fire and the cries of the soldiers. The concrete words create images that pull us irresistibly into the speech.

Simile

Another way to create imagery is through the use of **simile**. Simile is an explicit comparison between things that are essentially different yet have something in common. It always contains the word “like” or “as.” Here are some examples from student speeches:

Walking into my grandparents' home when I was a child was like being wrapped in a giant security blanket.
With eyes glued on their phones, pedestrians walk the streets like zombies after the apocalypse.



Audience-oriented speakers put a premium on clear, vivid, uncluttered language. They give a great deal of thought to finding just the right words to express their ideas.

Jörg Carstensen/picture alliance/Getty Images

These are bright, fresh similes that clarify and vitalize ideas. Some similes, however, have become stale through overuse. Here are a few:

fresh as a daisy

hungry as a bear

fit as a fiddle

busy as a bee

strong as an ox

happy as a lark

Such **clichés** are fine in everyday conversation, but you should avoid them in speechmaking. Otherwise, you are likely to be “dull as dishwater” and to find your audience “sleeping like a log”!

Metaphor

You can also use **metaphor** to create imagery in your speeches. Metaphor is an implicit comparison between things that are essentially different yet have something in common. Unlike simile, metaphor does not contain the word “like” or “as.” For example:

By highlighting the sounds of words, alliteration catches the attention of listeners and can make ideas easier to remember. Used sparingly, it is a marvelous way to spruce up your speeches. Used to excess, however, it can draw attention to itself, so that listeners get more involved in listening for the next alliteration than in absorbing the content of the speech.

Antithesis

Finally, you might try using **antithesis**—the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, usually in parallel structure. For example:

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

Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate. (John F. Kennedy)

It is no accident that both of these examples are from speeches by President Kennedy. Antithesis was one of his favorite language devices, and the one he used in his most memorable phrases. Because it nearly always produces a neatly turned phrase, it is a fine way to give your speeches a special touch of class.

You may be thinking that imagery and rhythm are too fancy for ordinary speeches like yours. This is not true. Take a look at the following excerpt from one student's speech about Ida B. Wells, a pioneering civil rights activist who fought against the injustices of her time:

Ida B. Wells had the courage to stand up—to stand up for herself and for equality under the law. Born in muggy Mississippi in the dark days of the Civil War, Wells faced segregation every day, but she refused to accept it.

In 1883 she bought a first-class ticket for a train ride from Memphis to Nashville. Even though she paid just as much as the white, first-class passengers, and had already taken her seat, crew members told her to move to the crowded, run-down smoking car reserved for Blacks. When she refused and stayed in her seat, she was

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the crowded, full-down smoking car reserved for blacks. When she refused and stayed in her seat, she was dragged away and forcibly removed from the train.

Seventy years before Rosa Parks ignited the civil rights movement by refusing to give up her bus seat, Wells stood up for equality—also by staying seated.

This is vivid, moving language. The imagery is sharp and poignant, the rhythm strong and insistent. Think of how you can do similar things in your own speeches.

connect™

View this excerpt from “Ida B. Wells” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 12.2).

Using Language Appropriately

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Here is part of a famous oration given by John Hancock in 1774, during the American Revolution. Speaking of the British soldiers who killed five Americans in the Boston Massacre, Hancock exclaimed:

Ye dark designing knaves, ye murderers, parricides! How dare you tread upon the earth, which has drank in the blood of slaughtered innocents shed by your wicked hands? . . . Tell me, ye bloody butchers, ye villains high and low, ye wretches, do you not feel the goads and stings of conscious guilt pierce through your savage bosoms?

This is certainly vivid language—and Hancock’s audience loved it. But can you imagine speaking the same way today? Norms about language are constantly changing as society itself changes. In addition to being accurate, clear, and vivid, language should be appropriate—to the occasion, to the audience, to the topic, and to the speaker.



Language needs to be appropriate to a speaker’s topic, as well as to the audience. A speech on thoroughbred horse racing would use more action-oriented words than would a speech about theories of psychology.

Appropriateness to the Occasion

Language that is appropriate for some occasions may not be appropriate for others. As a simple example, a coach might address the football team as “you guys” (or worse!), whereas the speaker in a more formal situation would begin with “distinguished guests.” Try reversing these two situations, and see how ridiculous it becomes. It’s only common sense to adjust your language to different occasions.

Appropriateness to the Audience

Appropriateness also depends on the audience. If you keep this in mind, it will help you greatly when dealing with technical topics. When addressing an audience of physicians, you might say “parotitis” to refer to a viral disease marked by the swelling of the parotid glands. Your audience would know just what you

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to a viral disease marked by the swelling of the parotid glands. Your audience would know just what you meant. But when talking to a nonmedical audience, such as your classmates, you would appropriately say “mumps.”

You should be especially careful to avoid language that might offend your audience. Off-color humor or profanity might be appropriate in a comedy routine, but most listeners would find it offensive in a formal public speech. Remember, speakers are expected to elevate and polish their language when addressing an audience.

Speakers are also expected to use inclusive language that is respectful of the different groups that make up American society. As the United States has become more diverse, our language has evolved to reflect that diversity. Public speakers should strive to use language that avoids stereotypes based on age, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and other factors. Just as in conversation you would be sensitive to a person with a different background, condition, or identity than yours, so you should accord the same respect when giving a speech. Using inclusive language is not a matter of political correctness, but it is a matter of P.C.—personal courtesy.⁷

Appropriateness to the Topic

Language should also be appropriate to the topic. You would not use metaphor, antithesis, and alliteration when explaining how to change a bicycle tire. But you might use all three in a speech honoring U.S. soldiers who have died in defense of their country. The first topic calls for straightforward description and explanation. The second calls for special language skills to evoke emotion, admiration, and appreciation.

Appropriateness to the Speaker

No matter what the occasion, audience, or topic, language should also be appropriate to the speaker. Every public speaker develops his or her own language style.

“Terrific,” you may be thinking. “I have my own style, too. I feel more comfortable using abstract words, slang, and technical jargon. That’s *my* way of speaking.” But to say that language should be appropriate to the speaker does not justify ignoring the other needs for appropriateness. There is a difference between one’s everyday style and one’s *developed* style as a public speaker. Accomplished speakers have developed their speaking styles over many years of trial, error, and practice. They have *worked* at using language effectively.

You can do the same if you become language-conscious. One way to develop this consciousness is to read and listen to effective speakers. Study their techniques for achieving accuracy, clarity, and vividness, and try to adapt those techniques to your own speeches. But do not try to “become” someone else when you speak. Learn from other speakers, blend what you learn into your own language style, and seek to become the best possible you.

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Summary

Good speakers have respect for language and how it works. As a speaker, you should be aware of the meanings of words and know how to use language accurately, clearly, vividly, and appropriately.

Words have two kinds of meanings—denotative and connotative. Denotative meaning is precise, literal, and objective. Connotative meaning is more variable, figurative, and subjective. It includes all the feelings, associations, and emotions that a word touches off in different people.

Page 223

Using language accurately is vital to a speaker. Never use a word unless you are sure of its meaning. If you are not sure, look up the word in a dictionary. As you prepare your speeches, ask yourself constantly, “What do I *really* want to say? What do I *really* mean?” Choose words that are precise and accurate.

Using language clearly allows listeners to grasp your meaning immediately. You can ensure this by using words that are known to the average person and require no specialized background, by choosing concrete words in preference to more abstract ones, and by eliminating verbal clutter.

Using language vividly helps bring your speech to life. One way to make your language more vivid is through imagery, which you can develop by using concrete language, simile, and metaphor. Another way to make your speeches vivid is by exploiting the rhythm of language with parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and antithesis.

Using language appropriately means adapting to the particular occasion, audience, and topic at hand. It also means developing your own language style instead of trying to copy someone else's.

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Exercises for Critical Thinking

1. Arrange each of the following sequences in order, from the most abstract word to the most concrete word.
 - a. housing complex, building, dining room, structure, apartment
 - b. *Mona Lisa*, art, painting, creative activity, portrait
 - c. automobile, vehicle, Ferrari, transportation, sports car
2. Rewrite each of the following sentences using clear, familiar words.
 - a. My employment objective is to attain a position of maximum financial reward.
 - b. All professors at this school are expected to achieve high standards of excellence in their instructional duties.
 - c. In the eventuality of a fire, it is imperative that all persons evacuate the building without undue delay.
3. Each of the following statements uses one or more of these stylistic devices: metaphor, simile, parallelism, repetition, alliteration, antithesis. Identify the device(s) used in each statement.
 - a. "We are a people in a quandary about the present. We are a people in search of our future. We are a people in search of a national community." (Barbara Jordan)
 - b. "The vice presidency is the sand trap of American politics. It's near the prize, and designed to be limiting." (Howard Fineman)
 - c. "I want you to make history, not be history. I want your work to be remembered, not be forgotten. I

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- c. "I want you to make history, not be history. I want your work to be remembered, not be forgotten. I want you to power and steer the academic current, not be engulfed by it." (Ibram X. Kendi)
- d. "I speak so those without a voice can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights: Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity." (Malala Yousafzai)

End Notes

1. For a valuable collection of essays on language, meaning, and culture, see Susan D. Blum (ed.), *Making Sense of Language*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
2. Dorothy Sarnoff, *Speech Can Change Your Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 71.
3. Annmarie Mungo, "A Child Is Born," *Winning Orations, 1980* (Mankato, MN: Interstate Oratorical Association, 1980), pp. 49–50.
4. See Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 12th ed. (New York: Longman, 2016), for more on the principles of verbal clarity.
5. Ronald Reagan, "Address on the Fortieth Anniversary of D-Day," in Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst (eds.), *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900–1999* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 552–555.
6. Edward Bliss Jr. (ed.), *In Search of Light: The Broadcasts of Edward R. Murrow, 1938–1961* (New York: Knopf, 1967), p. 276.
- 7.

CHAPTER 13

Delivery

Page 226



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- 📄 What Is Good Delivery?
- 📄 Methods of Delivery
- 📄 The Speaker's Voice
- 📄 The Speaker's Body
- 📄 Practicing Delivery
- 📄 Answering Audience Questions

If you were to record one of Stephen Colbert's monologues, memorize it word for word, and stand up before your friends to recite it, would you get the same response Colbert does? Not very likely. And why not? Because you would not *deliver* the jokes as Colbert does. Of course, the jokes are basically funny. But Stephen Colbert brings something extra to the jokes—his manner of presentation, his vocal inflections, his perfectly timed pauses, his facial expressions, his gestures. All these are part of an expert delivery. It would take you years of practice—as it took Colbert—to duplicate his results.

No one expects your speech class to transform you into a multimillion-dollar talk show host. Still, this example demonstrates how important delivery can be to any public speaking situation. Even a mediocre speech will be more effective if it is presented well, whereas a wonderfully written speech can be ruined by poor delivery.

This does not mean dazzling delivery will turn a mindless string of nonsense into a triumphant

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What Is Good Delivery?

Wendell Phillips was a leader in the movement to abolish slavery in the United States during the 1800s. Some people considered him the greatest speaker of his time. The following story suggests one reason why:

Shortly before the Civil War an Andover student, learning that Phillips was to lecture in Boston, made a 22-mile pilgrimage on foot to hear him. At first the trip seemed hardly worthwhile, for the student discovered that Phillips was not an orator in the grand manner, but spoke in an almost conversational style. He stood on the platform, one hand lightly resting on a table, talked for what seemed to be about 20 minutes, concluded, and sat down. When the student looked at his watch, he found to his astonishment that he had been listening for an hour and a half!¹

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Good delivery does not call attention to itself. It conveys the speaker's ideas clearly, interestingly, and without distracting the audience. Most audiences prefer delivery that combines a certain degree of formality with the best attributes of good conversation—directness, spontaneity, animation, vocal and facial expressiveness, and a lively sense of communication.

Speech delivery is an art, not a science. What works for one speaker may fail for another. And what succeeds with today's audience may not with tomorrow's. You cannot become a skilled speaker just by following a set of rules in a textbook. In the long run, there is no substitute for experience. But take heart! A textbook *can* give you basic pointers to get you started in the right direction.

When you plan your first speech (or your second or third), you should concentrate on such basics as speaking intelligibly, avoiding distracting mannerisms, and establishing eye contact with your listeners. Once you get these elements under control and begin to feel fairly comfortable in front of an audience, you can work on polishing your delivery to enhance the impact of your ideas. Eventually, you may find yourself able to control the timing, rhythm, and momentum of a speech as skillfully as a conductor controls an orchestra.

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Methods of Delivery

There are four basic methods of delivering a speech: (1) reading verbatim from a manuscript, (2) reciting a memorized text, (3) speaking impromptu, and (4) speaking extemporaneously. Let us look at each.

Reading from a Manuscript

Certain speeches *must* be delivered word for word, according to a meticulously prepared **manuscript**. Examples include a Pope's religious proclamation, an engineer's report to a professional meeting, or a president's message to Congress. In such situations, absolute accuracy is essential. Every word of the speech will be analyzed by the press, by colleagues, perhaps by enemies. In the case of the president, a misstated phrase could cause an international incident.

The Speaker's Voice

What kind of voice do you have? Is it rich and resonant? Soft and alluring? Loud and irritating? Whatever the characteristics of your voice, you can be sure it is unique. Because no two people are exactly the same physically, no two people have identical voices.

A golden voice is certainly an asset for a public speaker, but some of the most famous speakers in history have had undistinguished voices. Abraham Lincoln had a harsh and penetrating voice; Winston Churchill suffered from a slight lisp and an awkward stammer. Like them, you can overcome natural disadvantages and use your voice to the best effect. Lincoln and Churchill learned to *control* their voices. You can do the same thing.

The aspects of voice you should work to control are volume, pitch, rate, pauses, vocal variety, pronunciation, articulation, and dialect.

Volume

At one time, a powerful voice was essential for an orator. Today, electronic amplification allows even a soft-spoken person to be heard in any setting. In the classroom, **volume** is essential, because you will speak without a microphone. When you do, be sure to adjust your voice to the acoustics of the room, the size of the audience, and the level of background noise. If you speak too loudly, your listeners will think you boorish. If you speak too softly, they will not understand you.

Remember that your own voice always sounds louder to you than to a listener. Soon after beginning your speech, glance at the people farthest away from you. If they look puzzled, are leaning forward in their seats, or are otherwise straining to hear, you need to talk louder.

Unlike in-person speeches, online speeches require a microphone to carry your voice across the Internet. Presentation software like Zoom allows you to set your audio level so your voice is transmitted at just the right volume. This is usually done in the software's preferences pane. Before your speech, check the volume and adjust as needed.

Pitch

Pitch is the highness or lowness of a speaker's voice. The faster sound waves vibrate, the higher their pitch; the slower they vibrate, the lower their pitch.

Changes in pitch are known as **inflections**. Inflection is what makes the difference between the "A-ha!"

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Changes in pitch are known as **inflections**. Inflection is what makes the difference between the “Aha!” triumphantly exclaimed by Sherlock Holmes upon discovering a seemingly decisive clue and the “Aha” he mutters when he learns the clue is not decisive after all. If you were to read the preceding sentence aloud, your voice would probably go up in pitch on the first “Aha” and down on the second.

In ordinary conversation, we instinctively use inflections to convey meaning and emotion. People who use no variation in pitch are said to speak in a **monotone**, a trait whose only known benefit is to cure insomnia in one’s listeners.

Although few people speak in an absolute monotone, many fall into repetitious pitch patterns that are just as hypnotic. You can guard against this by recording your speeches as you practice them. If all your sentences end on the same inflection—either upward or downward—work on varying your pitch patterns to fit the meaning of your words.

Rate

Rate refers to the speed at which a person talks. People in the United States usually speak at a rate between 120 and 150 words per minute, but there is no uniform rate for effective speechmaking. Franklin Roosevelt spoke at 110 words per minute, John Kennedy at 180. Martin Luther King opened his “I Have a Dream” speech at 92 words per minute and finished it at 145. The best rate of speech depends on several things—the vocal attributes of the speaker, the mood she or he is trying to create, the composition of the audience, and the nature of the occasion.

Two obvious faults to avoid are speaking so slowly that your listeners become bored or so quickly that they lose track of your ideas. Novice speakers are particularly prone to racing through their speeches at a frantic rate. Fortunately, this is usually an easy habit to break, as is the less common one of crawling through one’s speech at a snail’s pace.

The key in both cases is becoming aware of the problem and concentrating on solving it. Use a recording device to check how fast you speak. Pay special attention to rate when practicing your speech. Finally, be sure to include reminders about delivery on your speaking outline so you won't forget to make the adjustments when you give your speech in class.³

Pauses

Learning how and when to **pause** is a major challenge for most beginning speakers. Even a moment of silence can seem like an eternity. As you gain more poise and confidence, however, you will discover how useful the pause can be. It can signal the end of a thought unit, give an idea time to sink in, and lend dramatic impact to a statement. "The right word may be effective," said Mark Twain, "but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause."

Developing a keen sense of timing is partly a matter of common sense, partly a matter of experience. You will not always get your pauses just right at first, but keep trying. Listen to accomplished speakers to see how they use pauses to modulate the rate and rhythm of their messages. Work on pauses when you practice your speeches.

Make sure you pause at the end of thought units and not in the middle. Otherwise, you may distract listeners from your ideas. Most important, do not fill the silence with "uh," "er," or "um." These **vocalized pauses** can create negative perceptions about a speaker's intelligence and often make a speaker appear deceptive.⁴

Vocal Variety

Just as variety is the spice of life, so is it the spice of public speaking. A flat, listless, unchanging voice is as deadly to speechmaking as a flat, listless, unchanging routine is to daily life. When giving a speech, you should strive for vocal variety—changes in rate, pitch, and volume that will give your voice interest and expressiveness.

For an excellent example of **vocal variety**, watch [Video 13.2](#). The speaker, Sajjid Zahir Chinoy, was born and raised in Bombay, India, before coming to the United States to attend college at the University of Richmond. At the end of his senior year, Chinoy was selected as the student commencement speaker in a campus-wide competition. He spoke of the warm reception he received at Richmond and of how cultural differences can be overcome by attempting to understand other people.



The best rate of speech depends partly on the mood a speaker wants to create. To communicate the beauty of Switzerland's Lake Geneva, you would probably speak at a slower-than-normal rate.

Christian D/Getty Images

At the end of his speech, Chinoy received thunderous applause—partly because of what he said, but also because of how he said it. Addressing the audience of 3,000 people without notes, he spoke

extemporaneously with strong eye contact and excellent vocal variety. The speech was so inspiring that the main speaker, Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles, began his presentation by paying tribute to Chinoy. “I’ve been to a number of commencements,” said Coles, “but I’ve never heard a speech quite like that!”

How can you develop a lively, expressive voice? Above all, by approaching every speech as Chinoy approached his—as an opportunity to share with your listeners ideas that are important to you. Your sense of conviction and your desire to communicate will give your voice the same spark it has in spontaneous conversation.

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View an excerpt from “Questions of Culture” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 13.2).

Pronunciation

We all mispronounce words now and again. Here, for example, are four words with which you are probably familiar. Say each one aloud.

genuine

arctic

err

nuclear

Very likely you made a mistake on at least one, for they are among the most frequently mispronounced words in the English language. Let's see:

Word	Common Error	Correct Pronunciation
genuine	gen-u-wine	gen-u-win
arctic	ar-tic	arc-tic
nuclear	nu-cu-lar	nu-cle-ar
err	air	ur

Every word leads a triple life: It is read, written, and spoken. Most people recognize and understand many more words in reading than they use in ordinary writing, and about three times as many as occur in spontaneous speech.⁵ This is why we occasionally stumble when speaking words that are part of our reading or writing vocabularies. In other cases, we may mispronounce the most commonplace words out of habit.

The problem is that we usually don't *know* when we are mispronouncing a word. If we are lucky, we learn the right **pronunciation** by hearing someone else say the word properly or by having someone gently correct us in private. If we are unlucky, we mispronounce the word in front of a roomful of people, who may raise their eyebrows, groan, or laugh.

All of this argues for practicing your speech in front of as many trusted friends and relatives as you can corner. If you have any doubts about the proper pronunciation of certain words, be sure to check a dictionary.

Articulation

Articulation and pronunciation are not identical. Sloppy articulation is the failure to form particular speech sounds crisply and distinctly. It is one of several causes of mispronunciation, but you can articulate a word sharply and still mispronounce it. For example, if you say the “s” in “Illinois” or the “p” in “pneumonia,”

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sharply and still mispronounce it. For example, if you say the *s* in *sinners* or the *p* in *pneumonia*, you are making a mistake in pronunciation, regardless of how precisely you articulate the sounds.

Among U.S. college students, poor articulation is more common than ignorance of correct pronunciation. We know that “let me” is not “lemme,” that “going to” is not “gonna,” that “did you” is not “didja,” yet we persist in articulating these words improperly. Here are some other common errors in articulation you should work to avoid:

Word	Misarticulation
ought to	otta
didn't	dint
don't know	dunno
have to	hafta
want to	wanna
will you	wilya

If you have sloppy articulation, work on identifying and eliminating your most common errors. Like other bad habits, careless articulation can be broken only by persistent effort—but the results are well worth it. As Shakespeare advised, “Mend your speech a little, lest you may mar your fortunes.”

Dialect

Most languages have **dialects**, each with a distinctive accent, grammar, and vocabulary. Dialects are usually based on regional or ethnic speech patterns. The United States has four major regional dialects—Eastern, New England, Southern, and General American. We also have multiple ethnic dialects. As the nation has become more diverse culturally, it has also become more diverse linguistically.

Linguists have concluded that no dialect is inherently better or worse than another. Dialects are not linguistic badges of superiority or inferiority. They are usually shaped by our regional or ethnic background, and every dialect is “right” for the community of people who use it.

When is a given dialect appropriate in public speaking? The answer depends above all on the composition of your audience. Heavy use of any dialect—regional or ethnic—can be troublesome when the audience does not share that dialect. In such a situation, the dialect may cause listeners to make negative judgments about the speaker’s personality, intelligence, and competence. This is why professional speakers have been known to invest large amounts of time (and money) to master the General American dialect used by most television news broadcasters.

Does this mean you must talk like a television news broadcaster if you want to be successful in your speeches? Not at all. Regional or ethnic dialects do not pose a problem as long as the audience is familiar with them and finds them appropriate. When speaking in the North, for example, a southern politician may avoid regional dialect. But when addressing audiences in the South, the same politician may intentionally include regional dialect as a way of creating common ground with listeners.

Although not strictly speaking a matter of dialect, the proficiency of non-native speakers of English often arises in the speech classroom. Fortunately, teachers and students alike usually go out of their way to be helpful and encouraging to international students and others for whom English is not the primary language. Over the years, many non-native speakers of English have found speech class a supportive environment in which to improve their proficiency in spoken English.⁶

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The Speaker’s Body

Imagine yourself at a party. During the evening you form impressions about the people around you. Jonte seems relaxed and even-tempered, Nicole tense and irritable. Kyndra seems open and straightforward, Sun

Hi hostile and evasive. Amin seems happy to see you; Seth definitely is not.

How do you reach these conclusions? To a surprising extent, you reach them not on the basis of what people say with words, but because of what they say with their posture, gestures, eyes, and facial expressions. Suppose you are sitting next to Amin, and he says, “This is a great party. I’m really glad to be here with you.” However, his body is turned slightly away from you, and he keeps looking at someone across the room. Despite what he says, you know he is *not* glad to be there with you.

Much the same thing happens in speechmaking. Posture, facial expression, gestures, eye contact—Page 236
all affect the way listeners respond to a speaker. How we use these and other body motions to communicate is the subject of a fascinating area of study called **kinesics**. One of its founders, Ray Birdwhistell, estimated that more than 700,000 physical signals can be sent through bodily movement. Studies have shown that these signals have a significant impact on the meaning communicated by speakers.

Research has also lent support to what the Greek historian Herodotus observed more than 2,400 years ago: “People trust their ears less than their eyes.” When a speaker’s body language is inconsistent with his or her words, listeners may well believe the body language rather than the words. Here are the major aspects of physical action that will affect the outcome of your speeches.

Personal Appearance

Many studies have confirmed that personal appearance plays an important role in speechmaking.⁷ As with many aspects of public speaking, how you dress will depend a lot on the audience and the occasion. If you’re addressing a group of Wall Street executives, you’ll likely wear a business suit. If you’re addressing Silicon Valley coders, you’ll doubtless wear something more casual. You’ll make still different choices if you’re speaking at a sales event or a retirement celebration.

A good rule of thumb is to dress a half-step up from your audience. If your audience will be in casual

clothing, you should opt for “smart casual” or “business casual.” If they will be in business clothing, you should appear slightly more formal. Keep in mind that listeners always see you before they hear you, so try to evoke a favorable first impression.



Good speakers use a lively voice to bring their ideas to life. They also use eye contact and facial expressions to create a bond with their audience.

SDI Productions/Getty Images

Personal appearance is as important for online speeches as it is for in-person speeches. Some people think that because much of their online communication is informal, their online speeches can be, too. But that's not the case. Even if you're speaking from your dorm or apartment, you can't wear what you would normally wear around the house. Instead, follow this simple rule: Your personal appearance in an online speech should be the same as it would be if you were giving the speech to an in-person audience.

Movement

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Novice speakers are often unsure about what to do with their body while giving a speech. Some shift their weight uneasily, fidget with their notes, or jingle coins in their pockets. Still others turn into statues, standing rigid and expressionless from beginning to end.

Such quirks usually stem from nervousness. If you are prone to distracting mannerisms, your teacher will identify them so you can work on controlling them. With a little concentration, these mannerisms should disappear as you become more comfortable speaking in front of an audience.

As important as how you act during the speech is what you do just *before* you begin and *after* you finish. As you get ready to speak, try to appear calm, poised, and confident, despite the butterflies in your stomach. Don't rush to get the speech started. Give yourself time to get set. Arrange your notes just the way you want them. Establish eye contact with your listeners. Then—and only then—should you start to talk.

When you reach the end of your speech, maintain eye contact for a few moments after you stop talking. This will give your closing line time to sink in. As it does, maintain your cool, collected demeanor. Whatever you do, don't start to gather your notes before you have finished talking, and don't cap off your speech with a huge sigh of relief or some remark like, "Whew! Am I glad that's over!"

When practicing your speeches, spend a little time rehearsing how you will behave at the beginning and at the end. It is one of the easiest—and one of the most effective—things you can do to improve your image with an audience.

Gestures

Few aspects of delivery cause students more anguish than deciding what to do with their hands. "Should I clasp them behind my back? Let them hang at my sides? Rest them on the lectern? And what about gesturing? When should I do that—and how?" Even people who use their hands expressively in everyday conversation seem to regard them as awkward appendages when speaking before an audience.

Over the years, more nonsense has been written about gesturing than any other aspect of speech delivery. Adroit **gestures** *can* add to the impact of a speech; but effective speakers do not need a vast repertoire of gestures. Some accomplished speakers gesture frequently, others hardly at all. The primary rule is this: Whatever gestures you make should not distract from your message. They should *appear* natural and spontaneous, help clarify or reinforce your ideas, and be suited to the audience and occasion. For a good example, watch  **Video 13.3**.

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View an excerpt from “Third-Culture Kid” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 13.3).

Gesturing tends to work itself out as you acquire experience and confidence. For now, make sure your hands do not upstage your ideas. Avoid flailing them about, wringing them together, or toying with your rings. Once you have eliminated these distractions, forget about your hands. Think about communicating with your listeners, and your gestures will take care of themselves—just as they do in conversation.

Eye Contact

The eyes have been called “the windows of the soul.” We look to them to help gauge a speaker’s truthfulness, intelligence, attitudes, and feelings.

Although patterns of **eye contact** in everyday conversation vary from culture to culture, there is wide agreement across cultures on the importance of eye contact in public speaking. In most circumstances, one of the quickest ways to establish a communicative bond with your listeners is to look at them personally and pleasantly. Avoiding their gaze is one of the surest ways to lose them.

Speakers in the United States who fail to establish eye contact are perceived as tentative or ill at ease and may be seen as insincere or dishonest. It is no wonder, then, that teachers urge students to look at the audience 80 to 90 percent of the time they are talking. You may find this disconcerting at first. But after one or two speeches, you should be able to meet the gaze of your audience fairly comfortably.

It isn’t enough just to look at your listeners; *how* you look at them also counts. Beware of the tendency to gaze intently at one part of the audience while ignoring the rest. In speech class, some students look only at the section of the room where the teacher is sitting. Others avoid looking anywhere near the teacher and focus on one or two sympathetic friends. You should try to establish eye contact with your whole audience.

When addressing a small audience such as your class, you can usually look briefly from one person to another. For a larger group, you can scan the audience rather than trying to engage the eyes of each person individually. No matter the size of your audience, you want your eyes to convey confidence, sincerity, and conviction.



Regardless of the audience and situation, you should use your delivery to establish a strong bond with your listeners. Their

delivery to establish a strong bond with your listeners. Their responses will help you judge how you are coming across.

Jeffbergen/Getty Images

Watch [Video 13.4](#) to see a fine example of eye contact. The speaker is telling her classmates how they can become volunteers for the Special Olympics. Notice how she uses her eyes to connect with her listeners at a personal level. This is the kind of strong communication you should strive for in your speeches. (For special aspects of eye contact in online speaking, check [Chapter 19](#), [pages 356–358](#).)

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View an excerpt from “Making a Difference Through the Special Olympics” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 13.4).

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Jeffbergen/Getty Images

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Practicing Delivery

Popular wisdom promises that practice makes perfect. This is true, but only if we practice properly. You will do little to improve your speech delivery unless you practice the right things in the right ways. Here is a five-step method that has worked well for many students:

1. Go through your preparation outline *aloud* to check how what you have written translates into spoken discourse. Is it too long? Too short? Are the main points clear when you speak them? Are the supporting materials distinct, convincing, interesting? Do the introduction and conclusion come across well? As you answer these questions, revise the speech as needed.
2. Prepare your speaking outline. In doing so, be sure to follow the guidelines in [Chapter 11](#). Use the same visual framework as in the preparation outline. Make sure the speaking outline is easy to read at a glance. Give yourself cues on the outline for delivering the speech.
3. Practice the speech aloud several times using only the speaking outline. Be sure to “talk through” all examples and to recite in full all quotations and statistics. If your speech includes visual aids, use them as you practice. The first couple of times, you will probably forget something or make a mistake, but don’t worry. Keep going and complete the speech as well as you can. Concentrate on gaining control of the *ideas*; don’t try to learn the speech word for word. After a few tries you should be able to get through the speech extemporaneously with surprising ease.
4. Now begin to polish and refine your delivery. Practice the speech in front of a mirror to check for eye contact and distracting mannerisms. Record the speech to gauge volume, pitch, rate, pauses, and vocal variety. Most important, try it out on friends, roommates, family members—anyone who will listen and

Answering Audience Questions

If you have ever watched a press conference or heard a speaker answer questions after a talk, you know the question-and-answer session can make or break a presentation. A speaker who handles questions well can strengthen the impact of his or her speech. On the other hand, a speaker who evades questions or shows annoyance will almost certainly create the opposite effect.

The question-and-answer session is a common part of public speaking, whether the occasion is a press conference, an online business presentation, a public hearing, or a classroom assignment. An answer to a question is often the final word an audience hears and is likely to leave a lasting impression.

Preparing for the Question-and-Answer Session

The first step to doing well in a Q&A session is to take it as seriously as the speech itself. The two major steps in preparing are working out answers to possible questions and practicing the delivery of those answers.

Formulate Answers to Possible Questions

Once you know that your presentation will include questions from the audience, you should be thinking about possible questions even as you are writing your speech. If you practice your speech in front of friends, family, or coworkers, ask them to jot down questions. Keep track of all the questions and formulate answers. Write your answers in full to make sure you have thought them through completely.

If you are giving a persuasive speech, be sure to work out answers to objections the audience may have to your proposal. No matter how careful you are to deal with those objections in your speech, you can be sure they will come up in the Q&A session.

If you are speaking on a topic with technical aspects, be ready to answer specialized inquiries about them, as well as questions that seek clarification, in nontechnical terms. You might even prepare a handout that you can distribute afterward for people who want more information.

Practice the Delivery of Your Answers

You would not present a speech to a room full of people without rehearsing. Neither should you go into a Q&A session without practicing the delivery of your answers.

One possibility is to have a friend or colleague listen to your presentation, ask questions, and critique your answers. This method is used by political candidates and business leaders before debates or press conferences. Another possibility is to record your answers to anticipated questions, play them back, and revise them until they are just right.

As you rehearse, work on making your answers brief and to the point. Many simple questions can be answered in 30 seconds, and even complex ones should usually be answered in a minute or two. If you practice answering questions beforehand, you will find it much easier to keep to these time limits.

Of course, there is no way to predict every question you will receive. But if you go into the Q&A period fully prepared, you will be able to adapt to whatever occurs.

Managing the Question-and-Answer Session

If you have ever watched a skillful speaker field inquiries from the audience, you know there is an art to

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If you have ever watched a skilful speaker field inquiries from the audience, you know there is an art to managing a Q&A session. Entire books have been written on this subject, but the following suggestions will get you started on the right foot.

Approach Questions with a Positive Attitude

A positive attitude will help you answer questions graciously and respectfully. Try to view questions from the audience as signs of genuine interest and a desire to learn more about your subject. If someone asks about a point that seems clear to you, don't respond by saying "I discussed that at the beginning of my talk," or "The answer seems obvious." Instead, use moments like these to reiterate or expand upon your ideas.

A speaker who adopts a sharp or defensive tone while answering questions will alienate many people in the audience. Even if you are asked a hostile question, keep your cool. Avoid the temptation to answer defensively, sarcastically, or argumentatively. Most people in the audience will respect you for trying to avoid a quarrel.

Using Public Speaking in Your **CAREER**

Utilizing your business degree and computer savvy, you have made a success of the online marketing company you started after graduating from college. Now in its third year, the company has prepared a proposal to design the e-commerce site for a major sporting goods retailer. In your 30-minute presentation to the retailer's management team, you will review the homepage designs, site maps, and security protocols.



Nick David/Getty Images

You notice on the agenda that another 30 minutes has been allotted after your presentation for questions and answers. Knowing from your previous experience with clients how important the Q&A session can be, you want to be sure you are ready for it. What steps will you take to prepare?

Listen Carefully

It's hard to answer a question well if you don't listen carefully to it. Give the questioner your full attention. When faced with an unclear or unwieldy question, try to rephrase it by saying something like, "If I understand your question, it seems to me that you are asking. . . ." Another option is simply to ask the audience member to repeat the question. Most people will restate it more succinctly and clearly.

Direct Answers to the Entire Audience

When you are being asked a question, look at the questioner. Direct your answer, however, to the entire audience. Make occasional eye contact with the questioner as you answer, but speak primarily to the audience as a whole. If you speak just to the questioner, the rest of your audience may drift off.

When speaking to a large audience, repeat or paraphrase each question after it is asked. This involves the entire audience and ensures that they know the question. In addition, repeating or paraphrasing

Page 242

the question gives you a moment to frame an answer before you respond.

In an online speech, you may be answering questions posed in the chat area of the presentation software. If so, be sure to restate the question for those who are not monitoring the chat. You can say something like, “Here’s a question I just received in the chat. . . .” Then answer it for the whole audience.

Be Honest and Straightforward

If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so. Don’t apologize, don’t evade, and most important, don’t try to bluff. Do, however, let the questioner know that you take the question seriously. Offer to check into the answer as soon as possible after the speech. If a more knowledgeable person is at hand, ask if she or he knows the answer.

Stay on Track

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It's easy to get diverted or lose control of time in a lively Q&A session. Unless there is a moderator, the speaker is responsible for keeping things on track. Allow one follow-up question from each person, and don't let yourself be dragged into a personal debate with any questioner. If someone attempts to ask more than two questions, respond graciously yet firmly by saying, "This is an interesting line of questioning, but we need to give other people a chance to ask questions."

Sometimes, a listener will launch into an extended monologue instead of posing a question. When this happens, you can retain control of the situation by saying something like, "Those are very interesting ideas, but do you have a specific question I can answer?" If the person persists, offer to talk individually with him or her after the session.



Question-and-answer sessions are an important part of public speaking in many situations, including business meetings, education conventions, and international conferences.

PeopleImages/Digital Vision/Getty Images

On some occasions, the length of the question-and-answer session is predetermined. On other occasions, it's up to the speaker. Make sure you allow enough time to get through issues of major importance, but don't let things drag on after the momentum of the session has started winding down. As the end approaches, offer to respond to another question or two. Then wrap things up by thanking the audience for its time and attention.⁸

Summary

Speech delivery is a matter of nonverbal communication. It is based on how you use your voice and body to convey the message expressed by your words. Rather than calling attention to itself, effective delivery conveys the speaker's ideas clearly, engagingly, and without distracting the audience.

There are four basic methods of delivering a speech: reading verbatim from a manuscript, reciting a memorized text, speaking impromptu, and speaking extemporaneously. When speaking extemporaneously, you will have a brief set of notes or a speaking outline and will choose the exact wording of your speech at the moment of delivery.

To use your voice effectively you should work on controlling your volume, pitch, rate, pauses, vocal variety, pronunciation, articulation, and dialect. Volume is the relative loudness of your voice, and pitch is the relative highness or lowness. Rate refers to the speed at which you talk. Pauses, when carefully timed, can add punch to your speech, but you should avoid vocalized pauses ("er," "um," and the like).

Vocal variety refers to changes in volume, pitch, rate, and pauses, and is crucial to making your voice lively and animated. You also need correct pronunciation and distinct articulation. Avoid heavy use of dialect in situations where the audience does not share the dialect or will find it inappropriate.

Posture, personal appearance, facial expression, gestures, and eye contact also affect the way listeners respond to speakers. Dress and groom appropriately, use gestures and bodily movement to enhance your message, and make eye contact with your listeners.

You should practice all these aspects of delivery along with the words of your speech. Start your practice sessions early so you will have plenty of time to gain command of the speech and its presentation.

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If your speech includes a question-and-answer session, anticipate the most likely questions, prepare answers to them, and practice delivering those answers. During the Q&A period, listen carefully to the questions, approach them positively, and respond to them briefly, graciously, and straightforwardly. Direct your answers to the full audience, rather than to the questioner alone, and make sure to end the session in a timely fashion.

Key Terms

nonverbal communication ( 226)

manuscript speech ( 228)

impromptu speech ( 229)

extemporaneous speech ( 230)

conversational quality ( 230)

volume ( 231)

pitch ( 232)

inflections ( 232)

monotone ( 232)

rate ( 232)

pause ( 232)

- **vocalized pause** ( 233)
- **vocal variety** ( 233)
- **pronunciation** ( 234)
- **articulation** ( 234)
- **dialect** ( 235)
- **kinesics** ( 236)
- **gestures** ( 237)
- **eye contact** ( 238)

- vocalized pause (📄 233)
- vocal variety (📄 233)
- pronunciation (📄 234)
- articulation (📄 234)
- dialect (📄 235)
- kinesics (📄 236)
- gestures (📄 237)
- eye contact (📄 238)

Review Questions

- Attend a speech sponsored by a campus organization. You may choose either a presentation by a guest speaker from outside your school or by someone at your school who has a reputation as a good lecturer. Prepare a brief report on the speaker's delivery.

In your report, first analyze the speaker's volume, pitch, rate, pauses, vocal variety, pronunciation, and articulation. Then evaluate the speaker's personal appearance, bodily action, gestures, and eye contact. Explain how the speaker's delivery added to or detracted from what the speaker said. Finally, note at least two techniques of delivery used by the speaker that you might want to try in your next speech.

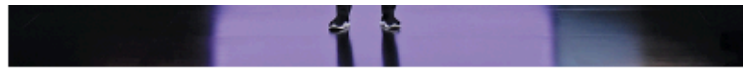
CHAPTER 14

Page 246

Using Visual Aids



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Qi Heng/VCG via Getty Images

- 📄 **Kinds of Visual Aids**
- 📄 **Presentation Technology**
- 📄 **Guidelines for Preparing Visual Aids**
- 📄 **Guidelines for Presenting Visual Aids**

Every year, usually in September, Apple unveils a new iPhone. If you watch the unveiling, you'll see the phone's captivating features. You'll also witness a masterclass in the use of visual aids.

Every time a new phone arrives, Apple executives create a dazzling story about it. You'll see video clips of users handling the phone with smiles on their faces. You'll see the presenters reinforce their pitch with dramatic images and succinct text. You'll see complex information conveyed in spectacular, easy-to-understand charts and graphs showing the phone's speed, battery life, options, and camera system.

What you won't see are the months of planning and practice that went into the event. Apple executives rehearse their speeches countless times before the day the new phone is revealed. They go through their speeches time and again to make sure what they say is perfectly coordinated with what the audience will see, creating a presentation with optimal impact.

By the day of the unveiling, they have crafted a visually rich story expertly designed to do one thing—sell the new iPhone. And they will sell plenty.

~~When Apple debuts a new iPhone, they spend months and millions of dollars getting their message and~~

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When Apple debuts a new iPhone, they spend months and millions of dollars getting their message and visual aids just right. You won't have that luxury in your speech class. But you can take several cues from the introduction of a new iPhone to create visual aids that will help make your speeches engaging and perhaps even dazzling.

People find a speaker's message more interesting, grasp it more easily, and retain it longer when it is presented visually as well as verbally. In fact, when used properly, visual aids can enhance almost *every* aspect of a speech. An average speaker who uses visual aids will come across as better prepared, more credible, and more professional than a dynamic speaker who does not use visual aids. Visual aids can even help you combat stage fright. They heighten audience interest, shift attention away from the speaker, and give the speaker greater confidence in the presentation as a whole.¹

For all these reasons, you will find visual aids of great value in your speeches, whether you're addressing an in-person audience or an online audience. In this chapter, we will concentrate on general principles for visual aids. In [Chapter 19](#), we'll attend to special aspects of using visual aids in online speeches.

Let us look first at the kinds of visual aids you are most likely to use, then at guidelines for preparing visual aids, and finally at guidelines for using visual aids.

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Let us look first at the kinds of visual aids you are most likely to use, then at guidelines for preparing visual aids, and finally at guidelines for using visual aids.

Kinds of Visual Aids

Objects and Models

Bringing the object of your speech to class can be an excellent way to clarify your ideas and give them dramatic impact. If your specific purpose is “To inform my audience how to choose the right ski equipment,” why not bring the equipment to class to show your listeners? Or suppose you want to inform your classmates about the Peruvian art of doll making. You could bring several dolls to class and explain how they were made.

Some objects, however, cannot be used effectively in classroom speeches. Some are too big. Others are too small to be seen clearly. Still others may not be available to you. If you were speaking about a rare suit of armor in a local museum, you could, theoretically, transport it to class, but it is most unlikely that the museum would let you borrow it.

If the object you want to discuss is too large, too small, or unavailable, you may be able to work with a model. For an example, check  [Video 14.1](#). The speaker is talking about CPR, which he demonstrates on a training dummy he borrowed from the local Red Cross.

Photographs and Drawings

In the absence of an object or a model, you may be able to use photographs or drawings. Neither, however, will work effectively unless they are large enough for the audience to see without straining. Normal-size photos are too small to be seen clearly without being passed around—which only diverts the audience from what you are saying. The same is true of photographs and drawings in books.



Photographs make excellent visual aids if they are large enough to be seen easily. Check Video 14.2 in the online Media Library for this chapter to see how one speaker used this photograph of the famous ruins at Angkor Wat.

Andrew Gunners/Getty Images



The most effective way to show drawings and photographs is with a presentation program such as PowerPoint or Google Slides. Notice, for example, how the speaker in [Video 14.2](#) uses PowerPoint to present a photograph of the famous ruins at Angkor Wat in Cambodia. No other method of showing the photograph would work as well.

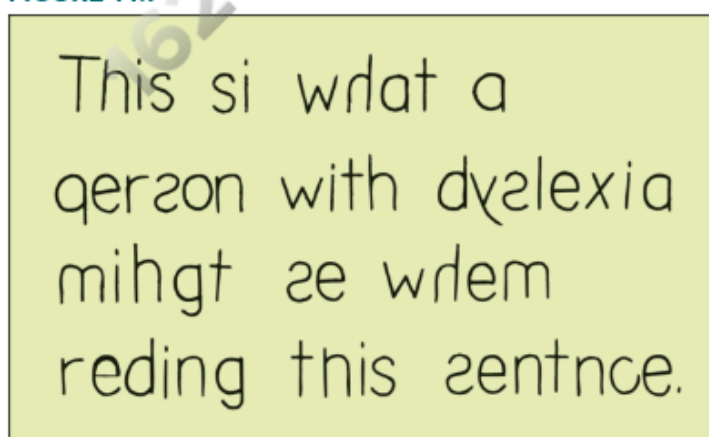
connect™

View an excerpt from “The Splendor of Angkor Wat” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 14.2).

For another example, take a look at [Figure 14.1](#) (page 249), which shows a drawing used in a speech about the kinds of problems faced by people who have dyslexia. It allowed the speaker to translate complex ideas into visual terms the audience could grasp immediately.

Page 249

FIGURE 14.1



Graphs

Audiences often have trouble grasping a complex series of numbers. You can ease their difficulty by using **graphs** to show statistical trends and patterns.

The most common type is the *line graph*.  **Figure 14.2** (page 250) shows such a graph, used in a speech about food spending in the United States. If you watch  **Video 14.3**, you can see how the speaker explained the graph. She said:

According to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, Americans now spend more money on restaurant food than on food in grocery stores. The blue line on this graph represents money spent in grocery stores. Historically it has always been higher than money spent in restaurants. But that changed in 2015.

The Speaker

Sometimes you can use your own body as a visual aid—by illustrating how a conductor directs an orchestra, by revealing the secrets behind magic tricks, by showing how to perform sign language, and so forth. In addition to clarifying a speaker's ideas, doing some kind of demonstration helps keep the audience involved. It also can reduce a speaker's nervousness by providing an outlet for extra adrenaline.

Doing a demonstration well requires special practice to coordinate your actions with your words and to control the timing of your speech. You can see an excellent example on [Video 14.5](#). After talking about when a tourniquet is useful in emergency situations, the speaker demonstrates how to apply a tourniquet. Notice how clearly he explains the five steps of application, communicates directly with the audience, and maintains eye contact throughout his demonstration.

View an excerpt from “Using a Tourniquet to Save a Life” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 14.5).

Special care is required if you are demonstrating a process that takes longer to complete than the time allotted for your speech. If you plan to show a long process, you might borrow the techniques of television chefs. They work through most of the steps in making a perfect marinated chicken, but they have a second, finished chicken ready to show you at the last minute.



Visual aids make a speaker's message clearer, more interesting, and easier to retain. In this case, a doctor uses a model to help medical students see the location of internal organs in the human body.

Kali9/Getty Images

Presentation Technology

Presentation technology allows you to integrate a variety of visual aids—including charts, graphs, photographs, and video—in the same talk. The most widely used presentation program is PowerPoint, but in recent years it has been joined by a host of competitors, including Google Slides, Keynote, Prezi, and Haiku Deck. Depending on the resources at your school, you may be able to use one of these programs in your speech class. If so, it will provide training for speeches outside the classroom—especially in business settings, where presentation technology is used every day.

Later in this chapter, we will look at guidelines for preparing and presenting visual aids effectively. In the process, we'll pay special attention to what you can do to create and deliver high-quality slides. For now, consider the following factors when thinking about employing presentation technology in your speeches.

Page 253

Pluses and Minuses of Presentation Technology

When used well, presentation technology is a great boon to communication. Unfortunately, it is not always used well. Too often speakers allow it to dominate their talks, wowing the audience with their technical proficiency while losing the message in a flurry of sounds and images.

This can be especially true with some of the new presentation programs. Prezi, for example, promises that you can “captivate your audience by zooming through your story.” The danger is that Prezi’s zooming, panning, and transition effects can become a barrier to communication, especially in a brief classroom

speech. As one leading expert on presentation technology warns, Prezi too often turns speeches into “heavily decorated and animated affairs with excessive motion that distracts from even well-researched content.”²

At the other extreme are mind-numbing presentations that gave rise to the phrase “Death by PowerPoint.” In such cases, the speaker plods through one poorly designed slide after another, virtually reading the speech to the audience as the words appear on-screen. This is no more effective than reading dully from a manuscript.

Planning to Use Presentation Technology

If you are going to employ presentation technology effectively, you need a clear idea of exactly why, how, and when to use it. Rather than putting everything you say on-screen for the audience to read, you need to choose which aspects of your speech to illustrate. This requires careful planning.

The first step is deciding where you can use PowerPoint, Keynote, or some other program to greatest advantage. After you have finished developing the speech, think about where well-chosen slides will clarify or strengthen your ideas. Rather than using slides to illustrate every thought, look for spots where they will genuinely enhance your message.

Page 254

One student, for example, used PowerPoint splendidly in a speech on medical robots. Part of the speech dealt with orderly robots, which transport medicine, food, and lab supplies around the hospital without a human by their side. The robots navigate by using “light whiskers”—invisible beams of sonar, infrared, and laser that constantly scan the environment to avoid collisions. Because the light whiskers are invisible, the speaker needed to find a way to make them visible for his audience. He did so by creating a PowerPoint slide in which colored lines representing the light whiskers popped on-screen in perfect coordination with the speaker’s words. As you can see from  **Video 14.6**, it was an ingenious solution.



View this excerpt from “Medical Robots: From Science Fiction to Science Fact” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 14.6).

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Using Public Speaking in Your CAREER

As a veterinarian and owner of a small-animal practice, you work closely with your local humane society to help control a growing population of unwanted dogs and cats. You and your staff devote many hours annually in free and reduced-cost medical services to animals adopted from the society. Now you have been asked to speak to the city council in support of legislation proposed by the society for stronger enforcement of animal licensing and leash laws.



G-stockstudio/Getty Images

In your speech, you plan to include statistics that (1) compare estimates of the city's dog population with the number of licenses issued during the past five years and (2) show the small number of citations given by local law enforcement for unleashed pets during the same period of time. Knowing from your college public speaking class how valuable visual aids can be in presenting statistics, you decide to illustrate one set of statistics with a chart and the other with a graph.

For which set of statistics will a chart be more appropriate? For which set will a graph be more appropriate? Of the three kinds of graphs discussed in this chapter—bar, line, pie—which will work best for your statistics, and why?

As you plan your speeches, think about how you can use presentation technology to enhance your ideas. At the same time, remember that too many visuals—or poor visuals—can do more harm than good. Be creative and resourceful without allowing technology to overpower your entire speech.

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Guidelines for Preparing Visual Aids

Whether you are creating visual aids by hand or with presentation technology, the following guidelines will help you design aids that are clear and visually appealing.

Prepare Visual Aids Well in Advance

Preparing visual aids well in advance has two advantages. First, it means you will have the time and resources to devise creative, attractive aids. Second, it means you can use them while practicing your speech. Visual aids are effective only when they are integrated smoothly with the rest of the speech. If you lose your place, drop your aids, or otherwise stumble around when presenting them, you will distract your audience and shatter your concentration.

Keep Visual Aids Simple

Visual aids should be simple, clear, and to the point. If you look back at the aids presented earlier in this chapter, you will see that all of them are clear and uncluttered. They contain enough information to communicate the speaker's point, but not so much as to confuse or distract the audience.

Limit your slides to a manageable amount of information, and beware of the tendency to go overboard. It is possible to create a graphic that displays two charts, a photograph, and 10 lines of text in five different typefaces with 250 colors. But who would be able to read it?

Make Sure Visual Aids Are Large Enough

A visual aid is useless if no one can see it. Keep in mind the size of the room in which you will be speaking and make sure your aid is big enough to be seen easily by everyone. As you prepare the aid, check its visibility by moving to a point as far away from it as your most distant listener will be sitting.

If you are using a presentation program such as PowerPoint or Google Slides, make sure your text and images are easy for everyone in your audience to see. By making sure your visual aid is large enough, you will avoid having to introduce it with the comment, "I know some of you can't see this, but. . . ."

What about using all capital letters? That might seem a great way to ensure that your print is large enough to be read easily. But research has shown that a long string of words in ALL CAPS is actually harder to read than normal text. Reserve ALL CAPS for titles or for individual words that require special emphasis.

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Use a Limited Amount of Text

When displaying text on visual aids, follow this general rule: Briefer is better. Succinct phrases containing only essential key words will help listeners grasp your basic point and process the information as you're speaking.

One of the biggest mistakes people make with presentation technology is putting too much text on a single slide. A general rule for slides that contain only text is to include no more than a half-dozen lines of type. If you are combining text with images, you may need to limit yourself to fewer lines to keep the text from getting too small. If you have a number of important points to cover, spread them out over multiple slides.

 **Figure 14.6** (page 256) shows a slide from a speech about the Iditarod Sled Dog Race, held each year in Alaska. Notice that the slide is not bogged down with information. It presents only an image of sled dogs, plus a title and text noting the number of dogs per team, the length of the race, and the start and ends points in Alaska. Because the slide is simple and clear, the speaker was able to present it succinctly and move on to her next point.

Use Images Strategically

One of the benefits of presentation technology is the ease with which it allows you to include photographs, charts, graphs, and other images, including video. Unfortunately, some speakers are prone to adding images simply because it is easy, rather than because it is essential for communicating their message. You should *never* add images of any sort to a slide unless they are truly needed. There is a great deal of research showing that extraneous images distract listeners and reduce comprehension of the speaker's point.³

In addition to keeping your slides free of extraneous images, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Make sure images are large enough to be seen clearly.
- Choose high-resolution images that will project without blurring.
- Keep graphs and charts clear and simple.
- In most cases, include a title above charts and graphs so the audience knows what they are viewing.
- Edit video so it is integrated seamlessly into your slides.

Guidelines for Presenting Visual Aids

No matter how well designed your visual aids may be, they will be of little value unless you display them properly, discuss them clearly, and integrate them effectively with the rest of your presentation. Here are seven guidelines that will help you get the maximum impact out of your visual aids.

Display Visual Aids Where Listeners Can See Them

Check the speech room ahead of time to decide exactly where you will display your visual aids. If you are displaying an object or a model, be sure to place it where it can be seen easily by everyone in the room. If necessary, hold up the object or model while you are discussing it.

Once you have set the aid in the best location, don't undo all your preparation by standing where you block the audience's view of the aid. Stand to one side of the aid, and point with the arm nearest it. Using a pen, a ruler, or some other pointer will allow you to stand farther away from the visual aid, thereby reducing the likelihood that you will obstruct the view.

Page 258



Checklist

Preparing Visual Aids

YES	NO
-----	----

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | 1. Have I prepared my visual aids well in advance? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 2. Are my visual aids clear and easy to comprehend? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 3. Does each visual aid contain only the information needed to make my point? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 4. Are my visual aids large enough to be seen clearly by the entire audience? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 5. Do the colors on my visual aids work well together? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 6. Is there a clear contrast between the lettering and background on my charts, graphs, and drawings? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 7. Do I use line graphs, pie graphs, and bar graphs correctly to show statistical trends and patterns? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 8. Do I limit charts to no more than eight items? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 9. Do I use fonts that are easy to read? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 10. Do I use a limited number of fonts? |



Speakers should display visual aids where they can be seen clearly by all members of the audience. They should also

remember to maintain eye contact with the audience while discussing their aids.

Hero Images/Getty Images

If you are using a projection screen, check ahead of time to make sure it is not located where you will cast a shadow on it while you are speaking. If necessary, move the lectern to the side of the screen.

Avoid Passing Visual Aids Among the Audience

Once visual aids get into the hands of your listeners, you are in trouble. At least three people will be paying more attention to the aid than to you—the person who has just had it, the person who has it now, and the person waiting to get it next. By the time the visual aid moves on, all three may have lost track of what you are saying.⁴

Nor do you solve this problem by preparing a handout for every member of the audience. They are likely to spend a good part of the speech looking over the handout at their own pace, rather than listening to you. Although handouts can be valuable, they usually just create competition for beginning speakers.

Every once in a while, of course, you will want listeners to have copies of some material to take home. When such a situation arises, keep the copies until after you've finished talking and distribute them at the end. Keeping control of your visual aids is essential to keeping control of your speech.

Display Visual Aids Only While Discussing Them

Just as circulating visual aids distracts attention, so does displaying them throughout a speech. If you are using an object or a model, keep it out of sight until you are ready to discuss it. When you finish your discussion, place the object or model back out of sight.

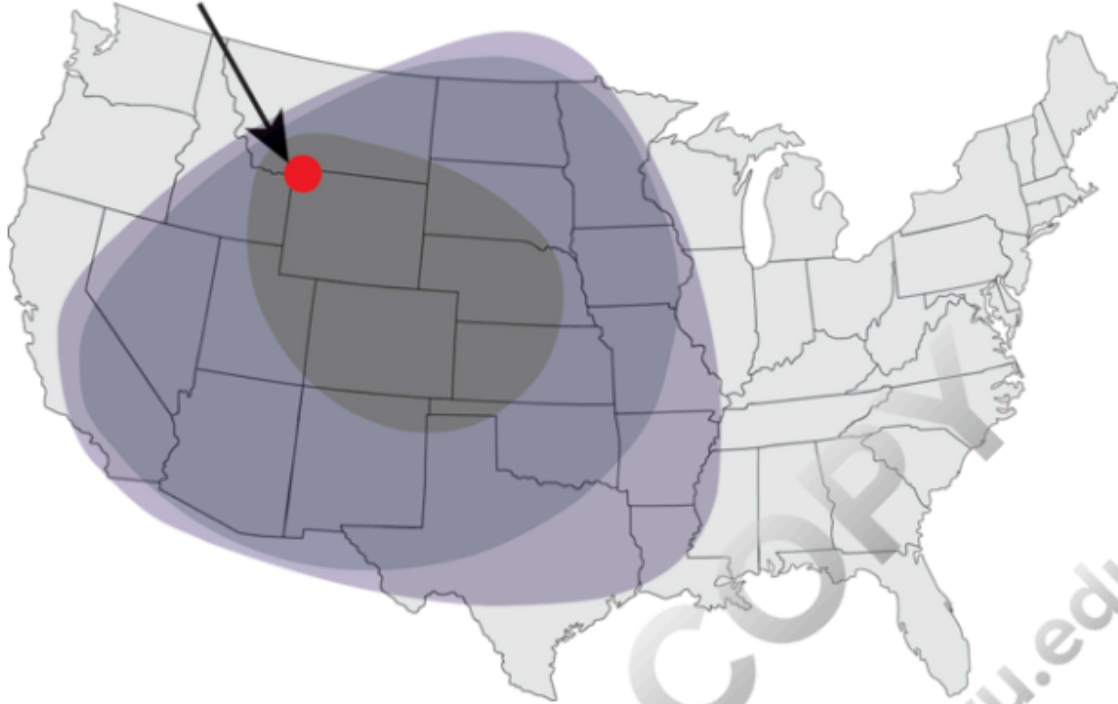
The same principle applies to presentation slides. They should be visible only while you are discussing them. You can accomplish this by adding blank slides as needed, so the audience's attention will not be diverted by the previous slide. It is also a good idea to add a blank slide at the end of your presentation, so your last content slide will not continue to be exposed after you have finished discussing it.

Explain Visual Aids Clearly and Concisely

Visual aids don't explain themselves. Like statistics, they need to be translated and related to the audience. For example,  **Figure 14.8** (page 260) is an excellent visual aid, but do you know what it represents? Probably not, unless you've researched the supervolcano beneath Yellowstone National Park. But even then, the full meaning of the map may not be clear until it is explained to you.

FIGURE 14.8

Yellowstone Caldera



A visual aid can be of enormous benefit—but only if the viewer knows what to look for and why. Unfortunately, speakers often rush over their visual aids without explaining them clearly and concisely. Don't just say, "As you can see . . ." and then pass quickly over the aid. Tell listeners what the aid means. Describe its major features. Spell out the meaning of charts and graphs. Interpret statistics and percentages. Remember, a visual aid is only as useful as the explanation that goes with it.

As you can see from [Video 14.7](#), the speaker who used the map about past eruptions of the Yellowstone supervolcano did an excellent job explaining that each colored area corresponds to a different eruption. Having used the map during her practice sessions, she was able to work it into the speech smoothly and skillfully—and to maintain eye contact with the audience throughout her discussion of it. You should strive to do the same when you present visual aids in your speeches.



View an excerpt from “Supervolcanoes: The Sleeping Giants” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 14.7).

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Finally, *always* bring a backup of your slides on a flash drive or in a cloud storage folder even if you plan on using your own computer during the speech. This may seem like a lot of fuss and bother, but anyone who has given speeches using any kind of presentation technology will tell you that it is absolutely essential.

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Summary

There are many kinds of visual aids. Most obvious is the object about which you are speaking, or a model of it. Diagrams, sketches, and other kinds of drawings are valuable because you can design them to illustrate your points exactly. Photographs should be large enough to be seen clearly by all your listeners. Graphs are an excellent way to illustrate any subject dealing with numbers, while charts are used to summarize large

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blocks of information. Video can be useful as a visual aid, but it needs to be carefully edited and integrated into the speech. You can act as your own visual aid by performing actions that demonstrate processes or ideas.

If you use presentation technology such as PowerPoint, Keynote, or Google Slides, plan carefully why, how, and when you will utilize it. Rather than putting everything you say on-screen for your audience to read, use the technology only when it will genuinely enhance your message.

No matter what kind of visual aid you use, you need to prepare it carefully. You will be most successful if you prepare your aids well in advance, keep them simple, make sure they are large enough to be seen clearly, and use a limited amount of text. If you are creating visual aids on a computer, use fonts, color, and images strategically and effectively.

In addition to being designed with care, visual aids need to be presented skillfully. Avoid passing visual aids among the audience. Display each aid only while you are talking about it, and be sure to place it where everyone can see it without straining. When presenting a visual aid, maintain eye contact with your listeners and explain the aid clearly and concisely. If you are using presentation technology, make sure you check the room and equipment prior to the time of delivery. Above all, practice with your visual aids so they fit into your speech smoothly and expertly.

Key Terms

graph (🔗 249)

line graph (🔗 250)

pie graph (🔗 250)

bar graph (🔗 251)

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Review Questions

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What are the major advantages of using visual aids in your speeches?
2. What kinds of visual aids might you use in a speech?
3. What factors should you consider when planning to use presentation technology in a speech?
4. What guidelines are given in the chapter for preparing visual aids?
5. What guidelines are given in the chapter for presenting visual aids?

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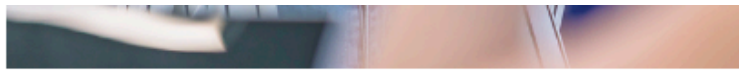
CHAPTER 15

Page 264

Speaking to Inform



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- 📄 **Types of Informative Speeches: Analysis and Organization**
- 📄 **Guidelines for Informative Speaking**
- 📄 **Sample Speech with Commentary**

Courtney Roddick is the chief marketer at a fast-growing company that sells eco-friendly camping equipment. On a bright Thursday morning in March, Courtney begins her workday by talking to a colleague from tech support about problems on her mobile device and what goes wrong when she tries to view files on the company's internal messaging system.

Later that morning, Courtney has a long Zoom meeting with members of her marketing team, who operate in different regions of North America. They discuss the company's new line of camping chairs, going over everything from the recycled fabric materials to potential advertising ideas. As the other team members talk, Courtney takes careful notes and asks questions to make sure she doesn't miss anything.

In the afternoon, Courtney rushes to a meeting with the company president, so she can report on what the marketing team discussed earlier in the day. She reviews the low environmental impact of the new camping chairs, discusses the distribution chain, and explains different advertising ideas. Afterward, the president compliments Courtney for giving such a clear presentation. "Anyone who can communicate that well," the president says, "is going to go a long way in this company."

Courtney doesn't consider herself a "public speaker," but much of her job involves absorbing and communicating information clearly and effectively. Although Courtney is only one person, her experience is not unusual. In one survey, graduates from five U.S. colleges were asked to rank the speech skills most important to their jobs. They rated informative speaking number one. In another survey, 62 percent of the respondents said they used informative speaking "almost constantly."¹

Public speaking to inform occurs in a wide range of everyday situations. The business manager explains next year's budget. The architect reviews plans for a new building. The union leader informs members about a new contract. The church worker outlines plans for a fund drive. There are endless situations in which people need to inform others. Competence in this form of communication will prove valuable to you throughout your life.

Page 265

One of your first classroom assignments probably will be to deliver an **informative speech** in which you will act as a lecturer or teacher. You may describe an object, show how something works, report on an event, explain a concept. Your aim will be to convey knowledge and understanding—not to advocate a cause. Your speech will be judged in light of three general criteria:

Page 266

Is the information communicated accurately?

Is the information communicated clearly?

Is the information made meaningful and interesting to the audience?

In this chapter, we will look at four types of informative speeches and the basic principles of informative speaking. Along the way, we will apply various general principles discussed in previous chapters.

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previous chapters.

Types of Informative Speeches: Analysis and Organization

There are many ways to classify informative speeches. Here we focus on the kinds you are most likely to give in your speech class: (1) speeches about objects, (2) speeches about processes, (3) speeches about events, and (4) speeches about concepts.

Speeches About Objects

As the word is used here, “**objects**” include anything that is visible, tangible, and stable in form. Objects may

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have moving parts or be alive; they may include places, structures, animals, even people. Here are examples of subjects for speeches about objects:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Galapagos Islands | stock market |
| Joan of Arc | Webb Space Telescope |
| musical instruments | dreamcatchers |

You will not have time to tell your classmates everything about any of these subjects. Instead, you will choose a specific purpose that focuses on one aspect of your subject. Working from the topics listed above, the following are examples of good specific purpose statements for informative speeches about objects:

To inform my audience about the scientific uses of the Webb Space Telescope.

To inform my audience about the role of dreamcatchers in Native American cultures.

To inform my audience about the major ecological features of the Galapagos Islands.

Notice how precise these statements are. As we saw in  **Chapter 5**, you should select a specific purpose that is not too broad to achieve in the allotted time. “To inform my audience about Pablo Picasso” is far too general for a classroom speech. “To inform my audience about the major contributions of Pablo Picasso to modern art” is more precise and is a purpose you could reasonably hope to achieve in a brief talk.

If your specific purpose is to explain the history or evolution of your subject, you will put your speech in *chronological* order. For example:

Page 267

Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the major achievements of Frederick Douglass.

Central Idea: Although born in slavery, Frederick Douglass became one of the greatest figures in American history.

- Main Points:*
- I. Douglass spent the first 20 years of his life as a slave in Maryland.
 - II. After escaping to the North, Douglass became a leader in the abolitionist movement to end slavery.
 - III. During the Civil War, Douglass helped establish Black regiments in the Union Army.
 - IV. After the war, Douglass was a tireless champion of equal rights for his race.

If your specific purpose is to describe the main features of your subject, you may organize your speech in *spatial* order:

Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the geographical regions of the Mississippi River.

Central Idea: The Mississippi River is divided into three sections, each with its own unique features.

Main Points:

- I. The upper Mississippi is known for its scenic parks and system of dams and locks.
- II. The middle Mississippi is known for its wildlife refuges and fishing opportunities.
- III. The lower Mississippi is known for its heavy river traffic and connection to the Gulf of Mexico.

As often as not, you will find that speeches about objects fall into *topical* order. For example:

Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the three major features of the Taj Mahal.

Central Idea: The three major features of the Taj Mahal are the mausoleum, the garden, and the reflecting pool.

Main Points:

- I. The Taj Mahal's mausoleum is famous for its brilliant white marble and massive dome.
- II. The Taj Mahal's garden is famous for its symmetry and carefully sculpted greenery.
- III. The Taj Mahal's reflecting pool is famous for its mirrorlike surface and expansive layout.

Regardless of how you approach your topic, be sure to give listeners plenty of help in sorting out facts and ideas. One way is by using enough transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts (see [Chapter 9](#)). Another way is to follow the old maxim, “Tell ’em what you’re going to say; say it; then tell ’em what you’ve said.” In other words, preview the main points of your speech in the introduction and summarize them in the conclusion. This will make your speech easier to understand and easier to remember.

Guidelines for Informative Speaking

All the previous chapters of this book relate to the principles of informative speaking. Selecting a topic and specific purpose, analyzing the audience, gathering materials, choosing supporting details, organizing the

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speech, using words to communicate meaning, delivering the speech—all must be done effectively if an informative speech is to be a success. Here we emphasize six additional points that will help make yours a success.

Don't Overestimate What the Audience Knows

In a speech about meteorology, a student said, “If modern methods of weather forecasting had existed in 1900, the Galveston hurricane disaster would never have taken place.” Then he was off to other matters, leaving his listeners to puzzle over what the Galveston hurricane was, when it happened, and what kind of destruction it wreaked.

The speaker assumed his audience already knew these things. But they were not experts on meteorology or on American history. Even those who had heard of the hurricane had only a fuzzy notion of it. Only the speaker knew that the hurricane, which killed more than 6,000 people when it unexpectedly struck on September 8, 1900, is still the deadliest natural disaster in American history.

As many speakers have discovered, it is easy to overestimate the audience's stock of information. In Page 274 most informative speeches, your listeners will be only vaguely knowledgeable (at best) about the details of your topic. You cannot *assume* they will know what you mean. Rather, you must be *sure* to explain everything so thoroughly that they cannot help but understand. As you work on your speech, always consider whether it will be clear to someone who is hearing about the topic for the first time.

Suppose you are talking about night-vision goggles—the kind you might see in a spy movie. Surely all of your classmates have heard of night-vision goggles, but most probably don't know how the goggles work. How will you tell them? Here's one way:

Night-vision goggles rely on an image-intensifying tube that moves infrared and visible light through a photocathode and a microchannel plate, where photons are converted to electrons and multiplied. Those electrons then hit a screen coated with phosphors that keep the electrons in the proper position—only with many more of them serving as light points.

To someone who knows a lot about physics and imaging, this may be perfectly clear. But someone who does not will almost surely get lost along the way. The tone of the statement is that of a speaker reviewing information already familiar to the audience—not of a speaker introducing new information.

Here, in contrast, is another explanation of night-vision goggles:

So how do night-vision goggles allow you to see in the dark? Imagine a secret agent on a nighttime mission. She quietly approaches the building she must infiltrate, but it's shrouded in darkness. Fortunately, she brought along her trusty night-vision goggles.

Once they're powered on, the goggles capture whatever light is in the immediate environment. But instead of stopping there, as human eyes do, the goggles send the light to a special tube that converts the light into

electrons and multiplies the electrons thousands of times over. The electrons are then displayed on a small screen inside the goggles, thereby allowing the wearer to see shapes in the darkness.

With the aid of her night-vision goggles, our secret agent can now complete her mission.

This explanation is clear and simple. Its tone is that of a teacher unraveling a new subject.

Is it too simple? Not at all. The test of a good speaker is to communicate even the most complex ideas clearly and simply. Anyone can go to a book and find a learned-sounding definition of night-vision goggles. But to say in plain English how night-vision goggles work—that takes effort and creative thinking.

Also, remember that readers can study a printed passage again and again until they extract its meaning, but listeners don't have that luxury. They must understand what you say in the time it takes you to say it. The more you assume they know about the topic, the greater your chances of being misunderstood.

Relate the Subject Directly to the Audience

The British dramatist Oscar Wilde arrived at his club after the disastrous opening-night performance of his new play.

“Oscar, how did your play go?” asked a friend.

“Oh,” Wilde quipped, “the play was a great success, but the audience was a failure.”

Speakers have been known to give much the same answer in saving face after a dismal informative speech. “Oh,” they say, “the speech was fine, but the audience just wasn’t interested.” And they are at least partly right—the audience *wasn’t* interested. But there is no such thing as a fine speech that puts people to sleep. It is the speaker’s job to get listeners interested—and to keep them interested.

Page 275



Informative speaking takes place in a wide range of situations. Here structural engineers discuss details of an ongoing building project.

Gorodenkoff/Shutterstock

Informative speakers have one big hurdle to overcome. They must recognize that what is fascinating to them may not be fascinating to everybody. Once you have chosen a topic that could possibly be interesting to your listeners, you should take special steps to relate it to them. You should tie it in with their interests and concerns.

Start in the introduction. Instead of saying,

I want to talk with you about the Ironman competition.

you could say:

Your body can't go any further. Your toenails fell off long ago. Your lungs are on fire. Your heart is one beat away from exploding. Are you dying? Are you dreaming? Neither. You're about to cross the finish line of your first Ironman competition—and nothing could feel better.

But don't stop with the introduction. Whenever you can, put your listeners into the body of the speech. After all, nothing interests people more than themselves. Find ways to talk about your topic in terms of your listeners. Bring your material home to them. Get it as close to them as possible.



View this excerpt from “Not Your Everyday Competition” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 15.2).

Here’s an example. Let’s say you are discussing the artistic technique known as encaustics, which involves painting with hot wax. You have plenty of facts and could recite them like this:

Dating back to the ancient Greeks, encaustic painting is a mixed-media method that combines melted wax, resin, and colored pigments. In encaustic painting, the artist first melts beeswax, then adds resin on a solid flat surface. After that, the artist adds pigment, which is fused to the wax and resin with a heat gun. After layer upon layer, the result is a rich, textured artwork.

This is valuable information, but it is not related to the audience. Let’s try again:

Page 276

Picture yourself as an artist, ready to create an encaustic painting like people have done for thousands of years. You start by melting beeswax and adding resin, then you apply it in layers to your wood panel or similar surface. As you apply layers of wax and resin, you fuse them together with a heat gun or torch. That makes the layers workable.

Then it's time to add color. You might use oil paint or blocks of pigment. You melt the pigment down and layer it on top of the wax. With a little more heat from your handy heat gun, the colors combine with the wax for a vibrant, textured, layered masterpiece. Now you're part of the long history of encaustic painting.



View this excerpt from “The Genius of Encaustics” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 15.3).

Look at the frequent use of “you” and “your.” The facts are the same, but now they are pointed directly at the audience. Research shows that using personal terms such as “you” and “your” in an informative speech significantly increases audience understanding of the speaker’s ideas.²

Don't Be Too Technical

What does it mean to say that an informative speech is too technical? It may mean the subject matter is too specialized for the audience. Any subject can be popularized—but only up to a point. The important thing for a speaker to know is what can be explained to an ordinary audience and what cannot.

Say your subject is power amplifiers. It's no trick to demonstrate how to operate an amplifier (how to turn it on and off, adjust the volume, set the tone and balance controls). It's also relatively easy to explain what an amplifier does (it boosts the sound received from a digital file, mobile device, or live performance). But to give a full scientific account of how an amplifier works cannot be done in any reasonable time unless the audience knows the principles of audio technology. The material is just too technical for a general audience.

Even when the subject matter is not technical, the language used to explain it may be. Every activity has its jargon, whether it be golf (bogey, wedge, match play); chemistry (colloid, glycogen, heavy water); or financial analysis (covered call, reverse bid, toehold acquisition). If you are talking to a group of specialists, you can use technical words and be understood. But you must do all you can to avoid technical words when informing a general audience such as your speech class.

Here, for instance, are two statements explaining aquamation, an eco-friendly alternative to cremation and traditional burial. The first is heavily laden with specialized language that would have little impact on ordinary listeners:

Aquamation, also known as alkaline hydrolysis, is a water-based process that promotes natural decomposition of a body. More eco-friendly than cremation and burial, aquamation begins by placing a body in a pressurized metal container, then heating a solution of water and alkali, often potassium hydroxide, inside the container. The process dissolves tissue and, like cremation, reduces bones to dusty ashes.

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Using Public Speaking in Your **CAREER**

As a financial planner at a local investment firm, you have been asked to speak to a group of recent college graduates about long-term financial planning. After considering what recent college graduates need to know about saving for their future, you decide to organize your

college graduates need to know about saving for their future, you decide to organize your presentation around four general stages of investing:

1. The early years of investing, which include putting aside small amounts of money that will grow over time.
2. The years of acquisition, which include balancing investments with large expenses such as raising children and paying a mortgage.
3. The years of accumulation, which include putting away as much money as possible in anticipation of retirement.
4. The retirement years, which include living off of savings and adjusting investments as needed.



Jim Craigmyle/Getty Images

As you look over these stages of investing, you think back to the public speaking course you took in college. You remember that informative speakers should relate their speech directly to the audience, should not be too technical, should not overestimate what the audience knows about the subject, and should be creative. How might each of these guidelines influence your presentation to recent college graduates? Be specific.

The second statement is perfectly understandable and shows how technical information can be made clear to the average person:

It's an environmentally friendly way to handle a body after a loved one has passed away. The *Washington Post* calls it central to the growing "green burial" movement. Although the name might sound strange, you'll be hearing a lot more about it in the coming years—aquamation.

Writing in *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, Philip Olson of Virginia Tech University explains how aquamation works. While cremation burns a body at extremely high temperatures and releases toxins into the air, aquamation uses a mixture of water and acid to speed up natural decomposition.

The body is liquefied under pressure, and the bones are turned to dust that can be put in an urn and given to the family to remember their loved one. Some advocates say it uses up to 90 percent less energy than traditional cremation.

Much clearer, isn't it? The only specialized word in the whole passage is "aquamation." The rest of the language is straightforward, the ideas easy to grasp. This is what you should strive for in your informative speeches.

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Avoid Abstractions

"My task," said novelist Joseph Conrad, "is, before all, to make you see." And make the reader see is just what Conrad did. Witness this passage, in which Conrad describes the aftermath of an explosion aboard a ship:

The first person I saw was Mahon, with eyes like saucers, his mouth open, and the long white hair standing straight on end round his head like a silver halo. . . . I stared at him in unbelief, and he stared at me with a queer kind of shocked curiosity. I did not know that I had no hair, no eyebrows, no eyelashes, that my young mustache was burnt off, that my face was black, one cheek laid open, my nose cut, and my chin bleeding.³

A speech is not a novel. Still, many informative speeches would be vastly improved by the novelist's bent for color, specificity, and detail. Page 278

One way to avoid abstractions is through *description*. When we think of description, we usually think of external events such as the explosion described by Conrad. But description is also used to communicate internal feelings. Here is how one student tried to convey to his audience the sensations he experienced when he first began sky diving:

As we wait for the plane to climb to the jump altitude of 12,000 feet, my mind races with a frenzied jumble of thoughts: "OK, this is the moment you've been waiting for. It's going to be great. Am I really going to jump out of

thoughts. "OK, this is the moment you've been waiting for. It's going to be great. Am I really going to jump out of an airplane from 12,000 feet? What if something goes wrong? Can I still back out? Come on now, don't worry. It'll be fine."

Even if we have not been sky diving, we have all had the same kinds of emotions on similar occasions. So what happened next?

Now it is time to jump. My palms are sweating and my heart is pounding so hard I think it may burst. "Get ready," yells the instructor. As I jump into the blue, I wonder, "What am I doing here?"

Yes—and then what?

The blast of air resistance blows me backward like a leaf at the mercy of an autumn wind. In about 10 seconds my body levels out and accelerates to a speed of 120 miles an hour. The air supports my body like an invisible flying carpet. There is no sound except for the wind rushing around my face. Any fears or doubts I had are gone in the exhilaration of free flight. Every nerve in my body is alive with sensation; yet I am overcome by a peaceful

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in the exhilaration of free flight. Every nerve in my body is alive with sensation; yet I am overcome by a peaceful feeling and the sense that I am at one with the sky.

As we listen to the speaker we share his thoughts, feel his heart pound, and join his exhilaration as he floats effortlessly through the sky. The vivid description lends reality to the speech and draws us further in.

Another way to escape abstractions is with *comparisons* that put your subject in concrete, familiar terms. Do you want to convey the fact that sharks very seldom attack people? You could say this:

Despite all the negative publicity, sharks pose little danger to human beings.

True, but the statement is vague and abstract. It does not communicate your meaning clearly and concretely. Now suppose you add this:

According to *National Geographic*, the United States averages less than one fatal shark attack every two years.

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In comparison, more than 41 people die every year from lightning strikes in the coastal states alone.

Now you have made the abstract specific and given us a sharp, new slant on things.

Like comparison, *contrast* can put an idea into concrete terms. Suppose you want to illustrate the popularity of World Cup soccer. You could say, “The championship game of the most recent World Cup was seen by a staggering 1 billion people.” The word “staggering” suggests that you consider 1 billion a significant number, but significant in comparison to what? One speaker offered this contrast:

The championship match of the most recent World Cup was seen by 1 billion people. In contrast, the most recent Super Bowl was seen by 112 million people. Think about it—almost ten times more people watched the final game of the World Cup than watched the Super Bowl.

This puts an abstract fact into meaningful perspective.

Personalize Your Ideas

Listeners want to be entertained as they are being enlightened.⁴ Nothing takes the edge off an informative speech more than an unbroken string of facts and figures. And nothing enlivens a speech more than personal illustrations. When possible, you should try to *personalize* your ideas and dramatize them in human terms.

Let's say you are talking about family homelessness, which most often involves mothers and their children living on the streets, in cars, or in shelters. You would surely note that 34 percent of the homeless population consists of families, leaving 1.6 million children without a home. You would also note that these children are much more likely than their peers to experience violence, physical and mental health problems, and developmental difficulties.



Whatever the subject of your informative speech, you will need strong supporting materials and clear organization. The more carefully you prepare your speech, the more likely you are to be successful.

Steve Debenport/E+/Getty Images

But these are dry facts and figures. If you really want to get your audience involved, you will weave in some examples of families who have experienced homelessness. One speaker began by telling this story:

If, like this speaker, you think creatively when constructing your informative speech, you are much more likely to be successful.

Page 281

connect™

View an excerpt from “Lady Liberty” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 15.5).

Sample Speech with Commentary

The following speech provides an excellent example of how to apply the principles of informative speaking discussed in this chapter. Notice how clearly the speech is organized, how the speaker discusses it in everyday, nontechnical language, and how he personalizes it by relating the subject to his classmates. He also uses a wide range of visual aids—drawings, maps, and photographs—to help the audience grasp his ideas.

As you can see by watching [Video 15.6](#), the speech also exemplifies the methods of an effective online presentation. It was recorded by the speaker and then uploaded for viewing by his classmates and instructor. The content is identical to what would have been presented in class, but the visual aids are presented with the GoReact Video Capture software that is available on the Connect platform with *The Art of Public Speaking*.

If you are presenting an online informative speech for your class, be sure to read [Chapter 19](#), Presenting Your Speech Online, as part of your preparation.



View “The Great Mesoamerican Ballgame” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 15.6).

The Great Mesoamerican Ballgame



COMMENTARY



SPEECH

After starting with a series of vivid images about sports today, the introduction notes that sports have been popular around the world for thousands of years. It ends by arousing curiosity about athletic events in the Americas long before the Olympic Games in ancient Greece.

The roar of the fans. The smell of the field. The competitors clashing before your eyes. I love watching sports in person, and I'm sure many of you do, too. It's something we share with people across the world going back thousands of years. Around 2,800 years ago, the first Olympic Games were played in ancient Greece. But did you know that 1,000 years before that, there were fierce sports competitions right here in the Americas?

Here the speaker reveals the topic of his speech and establishes his credibility.

Throughout Central America talented athletes played what we know today as the great Mesoamerican ballgame. As an avid sports fan and a student athlete, I've long been fascinated with the

student athlete, I've long been fascinated with the history of sports, and I've done extensive research for this speech.

The speaker previews his main points and provides a transition from the introduction to the body.

Today I'd like to inform you about the Mesoamerican ballgame—specifically, its history, how it was played, and its role in ancient society. Let's start with its history.

Main point one deals with the history of the Mesoamerican ballgame, starting with where the game was played. Here, as throughout his presentation, the speaker uses well-designed visual aids to help communicate his ideas.

Take a look at this map based on the *Historical Dictionary of Mesoamerica*. It shows some of the ancient civilizations that played the ballgame on a regular basis—including the Olmec, the Maya, and the Aztec. These ancient civilizations flourished in lands that include the modern-day countries of Mexico, Honduras, Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

The speaker rounds out main point one by stating that the Mesoamerican ballgame is the oldest recorded team sport played with a ball anywhere in the world. He clearly identifies his source for this important piece of information.

So far, archeologists have discovered more than

1,500 ancient ballcourts, like the one you see here in modern Honduras. According to a recent article on the science and technology website *Ars Technica*, the oldest ballcourt dates back more than 3,400 years. That makes the Mesoamerican ballgame the oldest recorded team sport played with a ball anywhere in the world.

Main point two explains how the ballgame was played, beginning with the number of players on a team.

Details of the game varied by region, but some key elements were consistent. In his book *The Ball*, anthropologist John Fox explains that two teams of up to eight players squared off in a scene similar to the one depicted in this 2,000-year-old sculpture.

Continuing his skillful use of visual aids, the speaker shows a photograph of an ancient ballcourt. He then supplements the photograph with a creative drawing that further clarifies the court's size, shape, and features.

In real life, ballcourts could be as large as two football fields. Here's a ballcourt in southern Mexico. Notice the field in the middle, the open areas on the ends of the field, and the high, slanted sides. These elements were common in ancient ballcourts, which you can see clearly in this illustration. At the top and bottom of the open field were two endzones, which gave the court its distinctive "I" design. Spectators had a great view of the action from on top of the high walls.

As you can see from Video 15.6, the speaker provides an excellent explanation of the

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provides an excellent explanation of the vertical hoops and their role in the ballgame. Notice how the speaker orients his slides vertically to maximize what the remote audience can see on their screens.

Most courts also contained these iconic vertical hoops, which were central to scoring points. You can get a better view of the hoops here; they were kind of like basketball hoops on their sides. Players could score through the hoops or by getting the ball in the endzone. As with most modern sports, the goal was to score more points than the other team.

The speaker shows a dramatic drawing that illustrates how players hit the ball with their hips; he follows this with photographs of ancient sculptures that illustrate the players' protective clothing. His slides are integrated smoothly into the speech and are perfectly timed with his words.

But here's the catch: Players were not allowed to use their hands or their feet. Instead, they used their arms, shoulders, thighs, and, most often, their hips, as depicted in this image. Hitting the ball with their

hips was hard because it was made of solid rubber, roughly the size of a basketball, and weighed 5–10 pounds. That’s why players wore protective clothing and large padded rings around their hips, which you can see in these ancient sculptures.

A transition signals that the speaker is moving into main point three, dealing with the ballgame’s role in ancient Mesoamerica. He begins by noting that it was a popular form of entertainment.

Now that we have a sense of how the game was played, let’s turn to its role in ancient Mesoamerican society. Like most modern sports, it was a source of entertainment. It brought together spectators from various social classes, including rulers, warriors, and peasants. Archeologists have even discovered evidence of gambling around the game. Think of it as an early version of March Madness.

The speaker continues by pointing out the game's religious purpose. Once again, he identifies the source of his information.

Beyond entertainment, there was a religious purpose to the game. In a 2020 article in *Science Advances*, archeologists Jeffrey Blomster and Victor Chavez explain that playing the game symbolized “the regeneration of life and the maintenance of cosmic order.”

This and the next paragraph complete main point three by exploring the ballgame's relationship to warfare.

To me, the most interesting role of the game was

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to me, the most interesting role of the game was related to warfare. *Smithsonian Magazine* explains that the game sometimes served as “a replacement for war.” Because the game was thought to be connected with the cosmic order, many believed it could predict the winning and losing sides in a war. So instead of going to war, competing societies might just play the ballgame.

Throughout his presentation, the speaker’s delivery is poised and confident. He talks extemporaneously, has excellent command of his ideas, gestures naturally, and maintains strong eye contact with his audience.

Sometimes, the losing team would even be put to death, as depicted in this ancient Aztec illustration. This may seem inhumane, but think about it like this: Mesoamerican societies realized that it might be better to lose the lives of some ball players than to experience the widespread devastation of war.

After reinforcing his central idea, the speaker's conclusion notes that the Mesoamerican ballgame has been taken up by modern players to honor their ancestors. The closing sentence rounds out the speech and ends on an uplifting note.

In conclusion, you now have a sense of how the great Mesoamerican ballgame shaped life in the Americas for thousands of years. Or should I say, continues to shape life in the Americas. Modern players have resurrected the game, which they call Ulama, and they play it to honor their ancestors. This is just one way that the great Mesoamerican ballgame lives on.

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Summary

Speaking to inform occurs in a wide range of everyday situations. Improving your ability to convey knowledge effectively will be valuable to you throughout your life.

Informative speeches may be grouped into four categories—speeches about objects, speeches about processes, speeches about events, and speeches about concepts.

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processes, speeches about events, and speeches about concepts.

Objects include places, structures, animals, even people. Speeches about objects usually are organized in chronological, spatial, or topical order. A process is a series of actions that work together to produce a final result. Speeches about processes explain how something is made, how something is done, or how something works. The most common types of organization for speeches about processes are chronological and topical.

An event is anything that happens or is regarded as happening. Speeches about events are usually arranged in chronological or topical order. Concepts include beliefs, theories, ideas, and principles. Speeches about concepts are often more complex than other kinds of informative speeches, and they typically follow a topical pattern of organization.

No matter what the subject of your informative speech, be careful not to overestimate what your audience knows about it. Explain everything so thoroughly that they can't help but understand. Avoid being too technical. Make sure your ideas and your language are fully comprehensible to someone who has no specialized knowledge about the topic.

Equally important, recognize that what is fascinating to you may not be fascinating to everybody. It is your job to make your informative speech interesting and meaningful to your audience. Find ways to talk about the topic in terms of your listeners. Avoid too many abstractions. Use description, comparison, and contrast to make your audience *see* what you are talking about. Try to personalize your ideas and dramatize them in human terms. Finally, be creative in thinking of ways to communicate your ideas.

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Exercises for Critical Thinking

1. Following is a list of subjects for informative speeches. Your task is twofold: (a) Select four of the topics and prepare a specific purpose statement for an informative speech about each of the four. Make sure your four specific purpose statements include at least one that deals with its topic as an object, one that deals with its topic as a process, one that deals with its topic as an event, and one that deals with its topic as a concept. (b) Explain what method of organization you would most likely use in structuring a speech about each of your specific purpose statements.

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CHAPTER 16

Page 286

Speaking to Persuade



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- 📄 **The Importance of Persuasion**
- 📄 **Ethics and Persuasion**
- 📄 **The Psychology of Persuasion**
- 📄 **Persuasive Speeches on Questions of Fact**
- 📄 **Persuasive Speeches on Questions of Value**
- 📄 **Persuasive Speeches on Questions of Policy**
- 📄 **Sample Speech with Commentary**

Victoria Perez started her day on campus by stopping at her English professor's office hours. "I don't normally do this," she said, "but I'm wondering if I can have a 24-hour extension on my paper. I have two exams on the same day and I've really been overwhelmed lately." The professor hemmed and hawed. Then he said, "Okay. You've turned in all your other work just fine, so you can have an extension this one time."

With a sigh of relief, Victoria headed off for classes. Walking past the library, she ran into some friends. "Are we still playing soccer later today?" one of them asked. "I wish I could," Victoria said, "but I'm posting flyers for the food bank today. How about tomorrow?"

In the afternoon, Victoria went to her internship as social media coordinator for the local minor-league baseball team. "I've been thinking about how we can get fans closer to the players," she said at a meeting with the marketing group. "What if we get some players to wear a small camera

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The Importance of Persuasion

Persuasion is the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people's beliefs or actions.¹ The ability to speak (and write) persuasively will benefit you in every part of your life, from personal relations to community activities to career aspirations. When economists added up the number of people—lawyers, sales representatives, public relations specialists, counselors, administrators, and others—whose jobs depend largely on persuading people to adopt their point of view, they concluded that persuasion accounts for up to 30 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product!²

Understanding the principles of persuasion is also vital to being an informed citizen and consumer. Politicians and advertisers, salespeople and interest groups, fund-raisers and community activists—all vie for your attention, votes, money, time, and support. The more you know about persuasion, the more effectively you can use your powers of critical thinking to assess the barrage of persuasive messages you are exposed to every day.

Although persuasion has been studied for more than 2,000 years, it is still the subject of lively debate among scholars. There are a number of scientific models of the persuasive process and a wide range of respected theories about how persuasion works. In this chapter and the next, we will explore the principles of persuasion as they apply to public speaking.

When you speak to persuade, you act as an advocate. Your job is to get listeners to agree with you and, perhaps, to act on that belief. Your goal may be to defend an idea, to refute an opponent, to sell a program, or to inspire people to action. Because persuasive speakers must communicate information clearly and concisely, you will need all the skills you used in speaking to inform. But you will also need new skills that take you from giving information to affecting your listeners' attitudes, beliefs, or actions.

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Ethics and Persuasion

No matter what the speaking situation, you need to make sure your goals are ethically sound and that you use ethical methods to communicate your ideas. Meeting these obligations can be especially challenging when you speak to persuade. Would you be willing to shade the truth “just a bit” if it would guarantee a successful speech? How about juggling statistics, doctoring quotations, passing off opinions as facts, or pandering to prejudice and stereotypes?

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of speakers—and other persuaders—who are willing to take ethical shortcuts to achieve their objectives. Yet, as Martin Luther King stated years ago, it is not possible to bring about a truly beneficial result by using unethical methods. Maintaining the bond of trust with listeners is also vital to a speaker's credibility. As in other kinds of public speaking, the ideal of effective persuasion is the good person speaking well.

When you work on your persuasive speech, keep in mind the guidelines for ethical speaking discussed in  **Chapter 2**. Make sure your goals are ethically sound and that you can defend them if they are questioned or challenged. Study the topic thoroughly so you won't mislead your audience through shoddy research or muddled thinking. Learn about all sides of an issue, seek out competing viewpoints, and get your facts right.

But knowing the facts is not enough. You also need to be honest in what you say. There is no place in ethical speechmaking for deliberately false or deceptive statements. Also be on guard against more subtle forms of dishonesty such as quoting out of context, portraying a few details as the whole story, and misrepresenting the sources of facts and figures. Take care to present statistics, testimony, and other kinds of evidence fairly and accurately.

Keep in mind as well the power of language and use it responsibly. Show respect for the rights of free speech and expression, and stay away from name-calling and other forms of abusive language. Finally, check the section of  **Chapter 17** that discusses the role of emotional appeal ( **pages 329–333**). Make sure that any emotional appeal you use is appropriate to the topic and that you build your speech on a firm base of facts and logic before appealing to your audience's emotions. Aim at the highest standards and construct your speech so it will be both convincing *and* ethically sound.³

The Psychology of Persuasion

Persuasion is a psychological process. It occurs in a situation where two or more points of view exist. The speaker supports right-to-work laws, but many listeners do not. The speaker considers genetic screening unethical, but some in the audience think it is justified in certain circumstances. The different points of view may be completely opposed, or they may simply be different in degree. Whichever the case, there must be a disagreement, or else there would be no need for persuasion.

The Challenge of Persuasive Speaking

Of all the kinds of public speaking, persuasion is the most complex and the most challenging. Your objective is more ambitious than in speaking to inform, and audience analysis and adaptation become much more demanding. In some persuasive speeches, you will deal with controversial topics that touch on your listeners' basic attitudes, values, and beliefs. This may increase their resistance to persuasion and make your task more difficult.

It is much easier, for example, to explain the history of the war on drugs than to persuade an audience either that marijuana should be legalized in every state or once again be outlawed across the country. In the persuasive speech, you must contend not only with your audience's knowledge about marijuana but also with their attitudes toward recreational drugs and their beliefs about the impact of marijuana use on human health and social mores.

Lines of argument that work with one part of the audience may fail with—or even upset—another part. What seems perfectly logical to some listeners may seem wildly irrational to others. No matter how expert you are on the topic, no matter how skillfully you prepare the speech, no matter how captivating your delivery—some

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Advertising gives us an effective model. Social media platforms allow advertisers to reach particular segments of the market. As a college student, you might see an advertisement on Instagram for a ride-sharing app like Uber or Lyft. But your 50-year-old uncle might see an advertisement from a financial services company like Fidelity or Charles Schwab.

For your classroom speeches, you don't have the sophisticated analytics of a large advertising agency. But as we saw in  **Chapter 6**, you can use questionnaires to find out where your classmates stand on your speech topic. This is your equivalent of market research. Once you know where your target audience stands, you can tailor your speech to fit their values and concerns—aim at the target, so to speak.

Here, for example, is how one student, Eveyln Xu, determined her target audience for a persuasive speech advocating lifetime GPS tracking of high-risk serial sex offenders:

There are 22 students in my audience. My audience-analysis questionnaires show that 4 are absolutely opposed to my plan. I can't persuade them no matter what I say. My questionnaires also show that 6 already support my position. I don't need to persuade them. The other 12 students could be persuaded if they knew more about how the GPS tracking program would work and about its privacy implications.

Not only did Eveyln pinpoint her target audience, she also knew from her audience-analysis questionnaire the issues she would have to discuss to be convincing:

The members of my target audience break down this way: 5 give "concerns over cost" as their primary concern; 5 are worried about "privacy and government surveillance"; and 2 think sex offenders will just remove the monitoring devices.

With all this information, Eveyln was able to put together a speech that focused directly on her classmates' attitudes and beliefs. As a result, she was able to convince several to support her position.

In the next chapter, we'll discuss the methods you can use to hit the target in your persuasive speeches. In the rest of this chapter, we focus on the three major kinds of persuasive speeches and how to organize them most effectively.

Persuasive Speeches on Questions of Fact

What Are Questions of Fact?

What college basketball team has won the most games since 2000? Who was the first African American to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court? How far is it from Los Angeles to Singapore? These questions of fact can be answered absolutely. The answers are either right or wrong.

But many questions of fact cannot be answered absolutely. There is a true answer, but we don't have enough information to know what it is. Some questions like this involve prediction: Will the economy be better or worse next year? Who will win the Super Bowl this season?

Other questions deal with issues on which the facts are murky or inconclusive. Is there intelligent life in other parts of the solar system? What will happen next in the Middle East? No one knows the final answers to these questions, but that doesn't stop people from speculating about them or from trying to convince other people that they have the best possible answers.

Page 293

Analyzing Questions of Fact

In some ways, a persuasive speech on a **question of fact** is similar to an informative speech. But the two kinds of speeches take place in different kinds of situations and for different purposes.

The situation for an informative speech is *nonpartisan*. The speaker acts as a lecturer or a teacher. The aim is to give information as impartially as possible, not to argue for a particular point of view.

On the other hand, the situation for a persuasive speech on a question of fact is *partisan*. The speaker acts as an advocate. The aim is not to be impartial, but to present one view of the facts as persuasively as possible. The speaker may mention competing views of the facts, but only to refute them.

For example, consider the assassination of John F. Kennedy. After more than 60 years, there is still much debate about what really happened in Dallas on November 22, 1963. Did Lee Harvey Oswald act alone, or was he part of a conspiracy? How many shots were fired at President Kennedy and from what locations? If there was a conspiracy, who was involved in it? The informative speaker would recite the known facts on both sides of these questions without drawing a conclusion about which side is correct. The persuasive speaker, however, would draw a conclusion from the known facts and try to convert listeners to his or her point of view.

If there were no possibility of dispute on questions of fact, there would be no need for courtroom trials. In a criminal trial there is usually at least one known fact—a crime has been committed. But did the defendant commit the crime? The prosecuting attorney tries to persuade the jury that the defendant is guilty. The defense attorney tries to persuade the jury that the defendant is innocent. The jury must decide which view of the facts is more persuasive.⁷

Organizing Speeches on Questions of Fact

Persuasive speeches on questions of fact are usually organized *topically*. Suppose, for example, that you want to convince your classmates that an earthquake of 9.0 or above on the Richter scale will hit California within the next 10 years. Each main point in your speech will present a *reason* why someone should agree with you:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that an earthquake of 9.0 or above on the Richter scale will hit California in the next 10 years.

Central Idea:

There are three good reasons to believe that an earthquake of 9.0 or above on the Richter scale will hit California in the next 10 years.

Main Points:

- I. California is long overdue for a major earthquake.
- II. Many geological signs indicate that a major earthquake may happen soon.
- III. Experts agree that an earthquake of 9.0 or above could strike California any day.

To take another example, suppose you are trying to persuade your classmates that the plays attributed to William Shakespeare were not actually written by him. Your specific purpose, central idea, and main points might be:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that William Shakespeare did not write the plays attributed to him.

Central Idea: There is considerable evidence that the plays attributed to William Shakespeare were actually written by Francis Bacon or Edward de Vere.

Main Points:

- I. Biographical and textual evidence suggest that William Shakespeare did not write the plays attributed to him.
- II. Historical evidence suggests that Shakespeare's plays were probably written by either Sir Francis Bacon or Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

Notice in these examples that the speaker's purpose is limited to persuading the audience to accept a particular view of the facts. Sometimes, however, the dispute that gives rise to a persuasive speech will go beyond a question of fact and will turn on a question of value.



Many persuasive speeches revolve around questions of fact. There is much debate, for example, about the impact of climate change on violent weather events around the world.

Saeed Khan/AFP/Getty Images

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Saeed Khan/AFP/Getty Images

Persuasive Speeches on Questions of Value

What Are Questions of Value?

What is the best movie of all time? Is solitary confinement morally justifiable? What are the ethical responsibilities of journalists? Such questions not only involve matters of fact, but they also demand *value judgments*—judgments based on a person's beliefs about what is right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, proper or improper, fair or unfair.

Take the issue of solitary confinement. It can be discussed at a purely factual level by asking such questions as “What are the laws about solitary confinement?” or “How widespread is solitary confinement as a punishment in American prisons?” These are factual questions. The answers you reach are independent of your belief about the morality of solitary confinement.

But suppose you ask, “Is it morally justifiable to keep prisoners in solitary confinement for extended periods of time?” Now you are dealing with a **question of value**. How you answer will depend not only on your factual knowledge about solitary confinement, but also on your moral values.

Analyzing Questions of Value

Contrary to what many people think, questions of value are not simply matters of personal opinion or whim. If you say, “I enjoy bicycle riding,” you do not have to give a reason why you enjoy it. You are making a statement about your personal taste. Even if bicycle riding were the most unpleasant activity ever invented, it could still be one of your favorites.

On the other hand, if you say, “Bicycle riding is the ideal form of land transportation,” you are making a statement about a question of value. Whether bicycling is the ideal form of land transportation does not depend on your own likes and dislikes. To defend the statement, you cannot say, “Bicycle riding is the ideal form of land transportation because I like it.”

Instead, you must *justify* your claim. The first step is to define what you mean by an “ideal form of land transportation.” Do you mean a mode of transportation that gets people where they want to go as fast as possible? That is relatively inexpensive? That is fun? Nonpolluting? Beneficial for the user? In other words, you must establish your *standards* for an “ideal form of land transportation.” Then you can show how bicycle riding measures up against those standards.

Whenever you give a speech on a question of value, be sure to give special thought to the standards for your value judgment.

Organizing Speeches on Questions of Value

Persuasive speeches on questions of value are almost always organized *topically*. The most common approach is to devote your first main point to establishing the standards for your value judgment and your second main point to applying those standards to the subject of your speech.

Think back for a moment to the speech about bicycle riding as the ideal form of land transportation. If you organized this speech in topical order, your first main point would identify the standards for an ideal form of land transportation. Your second main point would show how biking measures up against those standards. Here is how your specific purpose, central idea, and main points might look:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that bicycle riding is the ideal form of land transportation.

Bicycle riding is the ideal form of land transportation because it is faster than walking or running, is nonpolluting, and promotes the health of the rider.

Page 296

Main Points:

- I. An ideal form of land transportation should meet three major standards.
 - A. It should be faster than running or walking.
 - B. It should be nonpolluting.
 - C. It should be beneficial for the person who uses it.
- II. Bicycle riding meets all these standards for an ideal form of land transportation.

transportation.

- A. Bicycle riding is faster than walking or running.
- B. Bicycle riding is not a source of air, land, water, or noise pollution.
- C. Bicycle riding is extremely beneficial for the health of the rider.

When you speak on a question of value, you must make sure to justify your judgment against some identifiable standards. In the following example, notice how the speaker devotes her first main point to judging elephant trophy hunting against legal standards and her second main point to judging it against moral standards:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that elephant trophy hunting is legally and morally wrong.

Central Idea: Elephant trophy hunting violates international accords and our duty to treat animals humanely.

Main Points:

- I. Elephant trophy hunting violates international accords on species conservation.
- II. Elephant trophy hunting violates what moral philosopher Immanuel Kant says is our duty to treat animals humanely.

As you can see, speeches on questions of value may have strong implications for our actions. A person who is persuaded that elephant trophy hunting violates international accords and is morally wrong is more likely to support policies designed to ban this kind of hunting. But speeches on questions of value do not argue directly for or against particular courses of action. Once you go beyond arguing right or wrong to arguing that something should or should not be done, you move from a question of value to a question of policy.

Persuasive Speeches on Questions of Policy

What Are Questions of Policy?

Questions of policy arise daily in almost everything we do. At home we debate what to do during spring vacation, whether to buy a new laptop, which movie to see on the weekend. At work we discuss whether to ask for a raise, what strategy to use in selling a product, how to improve communication between management and employees. As citizens we ponder whether to vote for or against a political candidate, what to do about national defense, how to promote economic growth.

All these are **questions of policy** because they deal with specific courses of action. Questions of policy inevitably involve questions of fact. (How can we decide whether to vote for a candidate unless we know the facts of her or his stand on the issues?) They may also involve questions of value. (The policy you favor on capital punishment will be affected by whether you think the death penalty is moral or immoral.) But questions of policy *always* go beyond questions of fact or value to decide whether something should or should not be done.

When put formally, questions of policy usually include the word “should,” as in these examples:

Page 297

What measures should be taken to protect people's privacy online?

Should the electoral college be abolished?

What steps should be taken to reduce the erosion of America's coastlines?

Types of Speeches on Questions of Policy

When you speak on a question of policy, your goal may be either to gain passive agreement or to motivate immediate action from your listeners. Deciding which goal you want to achieve will affect almost every aspect of your speech.

Speeches to Gain Passive Agreement

If your goal is passive agreement, you will try to get your audience to agree with you that a certain policy is desirable, but you will not necessarily encourage the audience to do anything to enact the policy. For example, suppose you want to persuade people that the United States should abolish the electoral college and elect the president by direct popular vote. If you seek passive agreement, you will try to get your audience to concur, but you will not urge them to take any action right now to help change presidential election procedures.

Here are some specific purpose statements for policy **speeches to gain passive agreement**:

To persuade my audience that there should be stricter privacy standards on companies that offer personal genetic testing.

To persuade my audience that the U.S. patent system should be overhauled so as to promote innovation.

To persuade my audience that our state should increase funding for all levels of public education.

In each case, the speaker's aim is to convince listeners that the speaker's policy is necessary and practical. The speaker is not trying to get listeners to take action in support of the policy.

Speeches to Gain Immediate Action

When your goal is immediate action, you want to do more than get your listeners to nod their heads in agreement. You want to motivate them to action—to sign a petition for abolishing the electoral college, to campaign for lower tuition, to contribute to a fund drive, and so forth.

Here are some examples of specific purpose statements for policy **speeches to gain immediate action**:

To persuade my audience to donate to the Wounded Warrior Project.

To persuade my audience to vote in the upcoming state and local elections.

To persuade my audience to establish retirement accounts early in their careers.

Sample Speech with Commentary

The following persuasive speech deals with a question of policy and is organized according to Monroe's motivated sequence. As you read the speech, notice how the speaker relates the topic directly to her audience and uses well-chosen supporting materials as she moves through the motivated sequence. The speech also shows how a speaker's delivery can enhance the impact of his or her ideas—as you can see by watching Video 16.6.



View “Mindfulness Meditation” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 16.6).

Mindfulness Meditation



COMMENTARY



SPEECH

The first step in Monroe's motivated sequence is gaining attention, which the speaker accomplishes with a vivid scenario that gets her audience involved right at the start.

You're swamped with homework, midterms are right around the corner, and your persuasive speech is due tomorrow. We've all been there—the sleepless nights, the poor eating habits, the feelings of isolation. College life can be full of worry, stress, and anxiety. But there are ways to cope.

Here the speaker reveals the topic of her speech and cites a quotation supporting the benefits of meditation for college students.

Today I'd like to explain one of those ways: mindfulness meditation, which is a form of meditation designed to get you to focus on your mind and body in the present moment. It's a proven way to help recenter yourself and manage the challenges of college life. As stated by Aurora Reyes, a wellness director at UCLA Medical School, meditation can "relieve stress, lessen depression,

lower blood pressure, and improve sleep” while boosting “mood, memory, and even social intelligence.”

The speaker establishes her credibility, states her central idea, and provides a transition to the body of her speech. Notice how she relates to her audience by talking in personal terms such as “you,” “we,” and “your.”

I’ve been practicing meditation for about four years, since my junior year of high school, and it has truly changed my life. I also did a great deal of research for this speech, and I hope to persuade each of you to begin daily meditation. It isn’t a magic cure-all for every problem we face, but if your experience is like mine, you’ll be pleasantly surprised by what it can do for you. Let’s start by taking a closer look at the need to meditate.

The speaker moves into the need step of Monroe's motivated sequence. She uses statistics to document the high levels of anxiety among college students nationally.

Stress and anxiety among college students have skyrocketed in recent years. A report just last year from the American College Health Association found that 67 percent of college students experienced overwhelming anxiety in the last 12 months, while 58 percent reported above average levels of stress. These are higher numbers than the association had ever recorded.

This paragraph builds upon the previous one by turning to anxiety on the speaker's

campus. She provides high-quality evidence and clearly identifies her sources. Citing her audience-analysis survey brings the issue home to her classmates.

According to John Achter, student behavioral health coordinator for the university system, the numbers are just as high at campuses throughout our state. Even in this classroom, there is more than enough stress to go around. According to my audience-analysis questionnaire, 75 percent of you reported feeling “overwhelming anxiety” at some point last year.

“So what can we do?” indicates that the speaker is entering the satisfaction step of the motivated sequence, in which she explains how students can use meditation to manage stress and anxiety.

So what can we do? There are many ways to deal with stress and anxiety, including counseling, medication, and therapy. But I’d like to encourage you to try mindfulness meditation. Used by itself or in conjunction with other methods, it’s an effective and easy way to stay calm and controlled.

The speaker's delivery is genuine, straightforward, and highly personable. In addition to enhancing her communication, it bolsters her goodwill as a heartfelt advocate of the benefits of meditation.

In fact, this is something people have known for a long time. According to meditation expert Giovanni Dienstmann in his book *Practical Meditation*, there is evidence of people practicing meditation more than 7,000 years ago. For most of that time, meditation was a religious practice for seeking enlightenment. Today it's something that even college students can use to manage stress and anxiety.

The speaker continues the satisfaction step by demonstrating the basics of meditation.

On my audience-analysis questionnaire, more than half of you said you'd be interested in learning how to meditate, so let's go through it. Here are the basics, as described by David Gelles, *New York Times* columnist and author of *Mindful Work*.

You can view the speaker's demonstration on Video 16.6. As she proceeds, her nonverbal actions illustrate what she is explaining with her words.

First, you should sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Then you should begin deep breathing. Inhale for about 10 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, then exhale for 10 seconds, like this.

Throughout her demonstration, the speaker continues to relate to her audience by addressing them with “you” and “your.”

As you continue to breathe deeply, envision yourself in a serene, peaceful place. Continue the pattern of inhaling and exhaling until your breathing settles into a comfortable rhythm, usually about a minute or two.

The speaker’s extemporaneous delivery and sustained eye contact create a strong bond with her audience.

Once your breathing settles into a comfortable rhythm, you can relax your muscles from your head

all the way to your toes. Envision your anxiety and stress melting away. Do this for 15 minutes, even 10 minutes, per day and you will soon feel more mindful and centered.

The satisfaction section ends by emphasizing that meditation is most effective when it becomes part of one's daily routine.

Meditation expert Giovanni Dienstmann also recommends that you strive for consistency. This means practicing your meditation around the same time every day and, whenever possible, in the same place. Think of meditation as part of your daily routine, like brushing your teeth.

Now the speaker moves into the visualization section of the motivated sequence, in which she confirms the benefits of her plan. She begins by referring to her own experience.

Once you make meditation part of your daily routine, you will soon feel the difference. Take me. I've been meditating practically every day for the past four years. My meditations are 15 minutes long and take place while I'm seated on my dorm room floor, about an hour before I go to bed. I fall asleep relaxed and wake up ready to tackle the new day.

This paragraph goes beyond the speaker's experience to provide examples and research supporting the benefits of meditation. This kind of evidence is important when one seeks to persuade an audience to take action on a question of policy.

And I am not the only one. Bill Gates. Oprah.

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And I am not the only one. Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, and Kendrick Lamar all have regular meditation routines. Besides these famous names, thousands of college students have discovered the benefits of meditation. Last year, researchers at Florida State University reviewed 25 different scholarly articles on meditation for college students. They found that mindful meditation is proven to have “a large and significant effect in decreasing college students’ anxiety.”

The speaker concludes by moving into the action section of the motivated sequence.

In conclusion, I encourage all of you to begin a program of mindfulness meditation. It won't get rid of all of your problems, of course. But it's been proven to help manage the stress and anxiety we all face.

To help her classmates get going with meditation, she refers them to the Calm channel on YouTube.

If you need help getting started, you can follow the steps I laid out in this speech. Or you can go to YouTube and search “calm.” There you’ll find the Calm channel, which includes 10-minute meditation guides and mindfulness training.

The speaker ends with a final appeal for her classmates to test the benefits of meditation for themselves.

With daily meditation, you can recenter yourself and successfully manage the challenges ahead. I encourage you to give it a try and see what kind of difference it makes in your life.

Now the speaker moves into the visualization section of the motivated sequence, in which she confirms the benefits of her plan. She begins by referring to her own experience.

Once you make meditation part of your daily routine, you will soon feel the difference. Take me. I've been meditating practically every day for the past four years. My meditations are 15 minutes long and take place while I'm seated on my dorm room floor, about an hour before I go to bed. I fall asleep relaxed and wake up ready to tackle the new day.

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With daily meditation, you can recenter yourself and successfully manage the challenges ahead. I encourage you to give it a try and see what kind of difference it makes in your life.

Summary

Persuasion is the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people's beliefs or actions. When you speak to persuade, you act as an advocate. The ability to speak persuasively will benefit you in every part of your life, from personal relations to community activities to career aspirations.

How successful you are in any persuasive speech depends on how well you tailor your message to your listeners' values, attitudes, and beliefs. You should think of your speech as a mental dialogue with your audience. Identify your target audience, anticipate objections they may raise to your point of view, and answer those objections in your speech.

Persuasive speeches may center on questions of fact, value, or policy. When giving a persuasive speech about a question of fact, your role is akin to that of a lawyer in a courtroom trial. You will try to get your listeners to accept your view of the facts.

Questions of value involve a person's beliefs about what is right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral,

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Questions of value involve a person's beliefs about what is right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, ethical or unethical. When speaking about a question of value, you must justify your opinion by establishing standards for your value judgment. Speeches on questions of value do not argue directly for or against particular courses of action.

Once you go beyond arguing right or wrong to urging that something should or should not be done, you move to a question of policy. When you speak on a question of policy, your goal may be to evoke passive agreement or to spark immediate action. In either case, you will face three basic issues—need, plan, and practicality. How much of your speech you devote to each issue will depend on your topic and your audience.

There are several options for organizing speeches on questions of policy. If you advocate a change in policy, your main points will often fall naturally into problem-solution order or into problem-cause-solution order. If your audience already agrees that a problem exists, you may be able to use comparative advantages order. Whenever you seek immediate action from listeners, you should consider a more specialized organizational pattern known as Monroe's motivated sequence.

Regardless of your topic or method of organization, you need to make sure your goals are ethically sound and that you use ethical methods to persuade your audience.

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Key Terms

persuasion ( 288)

mental dialogue with the audience ( 291)

target audience ( 291)

question of fact ( 293)

question of value ( 295)

question of policy ( 296)

speech to gain passive agreement ( 297)

speech to gain immediate action ( 298)

need ( 298)

burden of proof ( 298)

plan ( 299)

practicality ( 299)

problem-solution order ( 300)

problem-cause-solution order ( 301)

comparative advantages order ( 302)

Monroe's motivated sequence ( 302)

- What are the three basic issues you must deal with when discussing a question of policy? What will determine the amount of attention you give to each of these issues in any particular speech?
- What four methods of organization are used most often in persuasive speeches on questions of policy?
- What are the five steps of Monroe's motivated sequence? Why is the motivated sequence especially useful in speeches that seek immediate action from listeners?

Exercises for Critical Thinking

1. Look back at the story of Victoria Perez at the beginning of this chapter. Like Victoria, most people do a certain amount of persuading every day in normal conversation. Keep a journal of your communication activities for an entire day, making special note of all instances in which you tried to persuade someone

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else to your point of view. Choose one of those instances and prepare a brief analysis of it.

In your analysis, answer the following questions: (1) Who was the audience for your persuasive effort? (2) What were the “specific purpose” and the “central idea” of your persuasive message? (3) Did you rehearse your persuasive message ahead of time, or did it arise spontaneously from the situation? (4) Were you successful in achieving your specific purpose? (5) If you faced the same situation again, what strategic changes would you make in your persuasive effort?

2. Following are four specific purposes for persuasive speeches. In each case explain whether the speech associated with it concerns a question of fact, a question of value, or a question of policy. Then rewrite the specific purpose statement to make it appropriate for a speech about one of the other two kinds of questions. For instance, if the original purpose statement is about a question of policy, write a new specific purpose statement that deals with the same topic as either a question of fact or a question of value.

Example:

Original statement: To persuade my audience that it is unfair for judges to favor natural parents over adoptive parents in child custody disputes. (question of value)

Rewritten statement: To persuade my audience that the courts should establish clear guidelines for settling disputes between adoptive parents and natural parents in child custody cases. (question of policy)

- a. To persuade my audience that refined sugar is harmful to human health.
 - b. To persuade my audience that a national sales tax should be adopted to help reduce the national debt.
 - c. To persuade my audience that it is unethical for doctors to receive money from pharmaceutical companies to promote their products.
 - d. To persuade my audience to join Teach for America.
3. Choose a topic for a persuasive speech on a question of policy. Create two specific purpose statements about that topic—one for a speech to gain passive agreement, another for a speech to motivate immediate action. Once you have the specific purpose statements, explain how the speech seeking immediate action would differ in structure and persuasive appeals from the speech seeking passive agreement. Be specific.

- Analyze “Getting the Lead Out” in the appendix of sample speeches that follows [Chapter 20](#). Because this is a speech on a question of policy, pay special attention to how the speaker deals with the basic issues of need, plan, and practicality. Does the speaker present a convincing case that a serious problem exists? Does he offer a clear plan to solve the problem? Does he demonstrate that the plan is practical?
- Select an advertisement from television or YouTube that is organized according to Monroe’s motivated sequence. Prepare a brief analysis in which you (a) identify the target audience for the advertisement and (b) describe each step in the motivated sequence as it appears in the advertisement.

CHAPTER 17

Page 312

Methods of Persuasion



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- 📄 **Building Credibility**
- 📄 **Using Evidence**
- 📄 **Reasoning**
- 📄 **Appealing to Emotions**
- 📄 **Sample Speech with Commentary**

Persuasion is big business. Authors and consultants promise to teach you the one key secret to persuading people to do what you want. Ryan Andrews promises to reveal the “forbidden techniques” of “how to manipulate and influence anyone in less than ten minutes.” Hendrik Rodgers claims to teach you the psychology of persuasion so you can “get others to do what you want.” Kevin Dutton claims to have discovered “a single, definitive formula” for “a mysterious, previously unidentified, superstrain of persuasion.” These people charge thousands of dollars for their seminars and motivational speeches. Companies and individuals flock—and pay—to read and hear what they have to say.

It sounds good, but does anyone really have the “one key secret” to persuasion? Probably not. Persuasion is too complicated for that. Yet, as the number of books, seminars, and videos on the subject shows, there is a perpetual fascination with the strategies and tactics of effective persuasion.

What makes a speaker persuasive? Why do listeners accept one speaker’s views and reject those

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What makes a speaker persuasive? Why do listeners accept one speaker's view and reject those of another? How can a speaker motivate listeners to act in support of a cause, a campaign, or a candidate?

People have been trying to answer these questions for thousands of years—from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle to modern-day communication researchers. Although many answers have been given, we can say that listeners will be persuaded by a speaker for one or more of four reasons:

Page 313

Because they perceive the speaker as having high *credibility*.

Because they are won over by the speaker's *evidence*.

Because they are convinced by the speaker's *reasoning*.

Because their *emotions* are touched by the speaker's ideas or language.

In this chapter we will look at each of these. We won't discover any magical secrets that will make you an irresistible persuasive speaker. But if you learn the principles discussed in this chapter, you will greatly increase your odds of winning the minds and hearts of your listeners.

Page 314

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Building Credibility

Here are two sets of imaginary statements. Which one of each pair would you be more likely to believe?

The U.S. judicial system needs major organizational changes to deal with the growing number of court cases. (Sonia Sotomayor)

The U.S. judicial system can deal with the number of court cases without any organizational changes. (Patrick Mahomes)

Technology is changing professional football in ways that the average fan cannot see. (Patrick Mahomes)

Technology is not having a major impact on professional football. (Sonia Sotomayor)

Most likely you chose the first in each pair of statements. If so, you were probably influenced by your perception of the speaker. You are more likely to respect the judgment of Sotomayor, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, when she speaks about the organization of the American judiciary. You are more likely to respect the judgment of Mahomes, quarterback of the Kansas City Chiefs, when he speaks about technology in professional football. Some instructors call this factor *source credibility*. Others refer to it as **ethos**, the name given by Aristotle.

Factors of Credibility

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Factors of Credibility

Many things affect a speaker's credibility, including sociability, dynamism, physical attractiveness, and perceived similarity between speaker and audience. Above all, though, credibility is affected by two factors:

- *Competence*—how an audience regards a speaker's intelligence, expertise, and knowledge of the subject.
- *Character*—how an audience regards a speaker's sincerity, trustworthiness, and concern for the well-being of the audience.¹

The more favorably listeners view a speaker's competence and character, the more likely they are to accept what the speaker says. No doubt you are familiar with this from your own experience. Suppose you take a course in economics. The course is taught by a distinguished professor who has published widely in prestigious journals, who sits on a major international commission, and who has won several awards for outstanding research. In class, you hang on this professor's every word. One day the professor is absent; a colleague from the Economics Department—fully qualified but not as well known—comes to lecture instead. Possibly the fill-in instructor gives the same lecture the distinguished professor would have given, but you do not pay nearly as close attention. The other instructor does not have as high **credibility** as the professor.

It is important to remember that credibility is an attitude. It exists not in the speaker, but in the mind of the audience. A speaker may have high credibility for one audience and low credibility for another. A speaker may also have high credibility on one topic and low credibility on another. Looking back to our imaginary statements, most people would more readily believe Patrick Mahomes speaking about professional football than Patrick Mahomes speaking about the organization of the U.S. judiciary.

Page 315

Types of Credibility

Not only can a speaker's credibility vary from audience to audience and topic to topic, but it can also change during the course of a speech—so much so that we can identify three types of credibility:

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- *Initial credibility*—the credibility of the speaker before she or he starts to speak.
- *Derived credibility*—the credibility of the speaker produced by everything she or he says and does during the speech itself.
- *Terminal credibility*—the credibility of the speaker at the end of the speech.²

All three are dynamic. High initial credibility is a great advantage for any speaker, but it can be destroyed during a speech, resulting in low terminal credibility. The reverse can also occur, as in the following example:

The head of a technology consulting firm, Maira Singh was hired by a regional restaurant chain to modernize their point-of-sale system. She and her team selected the industry-standard POS system, promising to customize it exactly as the restaurant chain needed. Maira assumed there would be glitches, but they turned out to be much worse than anything she had imagined. It took nine months to get the system working properly.

Two years later, the restaurant chain wanted to take advantage of a recent industry trend toward touchless ordering, which involves customers scanning a QR code, ordering, and paying directly from their mobile device. Despite the problems with the previous POS system, Maira was excited about what her team could do with a touchless system, so she decided to bid on the project.

Aware of her low initial credibility with the restaurant chain's management, Maira began her bid presentation by reminding everyone that she hoped to make their business run smoothly. She then acknowledged that she had told them the same thing about the POS system—an admission that drew a laugh and helped everyone relax. Finally, she explained her success implementing touchless systems at other businesses, all of which were thrilled with the results.

A day after the meeting, Maira got a call that she had won the contract. The management team was impressed with her presentation and confident in her abilities. She had achieved high terminal credibility.

In every speech you give you will have some degree of initial credibility, which will be strengthened or weakened by your message and how you deliver it. And your terminal credibility from one speech will affect

your initial credibility for the next one. If your audience sees you as sincere and competent, they will be much more receptive to your ideas.

Enhancing Your Credibility

How can you build your credibility in your speeches? At one level, the answer is frustratingly general. Since everything you say and do in a speech will affect your credibility, you should say and do *everything* in a way that will make you appear capable and trustworthy. In other words—give a brilliant speech and you will achieve high credibility!

All of this argues for practicing your persuasive speech fully ahead of time so you can deliver it fluently and expressively. In addition to being better prepared, you will take a major step toward enhancing your credibility. (Review [Chapter 13](#) if you have questions about speech delivery.)

Speaking techniques aside, the most important way to strengthen your credibility is to deliver your speeches with genuine conviction. President Harry Truman once said that in speaking, “sincerity, honesty, and a straightforward manner are more important than special talent or polish.” If you wish to convince others, you must first convince yourself. If you want others to believe and care about your ideas, you must believe and care about them yourself. Your spirit, enthusiasm, and conviction will carry over to your listeners.

Using Evidence

Evidence consists of supporting materials—examples, statistics, testimony—used to prove or disprove something. As we saw in [Chapter 8](#), most people are skeptical. They are suspicious of unsupported generalizations. They want speakers to justify their claims. If you hope to be persuasive, you must support your views with evidence. Whenever you say something that is open to question, you should give evidence to prove you are right.

Evidence is particularly important in classroom speeches because few students are recognized as experts on their speech topics. Research has shown that speakers with very high initial credibility do not need to use as much evidence as do speakers with lower credibility. For most speakers, though, strong evidence is absolutely necessary. It can enhance your credibility, increase both the immediate and long-term persuasiveness of your message, and help “inoculate” listeners against counterpersuasion.⁴

Evidence is also crucial whenever your target audience opposes your point of view. As we saw in [Chapter 16](#), listeners in such a situation will mentally argue with you—asking questions, raising objections, and creating counterarguments to “answer” what you say. The success of your speech will depend partly on how well you anticipate these internal responses and give evidence to refute them.

You may want to review [Chapter 8](#), which shows how to use supporting materials. The following case study illustrates how they work as evidence in a persuasive speech.

How Evidence Works: A Case Study

Let’s say one of your classmates is talking about shortcomings in the U.S. mental-health system. Instead of just telling you what she thinks, the speaker offers strong evidence to prove her point. Notice how she carries on a mental dialogue with her listeners. She imagines what they might be thinking, anticipates their

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questions and objections, and gives evidence to answer the questions and resolve the objections.

She begins this way:

Right now in our city, there is a homeless man muttering to himself on a street corner. An elderly woman isolated from the rest of the world. A teenager cutting her arms and legs. Some call them crazy. But to me, these are people who need help—help that they're not receiving because of our nation's inadequate mental-health services.

How do you react? If you already know about the deficiencies in mental-health services, you probably nod your head in agreement. But what if you don't know? Or what if you're skeptical? Perhaps you think taxpayer dollars could be better spent elsewhere. If so, a few anecdotes probably won't persuade you. Mentally you say to the speaker, "These are sad stories, but maybe they're isolated cases. Do we really have a national problem?"

Page 319

Anticipating just such a response, the speaker gives evidence to support her point:

According to a recent story in *U.S. News and World Report*, more than 120 million Americans—37 percent of the population—live in areas where mental-health professionals are in short supply. In fact, we need an estimated 6,400 new mental-health providers to fill the gaps in coverage.

“Okay, that’s a big number,” you may think. “But people with mental-health issues receive care in other ways. Rural areas with few options for care don’t tell the whole story.” The speaker answers:

What happens to the people who can’t receive treatment? According to Dr. Christine Montross, a psychiatrist at Brown University, many end up behind bars. There are around 350,000 people currently in prison who have severe mental illness. That is 10 times the number of people in state psychiatric hospitals. Our prisons are now more responsible for mental-health care than our mental-health facilities.

“That’s an interesting point,” you say to yourself. “But is that the extent of the problem?” Keeping one step ahead of you, the speaker continues:

Nor is the mental-health crisis isolated to our prisons. Consider the following statistics from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Untreated mental illnesses cost the United States almost \$300 billion a year in lost productivity. Adults with serious, but treatable, mental illness die an average of 25 years earlier than the rest of the population. And veterans with mental-health issues are committing suicide at alarming rates—an average of 20 every single day.

Now are you convinced? Chances are you will at least think about the lack of mental-health care as a serious problem. You may even decide that increasing funding for mental-health services would be a good investment of tax dollars. If so, you will have changed your mind in part because the speaker supported each of her claims with evidence.

Tips for Using Evidence

Any of the supporting materials discussed in [Chapter 8](#)—examples, statistics, testimony—can work as evidence in a persuasive speech. As we saw in that chapter, there are guidelines for using each type of supporting material regardless of the kind of speech you are giving. Here we look at four special tips for using evidence in a persuasive speech.⁵

Use Specific Evidence

No matter what kind of evidence you employ—statistics, examples, or testimony—it will be more persuasive if you state it in specific rather than general terms. In the speech about mental illness, for example, the speaker did not say, “Lack of adequate mental-health care costs the U.S. economy lots of money.” That would have left the audience wondering how much “lots” amounts to. By saying, “untreated mental illnesses cost the United States almost \$300 billion a year in lost productivity,” the speaker made her point much more persuasively. She also enhanced her credibility by showing that she had a firm grasp of the facts.

Use Novel Evidence

Evidence is more likely to be persuasive if it is new to the audience. You will gain little by citing facts and figures that are already well known to your listeners. If they have not persuaded your listeners already, they will not do so now. You must go beyond what the audience already knows and present striking new evidence that will get them to say, “Hmmm, I didn’t know *that*. Maybe I should rethink the issue.” Finding such evidence usually requires hard digging and resourceful research, but the rewards are worth the effort.

Use Evidence from Credible Sources

Careful listeners find evidence from competent, credible sources more persuasive than evidence from less qualified sources. Above all, they are suspicious of evidence from sources that appear to be biased or self-interested. In assessing the current state of airline safety, for example, they are more likely to be persuaded by testimony from impartial aviation experts than from the president of American Airlines. If you wish to be persuasive, rely on evidence from objective, nonpartisan sources.



Persuasive speeches need strong evidence to convince skeptical listeners. Research shows that evidence will be most convincing when it is stated in specific rather than general terms.

Somyot Techapuwapat/Getty Images

Make Clear the Point of Your Evidence

When speaking to persuade, you use evidence to prove a point. Yet you would be surprised how many novice speakers present their evidence without making clear the point it is supposed to prove. A number of studies have shown that you cannot count on listeners to draw, on their own, the conclusion you want them to reach. When using evidence, be sure listeners understand the point you are trying to make.

Notice, for example, how the speaker in Video 17.3 drives home the point of his evidence about the rate of motorcycle fatalities in comparison to automobile fatalities:

Page 321

According to the Governors Highway Safety Association, last year there were more than 5,000 motorcycle deaths in the United States. That's a jump of 9 percent from the previous year. If 5,000 people dead doesn't sound like a lot, consider this: Over the past 15 years, motorcycle deaths have doubled, while automobile deaths have dropped by 23 percent. Here in Wisconsin alone, 114 people died last year. That's a 34 percent increase from the year before.

Clearly, we can do more to solve the problem. Here in Wisconsin, there's an easy solution: We can save lives simply by requiring that all motorcyclists wear a helmet.



View this excerpt from “Saving Lives with Motorcycle Helmets” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 17.3).

Evidence is one element of what Aristotle referred to as **logos**—the logical appeal of a speaker. The other major element of logos is reasoning, which works in combination with evidence to help make a speaker’s claims persuasive.



Checklist Evidence

YES	NO
-----	----

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | 1. Are all my major claims supported by evidence? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 2. Do I use sufficient evidence to convince my audience of my claims? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 3. Is my evidence stated in specific rather than general terms? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 4. Do I use evidence that is new to my audience? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 5. Is my evidence from credible, unbiased sources? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 6. Do I identify the sources of my evidence? |

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| ☐ | ☐ | 4. Do I use evidence that is new to my audience? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 5. Is my evidence from credible, unbiased sources? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 6. Do I identify the sources of my evidence? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 7. Is my evidence clearly linked to each point that it is meant to prove? |

☐ ☐ 7. Is my evidence clearly linked to each point that it is meant to prove?

☐ ☐ 8. Do I provide evidence to answer possible objections the audience may have to my position?

Reasoning

The story is told about Hack Wilson, a hard-hitting outfielder for the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team in the 1930s.⁶ Wilson was a great player, but he had a fondness for the good life. His drinking exploits were legendary. He was known to spend the entire night on the town, stagger into the team's hotel at the break of dawn, grab a couple hours sleep, and get to the ballpark just in time for the afternoon game.

This greatly distressed Max Carey, Wilson's manager. At the next team meeting, Carey spent much time explaining the evils of drink. To prove his point, he stood beside a table on which he had placed two

Page 322

explaining the evils of drink. To prove his point, he stood beside a table on which he had placed two glasses and a plate of live angleworms. One glass was filled with water, the other with gin—Wilson's favorite beverage. With a flourish Carey dropped a worm into the glass of water. It wriggled happily. Next Carey plunged the same worm into the gin. It promptly stiffened and expired.

A murmur ran through the room, and some players were obviously impressed. But not Wilson. He didn't even seem interested. Carey waited a little, hoping for some delayed reaction from his wayward slugger. When none came, he prodded, "Do you follow my reasoning, Wilson?"

"Sure, skipper," answered Wilson. "It proves that if you drink gin, you'll never get worms!"

And what does this story prove? No matter how strong your evidence, you will not be persuasive unless listeners grasp your reasoning.

Reasoning is the process of drawing a conclusion based on evidence. Sometimes we reason well—as when we conclude that ice particles forming on the trees may mean the roads will be slippery. Other times we reason less effectively—as when we conclude that spilling salt will bring bad luck. Most superstitions are actually no more than instances of faulty reasoning.



Reasoning is an important part of persuasive speaking. Depending on the situation, a speaker may reason from specific instances, from principle, analogically, or causally.

Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

Reasoning in public speaking is an extension of reasoning in other aspects of life. As a public speaker, you have two major concerns with respect to reasoning. First, you must make sure your own reasoning is sound. Second, you must try to get listeners to agree with your reasoning. Let us look, then, at four basic methods of reasoning and how to use them in your speeches.

Reasoning from Specific Instances

When you reason from specific instances, you progress from a number of particular facts to a general conclusion.⁷ For example:

Fact 1: My physical education course last term was easy.

Fact 2: My roommate's physical education course was easy.

Fact 3: My brother's physical education course was easy.

Conclusion: Physical education courses are easy.

As this example suggests, we use **reasoning from specific instances** daily, although we probably don't realize it. Think for a moment of all the general conclusions that arise in conversation: Politicians are corrupt. Professors are bookish. Dorm food is awful. Where do such conclusions come from? They come from observing particular politicians, professors, dormitories, and so on.

The same thing happens in public speaking. The speaker who concludes that unethical banking practices are common in the United States because several major banks have been guilty of fraud in recent years is reasoning from specific instances. So is the speaker who argues that anti-Semitism is increasing on college campuses because there have been a number of attacks on Jewish students and symbols at schools across the nation.

Such conclusions are never foolproof. No matter how many specific instances you give (and you can give only a few in a speech), it is always possible that an exception exists. Throughout the ages people observed countless white swans in Europe without seeing any of a different color. It seemed an undeniable fact that all swans were white. Then, in the 19th century, black swans were discovered in Australia!⁸

When you reason from specific instances, beware of jumping to conclusions on the basis of insufficient evidence. Make sure your sample of specific instances is large enough to justify your conclusion.

Page 323

Also make sure the instances you present are fair, unbiased, and representative. (Are three physical education courses *enough* to conclude that physical education courses in general are easy? Are the three courses *typical* of most physical education courses?)

Finally, reinforce your argument with statistics or testimony. Because you can never give enough specific

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Finally, reinforce your argument with statistics or testimony. Because you can never give enough specific instances in a speech to make your conclusion irrefutable, you should supplement them with testimony or statistics demonstrating that the instances are representative.

Reasoning from Principle

Reasoning from principle is the opposite of reasoning from specific instances. It moves from the general to the specific.⁹ When you reason from principle, you progress from a general principle to a specific conclusion. We are all familiar with this kind of reasoning from statements such as the following:

1. All people are mortal.
2. Socrates is a person.
3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

This is a classic example of reasoning from principle. You begin with a general statement (“All people are mortal”), move to a minor premise (“Socrates is a person”), and end with a specific conclusion (“Socrates is mortal”).

There are good arguments on both sides of the debate over abolishing the electoral college. However, to conclude that the electoral college should be kept forever solely because it has always been a part of the U.S. Constitution commits the fallacy of appeal to tradition.

Just because a practice, an institution, or an idea is old does not automatically make it better. Its value should be based on its contributions to society, not on its age. If tradition were the sole measure of value, we would still have slavery, women would not be able to vote, and people would undergo surgery without anesthesia.

Appeal to Novelty

The fallacy of **appeal to novelty** is the opposite of appeal to tradition. Appeal to novelty assumes that because

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something is new, it is therefore superior to something that is older. For example:

Our church should adopt the updated New International Version of the Bible because it is 400 years newer than the King James Version.

The fact that the New International Version of the Bible is newer than the King James Version (completed in 1611) does not *automatically* make it better. There are many reasons why a church might prefer the New International Version, but the speaker should *explain* those reasons, rather than assuming that one version is better than another simply because it is new.

Advertisers often commit the fallacy of appeal to novelty. They tout their latest products as “new and improved,” yet we know from experience that new does not necessarily mean improved. As always, we need to look carefully at the claim and make sure it is based on sound reasoning.¹⁰

Appealing to Emotions

Effective persuasion often requires emotional appeal. As the Roman rhetorician Quintilian stated, “It is feeling and force of imagination that make us eloquent.”¹¹ By adding “feeling” and the “force of imagination” to your logical arguments, you can become a more compelling persuasive speaker.

What Are Emotional Appeals?

Emotional appeals—what Aristotle referred to as **pathos**—are intended to make listeners feel sad, angry, guilty, afraid, happy, proud, sympathetic, reverent, or the like. These are often appropriate reactions when the question is one of value or policy. As George Campbell wrote in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, “When persuasion is the end, passion also must be engaged.”¹²

Using Public Speaking in Your **CAREER**

As the service manager for a local home improvement company, you have been pleased to see your company expand its size and scope, but you don't want that growth to come at the expense of customer service. In particular, you're worried about losing touch with one of the company's key demographics—women, who make up 55 percent of your customer base. To prevent this from happening, you have developed a plan for a range of personalized services targeted at women, including one-on-one teaching of do-it-yourself skills and free in-home consultations.



Antonio Diaz/123RF

When you present your plan at a meeting of the company's management team, you listen as one executive argues in opposition. Among his points are the following: (1) If your plan is adopted, customers will expect more and more special services and eventually will demand free installation of flooring and carpeting. (2) Because a majority of the management team opposes your plan, it must not be a good idea. (3) One of your competitors tried a customer

opposes your plan, it must not be a good idea (c) One of your competitors tried a customer service plan specifically for women, but it did not succeed; therefore, your plan is doomed to failure.

In your response to the executive, you will point out the fallacy in each of his points. What are those fallacies?

Following is a list of some of the emotions evoked most often by public speakers. After each emotion are a few examples of subjects that might stir that emotion:

- *Fear*—of serious illness, of natural disasters, of sexual assault, of personal rejection, of economic hardship.
- *Compassion*—for war refugees, for battered women, for neglected animals, for starving children, for victims of cancer.
- *Pride*—in one's country, in one's family, in one's school, in one's ethnic heritage, in one's personal accomplishments.
- *Anger*—at terrorists and their supporters, at business leaders who act unethically, at members of Congress who abuse the public trust, at landlords who exploit student tenants, at vandals and thieves.
- *Guilt*—about not helping people less fortunate than ourselves, about not considering the rights of others, about not doing one's best.
- *Reverence*—for an admired person, for traditions and institutions, for one's deity.

Page 330

There are many other emotions and many other subjects that might stir them. However, this brief sample should give you an idea of the kinds of emotional appeals you might use to enhance the message of your persuasive speech.



Emotional appeals often make a speech more compelling, as in these remarks by Jonathan Van Ness at the Point Honors Gala for outstanding student scholars.

Cindy Ord/Getty Images

Generating Emotional Appeal

Use Emotional Language

As we saw in  **Chapter 12**, using emotion-laden words is one way to generate emotional appeal. Here, for instance, is part of the conclusion from a student speech about the challenges and rewards of working as a volunteer teacher:

The promise of America sparkles in the eyes of every child. Their dreams are the glittering dreams of America. When those dreams are dashed, when innocent hopes are betrayed, so are the dreams and hopes of the entire nation. It is our duty—to me, it is a sacred duty—to give all children the chance to learn and grow, to share equally in the American dream of freedom, justice, and opportunity.

The underlined words and phrases have strong emotional power, and in this case they produced the desired effect. Be aware, however, that packing too many emotionally charged words into one part of a speech can call attention to the emotional language itself and undermine its impact. The emotion rests in your audience, not in your words. Even the coldest facts can touch off an emotional response if they strike the right chords in a listener.

Page 331

Develop Vivid Examples

Often a better approach than relying on emotionally charged language is to let emotional appeal grow naturally out of the content of your speech. The most effective way to do this is with vivid, richly textured examples that pull listeners into the speech.

Here is how one speaker used a vivid example for emotional appeal. She was speaking about the malaria epidemic in Africa. Here is what she might have said, stripping the content of emotional appeal:

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Malaria is one of the biggest problems facing Africa. Many die from it every day. If the rest of the world doesn't help, the malaria epidemic will only get worse.

What she actually said went something like this:

Nathan was only five years old when the fever struck him. At first, no one knew what was wrong. No one knew that parasites inside his body had infected his red blood cells. No one knew those cells were clumping together, choking the flow of blood through his body and damaging his vital organs. No one knew his kidneys would soon fail and seizures would begin. No one knew he would wind up in a coma.

The parasites in Nathan's body came from a mosquito bite, a bite that gave him malaria. And Nathan is not alone. The World Health Organization tells us the horrible truth: In Africa, a child dies from malaria every 30 seconds.



View this excerpt from “The Tragedy of Malaria” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 17.4).

People who listen to a speech like that will not soon forget it. They may well be moved to action—as the speaker intends. The first speech, however, is not nearly as compelling. Listeners may well nod their heads, think to themselves “good idea”—and then forget about it. The story of Nathan and his tragic fate gives the second speech emotional impact and brings it home to listeners in personal terms.

Page 332

Speak with Sincerity and Conviction

Ronald Reagan was one of the most effective speakers in U.S. history. Even people who disagreed with his political views often found him irresistible. Why? Partly because he seemed to speak with great sincerity and conviction.

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conviction.

What was true for Reagan is true for you as well. The strongest source of emotional power is your conviction and sincerity. All your emotion-laden words and examples are but empty trappings unless *you* feel the emotion yourself. And if you do, your emotion will communicate itself to the audience through everything you say and do—not only through your words, but also through your tone of voice, rate of speech, gestures, and facial expressions.

Ethics and Emotional Appeal

Much has been written about the ethics of emotional appeal in speechmaking. Some people have taken the extreme position that ethical speakers should avoid emotional appeal entirely. To support this view, they point to speakers who have used emotional appeal to fan the flames of hatred, bigotry, and fanaticism.

There is no question that emotional appeals can be abused by unscrupulous speakers for detestable causes. But emotional appeals can also be wielded by honorable speakers for noble causes—by Winston Churchill to rouse the world against Adolf Hitler and the forces of Nazism, by Martin Luther King to call for racial justice. Few people would question the ethics of emotional appeal in these instances.

Nor is it always possible to draw a sharp line between reason and emotional appeal. Think back to the story of Nathan, the five-year-old boy who was infected with malaria. The story certainly has strong emotional appeal. But is there anything unreasonable about it? Or is it irrational for listeners to respond to it by donating to antimalarial causes? By the same token, is it illogical to be compassionate for victims of natural disasters? Angered by corporate wrongdoing? Fearful about cutbacks in student aid? Reason and emotion often work hand in hand.

Page 333





Emotional language and vivid examples can help generate emotional appeal, but neither will be effective unless the speaker talks with genuine sincerity and conviction.

Annette Riedl/picture alliance/Getty Images

One key to using emotional appeal ethically is to make sure it is appropriate to the speech topic. If you want to move listeners to act on a question of policy, emotional appeals are not only legitimate but perhaps necessary. If you want listeners to do something as a result of your speech, you will probably need to appeal to their hearts as well as to their heads.

On the other hand, emotional appeals are usually inappropriate in a persuasive speech on a question of fact. Here you should deal only in specific information and logic. Suppose someone charges your state governor with illegal campaign activities. If you respond by saying “I’m sure the charge is false because I have always admired the governor,” or “I’m sure the charge is true because I have always disliked the governor,” then you are guilty of applying emotional criteria to a purely factual question.

Even when trying to move listeners to action, you should never substitute emotional appeals for evidence and reasoning. You should *always* build your persuasive speech on a firm foundation of facts and logic. This is important not just for ethical reasons, but for practical ones as well. Unless you prove your case, careful listeners will not be stirred by your emotional appeals. You need to build a good case based on reason *and* kindle the emotions of your audience.¹³

When you use emotional appeal, keep in mind the guidelines for ethical speechmaking discussed in  **Chapter 2**. Make sure your goals are ethically sound, that you are honest in what you say, and that you avoid name-calling and other forms of abusive language. In using emotional appeal, as in other respects, your classroom speeches will offer a good testing ground for questions of ethical responsibility.

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Sample Speech with Commentary

The following persuasive speech on a question of policy is organized in problem-solution order. As you read the speech, notice how it employs the methods of persuasion discussed in this chapter. Pay special attention to the speaker’s evidence, which she uses not only to establish the existence of a serious problem, but also to explain her plan and to document its practicality.

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The speech also shows how visual aids can be used in a persuasive presentation to help clarify and document a speaker's arguments—as you can see by watching Video 17.5.

connect™

View “Eyewitness Misidentification” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 17.5).

Eyewitness Misidentification



COMMENTARY



The speaker opens with a realistic scenario that gains attention and draws the audience into the speech.

We've all seen it on cop shows. An eyewitness to a crime is brought to a police station, shown a lineup of suspects or a batch of photographs, and asked to pick out the perpetrator. Easy to do, right? After all, the eyewitness saw the crime with his or her own eyes.

The speaker moves from her opening scenario to show that, contrary to conventional wisdom, eyewitness identification is so unreliable that experts often refer to it as eyewitness *misidentification*.

As it turns out, not so easy. Over the past 30 years, psychologists and criminologists have been studying how eyewitness identifications can go horribly wrong. The Innocence Project, a national organization that works to free people who have been wrongly convicted, has found that eyewitnesses mistakenly identified suspects in 70 percent of convictions that were later overturned by DNA evidence. In fact, eyewitness identification can be so problematic that experts have come up with a new term for it—eyewitness *misidentification*.

The speaker establishes her credibility by

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The speaker establishes her credibility by stating that she learned about the problem of eyewitness misidentification in a criminal justice class.

I first learned about eyewitness misidentification in a criminal justice class I took last year. That class opened my eyes to the many problems that plague our justice system, and eyewitness misidentification is just one of them. But it's a huge one, and it's responsible for wrongfully incarcerating tens of thousands of people, according to the Innocence Project.

After further bolstering her credibility by referring to her research on the topic, the speaker states her central idea and provides a transition from the introduction to the body.

After conducting extensive research for this speech, I've learned that eyewitness misidentification is a problem we can fix, or at least minimize, through a few basic policy changes. Today, I want to persuade you that police departments across the country need to enact strong eyewitness identification guidelines. Doing so is essential to keeping innocent people out

of prison and guilty people off the street. Let's start by looking more closely at the problem of eyewitness misidentification.

This speech is organized in problem-solution order. The speaker begins the problem section by asking her audience to imagine themselves witnessing a violent crime and being asked to identify the perpetrator. Would they be able to do so accurately?

The problem of eyewitness misidentification is rooted in human psychology. Imagine that you're an eyewitness to a violent crime. Because it's violent, the situation is tense and you're naturally scared. Even if you get a good look at the suspect, your brain and body are on edge. Then the police bring you to the station for a lineup. Can you accurately pinpoint the perpetrator?

Referring to her audience-analysis survey relates the topic directly to the speaker's classmates.

According to my audience-analysis survey, more than 80 percent of you think you could. Yet researchers have identified three factors that consistently undermine the reliability of eyewitness testimony.

The speaker explores three factors that undermine the reliability of eyewitness testimony. The first deals with problems in perception.

First, when viewing a traumatic event like a violent crime, our perceptions often don't line up with reality. Doctor Thomas Albright of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies explains that with unexpected

events like crimes, our eyes work quickly to take in what we see. But we can't keep up, so our brains fill in details that simply might be wrong.

The second factor deals with problems in memory. The speaker explains her ideas clearly, supports them with credible evidence, and identifies the source of her evidence.

Second, in addition to problems with perception, there are problems associated with memory. Most people think our memory simply records events, but that's not true. Writing for the Association for Psychological Science, Professor Stephen Chew explains that "stress and terror can actually inhibit memory formation, and memories continue to be constructed after the originating event on the basis of information learned afterward."

Here the speaker completes her discussion of how problems with memory can lead to errors in eyewitness identification.

This means a lineup that occurs long after a crime is committed is much less reliable than one shortly after the crime. Worse still, as police and attorneys ask more and more questions, our memories can actually change over time, leading to faulty identifications.

This paragraph focuses on own-race bias and how it contributes to errors in eyewitness identification. The speaker explains the issue convincingly, and she again supports her position with expert

testimony.

Third, there's the problem of what legal scholar Bryan Ryan of Washington University Law School calls own-race bias and cross-race effect. Simply put, it's easier to recognize distinguishing characteristics of someone of your own race than someone of a different race. A white person trying to pick out a person of color from a lineup, or vice-versa, is prone to much greater bias and error than someone trying to pick out a person of his or her own race.

The speaker ends the problem section by personalizing the consequences of eyewitness misidentification with the example of James Watson, who spent nearly 40 years in jail before being exonerated by DNA evidence.

Time and time again, these problems of perception, memory, and own-race bias lead to the wrong person being put behind bars—the wrong person like James Watson, who spent 38 years in a Massachusetts prison for murder. As the University of Michigan National Registry of Exonerations explains, his conviction stemmed from a mistaken cross-race

conviction stemmed from a mistaken cross-face identification that emerged long after the crime and only after extensive police prodding. Watson was finally set free in 2020 after DNA exonerated him.

The speaker transitions into the solution section, in which she presents four guidelines for reducing the problem of eyewitness misidentification.

We can't allow tens of thousands of people like James Watson to waste another day behind bars. That's why police departments across the country need to adopt strong eyewitness identification guidelines. Here are four key guidelines I propose that are based on scientific research and are supported by psychologists, criminologists, and the Innocence Project.

As the speaker proceeds, she uses a signpost to introduce each guideline.

One, all police lineups should be double-blind. This means that neither the person administering the lineup nor the eyewitness should know ahead of time who the primary suspect is. We don't want the lineup administrator to give off any clues that could bias the eyewitness.

As you can see from Video 17.5, the speaker highlights each guideline with a PowerPoint slide.

Two, the lineup administrator needs to provide careful instructions. The eyewitness needs to be told not to feel pressure to make a choice, and that the suspect may not actually be in the lineup. This will free the eyewitness to make a choice—or not—on their own terms.

The speaker uses her voice, gestures, and eye contact to emphasize key points and to enhance communication with her audience.

Three, the lineup needs to be carefully composed so as not to bias the eyewitness. The people in the lineup—often known as “fillers”—should resemble the suspect as much as possible. For instance, instead of having a lineup where only the suspect has facial hair, everyone in the lineup should have facial hair.

Throughout her speech, the speaker does an excellent job of explaining complex ideas plainly and concisely. She provides enough detail about each guideline for the audience to understand it, but not so much as to bog down her momentum.

And four, immediately after making an identification, the eyewitness should provide a confidence statement. This statement indicates how confident the eyewitness is about the person he or she identified—40 percent confident, 80 percent, 100 percent, whatever the figure is. This should happen immediately after the lineup, and it should be available to prosecutors and defense attorneys when the case goes to trial.

The speaker wraps up her solution section by affirming the practicality of her guidelines. The quotation from Professor Smalarz stresses the importance of having all the states implement all four guidelines to prevent further miscarriages of justice.

These four guidelines are so important that they've been endorsed by the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Department of Justice. States, however, have been slow to implement them. According to Laura Smalarz, professor of psychology at Arizona State University, 24 states have adopted at least one of the guidelines. But as Professor Smalarz says, we need *all* the states to adopt *all* the guidelines if we are to "prevent additional miscarriages of justice."

The speaker signals the beginning of her conclusion and summarizes her main points. Her final words end the speech on a forceful note.

In conclusion, I hope you see how serious the problem of eyewitness misidentification is and how it can be brought under control. Doing so will not eliminate all the problems in our justice system, but it will make the system more just for thousands of people.

Throughout her speech, the speaker does an excellent job of explaining complex ideas plainly and concisely. She provides enough detail about each guideline for the audience to understand it, but not so much as to bog down her momentum.

And four, immediately after making an identification, the eyewitness should provide a confidence statement. This statement indicates how confident the eyewitness is about the person he or she identified—40 percent confident, 80 percent, 100 percent, whatever the figure is. This should happen immediately after the lineup, and it should be available to prosecutors and defense attorneys when the case goes to trial.

The speaker wraps up her solution section by affirming the practicality of her guidelines. The quotation from Professor Smalarz stresses the importance of having all the states implement all four guidelines to prevent further miscarriages of justice.

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Summary

Listeners accept a speaker's ideas for one or more of four reasons—because they perceive the speaker as having high credibility, because they are won over by the speaker's evidence, because they are convinced by the speaker's reasoning, and because they are moved by the speaker's emotional appeals.

Credibility is affected by many factors, but the two most important are competence and character. The more favorably listeners view a speaker's competence and character, the more likely they are to accept her or his ideas. Although credibility is partly a matter of reputation, you can enhance your credibility during a speech by establishing common ground with your listeners, by letting them know why you are qualified to speak on the topic, and by presenting your ideas fluently and expressively.

If you hope to be persuasive, you must also support your views with evidence—examples, statistics, and testimony. Regardless of what kind of evidence you use, it will be more persuasive if it is new to the audience, is stated in specific rather than general terms, and is from credible sources. Your evidence will also be more persuasive if you state explicitly the point it is supposed to prove.

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also be more persuasive if you state explicitly the point it is supposed to prove.

No matter how strong your evidence, you will not be persuasive unless listeners agree with your reasoning. In reasoning from specific instances, you move from a number of particular facts to a general conclusion. Reasoning from principle is the reverse—you move from a general principle to a particular conclusion. When you use causal reasoning, you try to establish a relationship between causes and effects. In analogical reasoning, you compare two cases and infer that what is true for one is also true for the other.

Whatever kind of reasoning you use, avoid fallacies such as hasty generalization, false cause, invalid analogy, appeal to tradition, and appeal to novelty. You should also be on guard against the red herring, slippery slope, bandwagon, *ad hominem*, and either-or fallacies.

Page 337

Finally, you can persuade your listeners by appealing to their emotions. One way to generate emotional appeal is by using emotion-laden language. Another is to develop vivid, richly textured examples. Neither, however, will be effective unless you feel the emotion yourself and communicate it by speaking with sincerity and conviction.

As with other methods of persuasion, your use of emotional appeal should be guided by a firm ethical rudder. Although emotional appeals are usually inappropriate in speeches on questions of fact, they are legitimate—and often necessary—in speeches that seek immediate action on questions of policy. Even when trying to move listeners to action, however, you should never substitute emotional appeals for evidence and reasoning.

Whatever kind of reasoning you use, avoid fallacies such as hasty generalization, false cause, invalid analogy, appeal to tradition, and appeal to novelty. You should also be on guard against the red herring, slippery slope, bandwagon, *ad hominem*, and either-or fallacies.

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Key Terms

ethos ([🔗](#) 314)

credibility ([🔗](#) 314)

initial credibility ([🔗](#) 315)

derived credibility ([🔗](#) 315)

terminal credibility ([🔗](#) 315)

creating common ground ([🔗](#) 316)

evidence ([🔗](#) 318)

logos ([🔗](#) 321)

reasoning ([🔗](#) 322)

reasoning from specific instances ([🔗](#) 322)

reasoning from principle ([🔗](#) 323)

causal reasoning ([🔗](#) 324)

analogical reasoning ([🔗](#) 325)

fallacy ([🔗](#) 325)

hasty generalization ([🔗](#) 325)

false cause ([🔗](#) 326)

invalid analogy ([🔗](#) 327)

bandwagon ([🔗](#) 327)

red herring ([🔗](#) 327)

ad hominem ([🔗](#) 328)

either-or ([🔗](#) 328)

slippery slope ([🔗](#) 328)

appeal to tradition ([🔗](#) 328)

appeal to novelty ([🔗](#) 329)

pathos ([🔗](#) 329)

- What is causal reasoning? Why is the relationship between causes and effects not always clear?
- What is analogical reasoning? Why is analogical reasoning frequently used in persuasive speeches on questions of policy?
- What are the ten logical fallacies discussed in this chapter?
- What is the role of emotional appeal in persuasive speaking? Identify three methods you can use to generate emotional appeal in your speeches.

Exercises for Critical Thinking

1. Research has shown that a speaker's initial credibility can have great impact on how the speaker's ideas are received by listeners. Research has also shown that a speaker's credibility will vary from topic to topic

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and audience to audience. In the left-hand column below is a list of well-known public figures. In the right-hand column is a list of potential speech topics. Assume that each speaker will be addressing your speech class.

For each speaker, identify the topic in the right-hand column on which she or he would have the highest initial credibility for your class. Then explain how the speaker's initial credibility might be affected if the speaker were discussing the topic in the right-hand column directly across from her or his name.

Speaker

Jennifer Lopez

Tim Cook

Oprah Winfrey

Stephen King

Roger Federer

Topic

Horror and Modern Fiction

My Life in Tennis

Trends in Pop Music

The Art of Interviewing

The Future of Smartphones

2. Identify the kind of reasoning used in each of the following statements. What weaknesses, if any, can you find in the reasoning of each?
- The U.S. Constitution prohibits cruel and unusual punishment. Life sentencing for juvenile offenders is cruel and unusual punishment. Therefore, life sentencing for juvenile offenders is contrary to the U.S. Constitution.
 - We can see from its work all around the world that Women for Women International is a worthy charitable organization. It has helped women in Rwanda operate sewing machines and make clothing. It has given women in Kosovo the skills to operate businesses in their communities. It has shown

- Over the years there has been much debate about the role of emotional appeal in public speaking. Do you believe it is ethical for public speakers to use emotional appeals when seeking to persuade an audience? Do you feel there are certain kinds of emotions to which an ethical speaker should not appeal? Why or why not? Be prepared to explain your ideas in class.
- Analyze “Changing Lives Through the Literacy Network” in the appendix of sample speeches that follows [Chapter 20](#). Pay special attention to the speaker’s credibility, evidence, reasoning, and emotional appeal. In addition to reading the text, view the speech on Video 17.6 so you can assess the speaker’s delivery and its impact on her persuasiveness.

connect™

View “Changing Lives Through the Literacy Network” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 17.6)

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CHAPTER 18

Page 340

Speaking on Special Occasions



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- 📄 **Speeches of Introduction**
- 📄 **Speeches of Presentation**
- 📄 **Speeches of Acceptance**
- 📄 **Commemorative Speeches**

Special occasions are the punctuation marks of day-to-day life, the high points that stand out above ordinary routine. Christenings, weddings, funerals, graduations, award ceremonies, inaugurals, retirement dinners—all these are occasions, and they are very special to the people who take part in them. Nearly always they are occasions for speechmaking. A close friend proposes a toast to the newly married couple; the sales manager presents an award to the sales representative of the year; a family member delivers a moving eulogy to the deceased. These speeches help give the occasion its “specialness.” They are part of the ceremonial aura that marks the event.

Speeches for special occasions are different from the speeches we have considered so far in this book. They may convey information or persuade, but that is not their primary purpose. Rather, they aim to fit the special needs of a special occasion. In this chapter we look at the most common special occasions and the kinds of speeches appropriate for each.

CHAPTER 18

Page 340

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Speeches of Introduction

“Distinguished guests, the President of the United States.” If you are ever in a situation in which you have to introduce the president, you will need no more than the eight words that begin this paragraph. The president is so well known that any further remarks would be inappropriate and almost foolish.

Most of the time, however, a **speech of introduction** will be neither this brief nor this ritualized. If you are introducing another speaker, you will need to accomplish three purposes in your introduction:

Often you will find yourself in the situation of introducing someone who is fairly well known to the audience—a classmate, a colleague at a business meeting, a neighbor in a community group. Then you should try to be creative and cast the speaker in a new light. Talk to the speaker beforehand and see if you can learn some interesting facts that are not generally known—especially facts that relate to the speaker's topic.

Above all, if you expect to be creative and dramatic, be sure to practice your speech of introduction thoroughly. You should be able to deliver it extemporaneously, with sincerity and enthusiasm.

Speeches of Presentation

Speeches of presentation are given when someone receives a gift, an award, or some other form of public recognition. Usually such speeches are brief. They may be no more than a mere announcement (“And the winner is . . .”) or be up to four or five minutes in length.

The main purpose of a speech of presentation is to tell the audience why the recipient is receiving the award: to point out his or her contributions, achievements, and so forth. Do not deal with everything the person has ever done. Focus on achievements related to the award, and discuss these achievements in a way that will make them meaningful to the audience.

Depending on the audience and the occasion, you may also need to discuss two other matters in a **speech of presentation**. First, if the audience is not familiar with the award, you should explain it briefly. Second, if the award was won in a public competition and the audience knows who the losers are, you might take a moment to praise the losers.

On  **page 344** is a sample speech of presentation. It was presented by U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona when giving the 2021 National Teacher of the Year award to Juliana Urtubey, a special education teacher at Kermit R. Booker Sr. Innovative Elementary School in Las Vegas, Nevada. Because the Teacher of the Year ceremony recognizes exemplary teachers from every state, Cardona acknowledged the larger group before turning to the national honoree. His speech focused on Urtubey’s commitment to educational excellence and equity.

PRESENTING THE NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Miguel Cardona

It's an honor to celebrate your achievements, especially over the past two years, which have marked the most challenging period in our education history. Congratulations . . . to all state teachers of the year for this well-deserved recognition.

Juliana is an educator with a passion near to my heart. As a first-generation bilingual immigrant, Juliana works to help her students feel proud of their cultures and who they are. She works in special-education classrooms and as an elementary school instructional strategist. I'm heartened that Juliana is the first Latina national teacher of the year in more than 15 years.

Juliana, thank you for using your platform to advocate for a joyful and just education for all students—one that is inclusive, affirming, and celebrates the wonder of learning. . . .

Your contributions to our children's success and our nation's future can't be overstated. You are our country's greatest child advocate. And, as you know, this is our moment. This is our moment. There's no more important time to represent the profession as teachers of the year than now. . . .

With each new group of honorees, we pay tribute to the countless dedicated and passionate educators in classrooms across America—teachers who are pouring their hearts into their work, inspiring their students, and collaborating with their colleagues and neighbors to make their school communities vibrant places to learn.

I've always said it shouldn't take a pandemic for us to realize how important teachers are to this country. We know that great teachers are life-changing. They literally shape the lives of those in their reach. . . .

I'm excited now to turn the stage over to our 2021 National Teacher of the Year, Juliana Urtubey.



Whether given on the world stage or in one's local community, speeches for special occasions should seek to invest the occasion with dignity, meaning, and honest emotion.

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ACCEPTING THE NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Juliana Urtubey

What a beautiful day it is to celebrate educators and the transformative power of education. .

..

I am so grateful to the strong leadership and mentorship of many. I am in awe because each teacher here proudly represents their states and their communities, and we embody the hope and advocacy needed in our times to forge a new path forward towards an education that ensures all can thrive.

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that ensures all can thrive. . . .

Today our focus is to renew the promise of equity and excellence for all children in every school across the country. We know that the pandemic has increased disparities in all walks of life, including education, and our work today requires us to collaborate with students, their families, educators, and communities, while holding onto hope for a brighter future.

This work is often slow, and it's often at odds with the urgency of our times. Let us remember the long-term power and impact of building and sustaining relationships with students, families, and educators so that all of our voices and solutions are in the front lines. . . .

As a special-education teacher, my job is to make sure my students see themselves the way I see them—with all their possibilities and abilities to contribute to school communities. As your 2021 National Teacher of the Year, my job is to show the world the incredible power of educators I see each and every day. . . .

Let's ensure that our future has no barriers, only bridges. Let's ensure that together we enact the biggest lesson that I've learned from my students—and that is, there's nothing more fulfilling than doing our work with joy and that what we provide to the world is in the spirit of justice.

Thank you so much.

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Commemorative Speeches

Commemorative speeches are speeches of praise or celebration. Eulogies, Fourth of July speeches, and

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dedications are examples of commemorative speeches. Your aim in such speeches is to pay tribute to a person, a group of people, an institution, or an idea.

As in an informative speech, you probably will have to give the audience information about your subject. After all, the audience must know *why* your subject is praiseworthy. As in other speeches, you may draw on examples, testimony, even statistics to illustrate the achievements of your subject.

Your fundamental purpose in a commemorative speech, however, is not to inform your listeners but to *inspire* them—to arouse and heighten their appreciation of or admiration for the person, institution, or idea you are praising. If you are paying tribute to a person, for example, you should not simply recount the details of the person's life. Rather, you should penetrate to the *essence* of your subject and generate in your audience a deep sense of respect.

When speaking to commemorate, you want to express feelings, to stir sentiments—joy and hope when a new building is dedicated, anticipation and good wishes at a commencement celebration, lament and consolation at a funeral, admiration and respect at a testimonial dinner. A commemorative speech is like an impressionist painting—“a picture with warm colors and texture capturing a mood or a moment.”³

Summary

In this chapter we have considered speeches of introduction, speeches of presentation, speeches of acceptance, and commemorative speeches.

Your job in a speech of introduction is to build enthusiasm for the main speaker and to establish a welcoming climate. Keep your remarks brief, make sure they are accurate, and adapt them to the audience, the occasion, and the main speaker.

Speeches of presentation are given when someone receives a gift or an award. The main theme of such a speech is to acknowledge the achievements of the recipient. The purpose of an acceptance speech is to give thanks for a gift or an award. When delivering such a speech, you should thank the people who are bestowing the award and recognize the contributions of people who helped you gain it. Be brief, humble, and gracious.

Commemorative speeches are speeches of praise or celebration. Your aim in such a speech is to pay tribute to a person, a group of people, an institution, or an idea. A commemorative speech should inspire the audience, and its success will depend largely on how well you put into language the thoughts and feelings appropriate to the occasion.

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Exercises for Critical Thinking

1. Attend a speech sponsored by a campus organization. Pay special attention to the speech introducing the main speaker. How well does it fit the guidelines discussed in this chapter?
2. Observe several speeches of presentation and acceptance—at a campus awards ceremony or on a show such as the Academy Awards, Grammy Awards, or Emmy Awards. Which speeches do you find most effective? Least effective? Why?
3. Eulogies are among the most common types of commemorative speeches. Imagine that you have been asked by family members to deliver a eulogy at the funeral for one of your grandparents. What would be your primary purpose in delivering a speech on such an occasion? What praiseworthy characteristics would you focus on in eulogizing your grandparent? How might you adapt your remarks to other family members in attendance?
4. Analyze “Ida B. Wells” ([🔗](#) **page 349**) in light of the criteria for commemorative speaking presented in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 19

Page 352

Presenting Your Speech Online



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- 📄 **The Special Nature of the Online Environment**
- 📄 **Kinds of Online Speeches**
- 📄 **Guidelines for Online Speaking**
- 📄 **Optimizing Visual Aids in Online Speeches**
- 📄 **Have a Backup Plan**
- 📄 **Sample Speech with Commentary**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, online public speaking was something of a novelty. A few people had delivered online speeches in virtual college courses. Others had gained experience through virtual job interviews or remote meetings. But online speaking was far from common.

Then everything changed. During the pandemic we watched teachers deliver lessons online, we met in groups with classmates spread across the country, and we learned the good, the bad, and the ugly of Zoom. Church services, city council meetings, sales presentations, weddings, funerals, and so much more—all went virtual and immersed us in the world of online public speaking.

In this world we started to notice what worked and what didn't work. Some speakers sat in front of windows, which washed them out and made them difficult to see clearly. Others rambled on with little concern for the pacing of their speech or keeping the audience engaged. Still others spoke from kitchens with dirty dishes piled high, making them seem unprofessional and unprepared.

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The Special Nature of the Online Environment

When you deliver a traditional speech, you're in the same room as your audience. You can see how many people are present. You can look them in the eye to keep them engaged. You have multiple forms of feedback to assess how fully they are paying attention and how well they are grasping your message.

In the **online environment**, you have a fundamentally different relationship with your audience. Because you're not in the same room with them, gauging their responses can be difficult. You might not know if they begin staring out the window, checking Instagram, or reading news online. Even if you can see the audience on your computer screen, you don't have the same relationship with them that you would if you were personally present in the room.

In fact, almost every aspect of the speech communication process can be affected by the online environment. Think, for example, about the kinds of interference you might face online. Interference can come from the physical spaces where your listeners are located—someone unexpectedly entering the room or a noise in the hallway outside. But interference can also come from the technology connecting you with your audience. A glitch might cause the connection to freeze or drop. Bandwidth congestion might lead to lagging video or buffering issues. Someone's computer might decide to update itself in the middle of your presentation.

Then there is the temptation to multitask, which is often irresistible in the online environment. Who among us hasn't responded to email, browsed shopping sites, or checked sports scores while listening to an online presentation?

These are just some of the challenges facing online public speakers. As with other aspects of life, there is no

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These are just some of the challenges facing online public speakers. As with other aspects of life, there is no

substitute for experience when it comes to giving speeches online. But if you follow the principles discussed in this chapter, you'll get started in the right direction. We'll begin by looking at two types of online speeches.

Kinds of Online Speeches

There are two major kinds of online speeches. One is **recorded online speeches** that are designed primarily for viewing on the Internet. TED Talks are an example. The speakers spend months creating their presentations with the help of TED advisers. On speech day, they address an in-person audience, but that audience is largely a formality. The target audience is composed of the millions of people who will access the talks after they are edited and uploaded to YouTube.

Recorded online speeches can also be found in blended or online public speaking classes. Students make their presentations at their dorm, home, or apartment and upload them to a server where their instructor and fellow students can view the speeches later.

The second major kind of online speech is a **real-time online speech** created for an audience that will view it online as it is being delivered, often using software designed specifically for that purpose. Sometimes the audience is in a classroom or office, but it can also be spread across several locations in multiple time zones. The speaker is seated or standing and talks into a webcam that is located a couple feet away. The entire speech—content, delivery, visual aids—is communicated live via the webcam.

The distinctions between recorded and real-time online speeches are not absolute, but they are essential to keep in mind whenever you present an online speech. If you are recording and uploading a traditional speech for remote viewing—as in an online speech class—you will prepare and present the speech largely as if you were speaking in the classroom.

On the other hand, if you are talking in real time to a remote audience via a webcam, they will expect a speech that is created specifically for the online environment. Such a presentation will have all the usual elements of a public speech—introduction, body, conclusion—with clear main points, strong supporting materials, and engaging delivery. To be successful, however, every aspect of it will have to be adapted to the fact that you are not physically present with the audience and are communicating through a webcam while the audience views the speech on a computer monitor or a video screen.¹



Unlike a recorded online speech, a real-time online presentation is seen by the remote audience as it is being delivered. To be successful, every aspect of such a speech

delivered to be successful, every aspect of each speech must be strategically adapted to the online environment.

Luis Alvarez/Getty Images

Guidelines for Online Speaking

If you follow the principles discussed in previous chapters, you will be well prepared for most aspects of giving an online speech. Yet, as we noted earlier, you need to adapt those principles to the special nature of online communication. In this section of the chapter, we explore general guidelines for online speaking. In the next section, we focus specifically on optimizing the use of visual aids in online speeches.

Control the Visual Environment

The Internet is often informal. We FaceTime with family members, post photos of our social lives to

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The internet is often informal. We FaceTime with family members, post photos of our social lives to Instagram, and record dances for TikTok. Online speeches, however, should *not* be informal. They should be as polished and professional as in-person speeches. This requires, among other things, making the **visual environment**—what the audience sees on-screen—work for you rather than against you. Major elements of the visual environment are setting, lighting, framing, eye contact, and personal appearance.

Optimizing Visual Aids in Online Speeches

If you're delivering a brief online speech, you likely won't need to include visual aids. But as your speech reaches three minutes or more, the more valuable visual aids become to sharpen your message and keep your audience engaged.

 **Chapter 14** discusses several kinds of visual aids and guidelines for using them. Those guidelines include:

- Keep your visual aids simple so they communicate your point but don't confuse or distract the audience.
- Make your visual aids large enough for the audience to see clearly.
- Use a limited amount of text so the audience can process the information quickly.
- Use fonts, colors, and images in a way that creates dynamic, audience-friendly visual aids.
- Display your visual aids only while you are discussing them.
- Practice with your visual aids so your words, text, and graphics are skillfully coordinated.

Here we discuss special considerations for using visual aids in real-time and recorded online speeches.

Visual Aids in Real-Time Online Speeches

Programs like Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Teams allow you to share your screen so the audience can see what is on your computer—a PowerPoint presentation, for instance. In many programs, sharing your screen will replace video of you with video of your slides, allowing the audience to view your visual aids while you continue to talk over them.

When planning to share your screen, it's important to strike the right balance between displaying yourself and showing your visual aids. Stay on-screen early in the speech to create a visual connection with the audience. Once you've established that connection, you can alternate between shots of yourself and shots of your visual aids. This will return the focus to you and your message at appropriate times.

For an example of how to alternate between the speaker and visual aids in a real-time online speech, look at the speech excerpt in Video 19.1. The speaker is seeking to persuade her classmates to donate to the organization charity: water. As you watch, notice that the speaker's visual aids fill the entire screen so the audience can see them clearly. When the speaker is not discussing the visual aids, she switches back to showing just herself. This gives the speech visual variety, alters the pacing, and heightens audience interest. (Text and video of the full speech appear at the end of this chapter.)

Visual Aids in Recorded Online Speeches

When giving a recorded online speech, you have a couple options for incorporating visual aids. If you’re addressing an assembled audience of a few friends or family members, you can display visual aids as you would in the classroom—usually on a monitor or a TV screen.

If you’re recording the speech for an audience that will watch it remotely after it has been uploaded to the Internet, you can use a software program such as GoReact, which is included on the Connect website that accompanies this book. GoReact divides the audience’s video player into two sections. You will appear in one section while your visual aids appear in the other. This allows the audience to see both you and your aids at the same time—as illustrated in [Figure 19.5](#) (page 362). This is often referred to as the “**concurrent view**” of online presentations.⁸

FIGURE 19.5





To see how the concurrent view works in action, watch Video 19.2, which presents a portion of a student speech titled “The Great Mesoamerican Ballgame.” As you will see, the speaker appears on one part of the screen. The other part is reserved for his visual aids, which he controls with a remote, much as he would if he were speaking to an in-person audience. When he is not showing a visual aid, the other part of the screen displays an unobtrusive background of the speaker’s choosing.

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View an excerpt from “The Great Mesoamerican Ballgame” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 19.2).

Many instructors prefer this concurrent view because it keeps the speaker on-screen during the entire speech, just as he would be visible throughout an in-person presentation.





Whether you are presenting an online speech for class or for another situation, you need to support your ideas with clear, convincing supporting materials and to develop a backup plan in case you face technological glitches.

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If you use the concurrent view, be sure to format your slides in “portrait” orientation, which is an option in all the major presentation technology programs, including PowerPoint, Keynote, and Google Slides. This will allow your slides to fill the entire vertical space on the left-hand side of the screen. Otherwise, they will be much smaller and will appear with wide black bands above and below them—as shown in [Figure 19.6](#) (page 363).

FIGURE 19.6



As you watch Video 19.2, notice that the speaker has rehearsed so thoroughly that he can present his visual aids in perfect coordination with his words. There are no gaps in content or errors in using the remote. Notice, too, how he treats the webcam as the eye of the audience, which allows him to maintain eye contact from beginning to end. Finally, pay attention to how he removes each slide from view when he is finished discussing it. This keeps the audience focused on the speaker and his message rather than allowing its attention to linger on the preceding slide.

All of these practices are part of using visual aids effectively in any type of speech, but they are especially important in online speeches. Because such speeches depend entirely on what appears on-screen, you want to make sure that your visual aids are suitably adapted for the screen.

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FG Trade/E+/Getty Images

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Have a Backup Plan

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I Have a Backup Plan

No matter how much time you put into preparing your visual aids and other aspects of your speech, you can still be undermined by technological glitches at the audience's end. This is why experts recommend that you always have a backup plan.

For a recorded online speech, the best backup plan is to give yourself plenty of time before a speech is due to overcome problems with your equipment, Internet connection, and preferred platform. Don't wait until the last minute to record your speech or to upload it. If worse comes to worst, you might need to borrow a different computer, find a better Internet connection, or upload your speech to a different platform.

For a real-time online presentation, your backup plan might include one or more of the following:

Page 365

- Distribute an outline of your speech via email.
- Move the speech to an audio-only conference call.
- Share the text of your speech through a document collaboration program such as Google Docs and invite your audience to comment on the text.
- Turn your real-time online speech into a recorded speech, capturing it first on your computer, then uploading it to a video-sharing website such as YouTube for your audience to view later.
- Reschedule the speech once the technical problems are resolved.

Because we have all been sabotaged by technology at one time or another, audiences usually have sympathy for a speaker who encounters such problems. Having a backup plan will make you look conscientious and considerate.

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Sample Speech with Commentary

In earlier chapters of the book, you will find two recorded online speeches: “Twists and Turns” (Video 4.3), which appears at the end of [Chapter 4](#), and “The Great Mesoamerican Ballgame” (Video 15.6), which we previously discussed and appears in full at the end of [Chapter 15](#). Both speeches illustrate the guidelines for recorded online speaking discussed in this chapter.

The following speech demonstrates how to apply the principles of online speaking in a real-time presentation. The speaker’s assignment was to present a real-time online speech of four to five minutes persuading the audience to support a charity of the speaker’s choice. The speech follows the criteria for persuasive speaking discussed in [Chapters 16](#) and [17](#), but it is adapted to meet the challenges of the online environment.

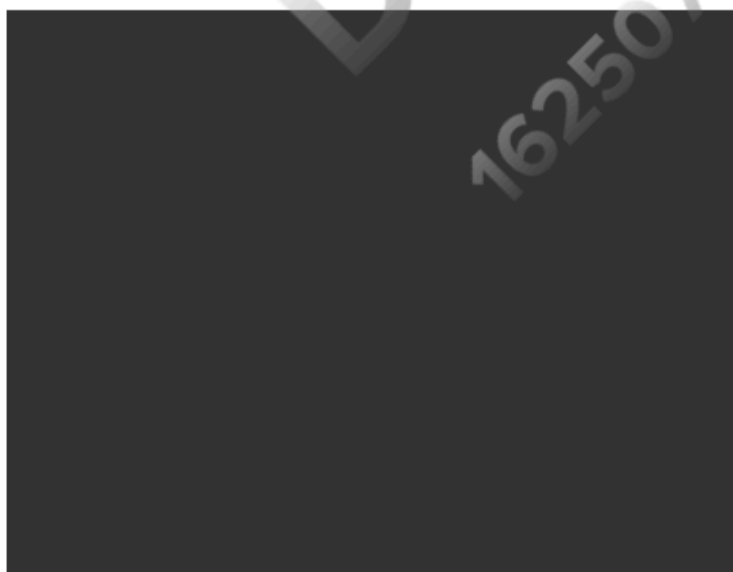


View “charity: water” in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 19.3).

In addition to reading the speech, you can view it on Video 19.3. As you watch, notice how the speaker has full command of the technology and uses it to integrate visual aids into her presentation. The background for the speech is uncluttered, the speaker’s delivery is well adapted to the online setting, and she communicates in a poised and professional manner.

charity: water

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COMMENTARY



SPEECH

The speaker begins by making sure the audience can see her and hear her. This is

Having explained her plan, the speaker enters the visualization section. In this paragraph, she uses a combination of statistics, brief examples, and visual aids to show that charity: water achieves concrete results. When the paragraph is over, she returns to showing herself on-screen.

Most important, charity: water works. As its website explains, it has helped with 23,000 water projects in 24 countries, serving an estimated 7 million people. In Honduras, charity: water helped install a water pump so villagers didn't have to get water from the nearby river. In Rwanda, it helped dig a well so people didn't have to drink water from a stagnant pond. In India, it helped construct a water system to pipe clean water into town from a nearby mountain.

The next two paragraphs continue the visualization section by showing that charity: water is highly responsible in using the money donated to it. This is always an important issue to address when asking people to donate to a charity.

Not only does charity: water complete these projects, but it does so while being financially responsible. Usually, when you donate to a charity, a percentage of your money goes to overhead costs and administrative work. But with charity: water, private donors pay for all these costs. This means every penny you give goes to helping people in need.

Knowing that listeners need evidence, the speaker cites third-party organizations that

have verified charity: water's accountability.

But you don't have to take my word for it. The charity-evaluation website Charity Navigator gives charity: water a four-star rating, the highest possible. Likewise, Give.org reports that charity: water meets or exceeds all twenty of its standards for accountability.

Now the speaker moves into her action section, in which she urges the audience to donate to charity: water.

These are just some of the reasons we should support charity: water. Even though we're college students and don't have bundles of cash lying around, we can still make a difference.

The speaker's conclusion, like the rest of her presentation, is strengthened by her delivery, which is sincere, personable, and heartfelt.

So go to charity: water's website and give five bucks, ten bucks, or twenty bucks—the same amount you might spend at Starbucks or hanging out with friends this weekend. Every penny you donate will give the gift of clean water that we take for granted. Thank you.

Summary

There are two major types of online speeches. A recorded online speech is delivered, recorded, and then uploaded to the Internet for later viewing. Examples are TED Talks and presentations in online or blended speech classes. A real-time online speech is created for an audience that will view the speech on the Internet as it is being delivered—as, for instance, in a job interview, a training session, or a sales presentation.

Both types of speeches must be adapted to the online environment, and both can be more challenging and time-consuming to prepare than speeches for in-person audiences. Challenges include controlling the visual environment, adapting your nonverbal communication, knowing your technology, adapting to the online

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Learning to use visual aids effectively in the online environment can make your speeches more dynamic and engaging. You can enhance the pacing and visual variety of a real-time online speech by switching back and forth between showing yourself and your visual aids. In recorded online speeches, certain software programs allow you to display yourself alongside your visual aids, much as you would in an in-person speech.

No matter which kind of online presentation you are going to give, you'll need a backup plan in case you run into technological glitches on speech day. Always keep in mind that your online speech will require everything needed for an in-person speech—and more.

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Key Terms

- If you're planning on delivering a real-time online speech, analyze "charity: water," which appears at the end of this chapter ([pages 365–367](#)). View the speech on Video 19.3 so you can see the speaker's delivery and use of visual aids. Evaluate the speech in light of the guidelines for online speaking discussed in this chapter.
- 4. If you're planning on delivering a recorded online speech, analyze "The Great Mesoamerican Ballgame," which appears at the end of [Chapter 15](#) ([pages 281–283](#)). View the speech on Video 19.4 so you can see the speaker's delivery and use of visual aids. Evaluate the speech in light of the guidelines for online speaking discussed in this chapter.

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View "The Great Mesoamerican Ballgame" in the online Media Library for this chapter (Video 19.4).

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CHAPTER 20

Page 370

Speaking in Small Groups



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- 📄 **What Is a Small Group?**
- 📄 **Leadership In Small Groups**
- 📄 **Responsibilities In a Small Group**
- 📄 **The Reflective-Thinking Method**
- 📄 **Presenting the Recommendations of the Group**

The president of a medical-device company asked Noah Cox, the new head of the human resources department, to organize an October retreat for the company's sales division. Noah went to work on setting a date, finding a place to stay, and creating an agenda for the retreat.

Noah was very pleased with his plan. He thought he had taken everyone's needs into account. But when he explained his plan at the company's next staff meeting, no one seemed happy.

"The date you set for the retreat is over Halloween," said the marketing manager. "I know you don't have children, but no one with kids is going to want to be away at that time."

The administrative assistant responded next. "Do you realize," he said, "that the hotel you booked is the same one we used for a retreat five years ago? It was a disaster! The food was awful, the meeting rooms were uncomfortable, and the tech support was nonexistent."

Next a junior member of the sales team said, "I see that all the sessions involve executives. Did you mean to exclude the younger team members? We're the ones on the ground at the hospitals."

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Finally, the vice president of product development said, “I wish you had checked with me at some point. I could have warned you about the hotel, the conflict with Halloween, and the need to include junior staff.”

What went wrong? Noah did not have enough time or resources on his own to create a successful retreat. If a group, instead of a single person, had been assigned to plan the retreat, the problems might have been averted. One person could have taken charge of looking into the best dates, another of finding accommodations, a third of coordinating with other staff members about who should be included in the retreat, and so forth. The plan would have taken *all* factors into account.

Page 371

Of course, you may have heard the old saying, “A camel is a horse designed by a committee.” If you have ever been part of a group that seemed to get nothing done, you may be inclined to say, “Oh, let one person decide and get it over with.” The problem in such cases, however, is not that there is a group, but that the group is not functioning properly. A great deal of research shows that if members of a group work well together, they can usually resolve a problem better than a single person.¹

Page 372

This chapter deals with speaking in a particular kind of group—the problem-solving small group.

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This chapter deals with speaking in a particular kind of group—the problem-solving small group.

What Is a Small Group?

As its name implies, a **small group** has a limited number of members. The minimum number is three. (A

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group of two persons is called a **dyad**, and it operates quite differently from a group of three or more.) There is some difference of opinion about the maximum number of people who constitute a small group. Most experts set the maximum number at 7 or 8; some go as high as 12. The important point is that the group must be small enough to allow free discussion among all members. In small-group communication, all participants are potentially speakers *and* listeners.

Members of a small group assemble for a specific purpose. Several shoppers milling around the clothing section of a department store are not a small group, even if they speak to one another or comment about high prices and poor service. But if those same shoppers decided to meet together and prepare a formal complaint to the store manager about high prices and poor service, they would then constitute a small group.

A **problem-solving small group** is formed to solve a particular problem. Such groups exist in every area of life. Business groups consider ways of increasing sales. Church groups discuss how to raise funds and provide for people in need. Groups of parents work on improving day-care facilities. You will almost surely be a member of many problem-solving small groups during your life.

Although speaking in a small group is not the same as public speaking, it involves similar skills. Members of a small group influence one another through communication. As a participant in a small group, you might influence your colleagues by giving them important information, by encouraging them to speak, by convincing them to change their minds, even by getting them to end a meeting of the group. All other members of the group have the same opportunity to influence you through effective communication.²

Leadership in Small Groups

We have said that small groups often make better decisions than do individuals. To do so, however, they

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need effective **leadership**.

Kinds of Leadership

Sometimes there is *no specific leader*. In such a situation, members of effective groups tend to have equal influence. When a need for leadership arises, any of the members can—and one probably will—provide the necessary leadership. A typical instance might be a class project, in which you and several classmates are working together. From time to time, each of you will help the group move toward its goal by suggesting when and where to meet, by outlining the strengths and weaknesses of a certain viewpoint, by resolving disagreements among other members, and so forth.

Whether members feel satisfied with the group's accomplishments.

Whether members feel good about their roles in the group.

If interpersonal problems dominate discussion, the group will have a difficult time working together and reaching a decision. A leader can do much to create and sustain supportive communication in the group. By helping group members handle conflict, by working out differences of opinion, by reducing interpersonal tension, by encouraging participation from all members, by being alert to personal feelings, and by promoting solidarity within the group, a leader can make a tremendous contribution toward helping the group achieve its goals.

Responsibilities in a Small Group

Every member of a small group must assume certain responsibilities, which can be divided into five major categories: (1) commit yourself to the goals of your group; (2) fulfill individual assignments; (3) avoid interpersonal conflicts; (4) encourage full participation; (5) keep the discussion on track. Some of these responsibilities involve leadership roles, but all five are so important that each participant should take them as personal obligations, regardless of the group's leadership.

Commit Yourself to the Goals of Your Group

For a group to succeed, members must align their personal goals with the group's goal. This sounds obvious, but it is not always easy. When you are working with other students on a class project, the group goal—and most likely the goal of each member—is to get a good grade. There is a strong incentive for members to cooperate and commit themselves to completing the task.

Problems arise when one or more members have personal goals that conflict with the group's goal. Here is the kind of situation that can occur:

Tiffany Varga is a member of the committee to buy new equipment for the local art museum's cafeteria. Because the budget is very tight, the committee's goal is to get the best equipment for the lowest price. But unknown to the other members of the group, Tiffany's son-in-law is a salesman for a distributor of high-priced kitchen appliances. Privately, Tiffany has reasoned that if she can sway the committee toward that company, her son-in-law will get a large commission. Tiffany does not mention this fact to the group. Instead, she argues that quality—not price—should be the determining factor in the purchase. The group process breaks down because Tiffany will not surrender her private goal.

This is an extreme example, but there can be more subtle kinds of private goals, as in the following case:

Carlos and Bianca are part of a group, and Carlos would like to be on closer terms with Bianca. To impress her, he may agree with everything she says, regardless of whether he really shares her views. Consequently, Carlos's expressed views are not his actual views. In short, Carlos has a *hidden agenda* in the group meeting. The group's agenda is to solve the problem, but Carlos's agenda is to go out with Bianca.

Group members may have all sorts of *hidden agendas*. One may be experiencing personal problems—lowered grades, a breakup with a friend, or just a bad day. Another may have a commitment to a different group whose goals conflict with those of the present group. A third may want to take charge of the group for reasons of personal power, regardless of the group's task.

Remember that what one member of a group does affects all the other members. You should not try to advance your own interests or boost your own ego at the expense of the group and its goals. Beware of hidden agendas—whether yours or someone else's—and participate with a positive spirit.

Fulfill Individual Assignments

As mentioned earlier, one of the advantages of the group process is that it divides the workload among several people. But unless every member fulfills his or her assignments, the group's entire project may fail—as in the following example:

A number of years ago, one student group decided to raise money for the local children's hospital by hosting a silent auction. After the fund-raiser had been approved, assignments were given out. Carina would contact local businesses about donating items to be auctioned. Megan would set up the room with tables and chairs. Alejandro would prepare light refreshments. Samantha would handle decorations. Derrick would publicize the auction.

Everybody completed their assignments except Derrick, who was busy writing a term paper. He figured he would send an email announcement and post the information to social media in the days leading up to the auction. But he neglected to do any of those things. Realizing this on the morning of the event, he hurriedly posted the information to social media, and even got some accounts to repost the details, but it was too little,

too late. Only a handful of people showed up to the auction, and they were all friends of other group members.

No matter what other assignments they may have, *all* members of a group have one very critical assignment—listening. First, it helps you understand what is happening in the group. And unlike a public speaking situation, you can stop the speaker and ask for clarification at any point. Second, listening helps you evaluate the merits of the speaker's position. Third, listening provides support for the speaker and helps create a positive climate for discussion. Without effective listening, no group is going to make much progress.

Avoid Interpersonal Conflicts

If groups were made up of robots, there would be no interpersonal conflicts. But groups are made up of people with likes and dislikes, animosities and biases, and very different personalities. It is vital to the group process that disagreements be kept on a task level, rather than on a personal level.

Suppose you disagree with another member's idea. Disagreement on the personal level could sound like this: "That's the most stupid idea I ever heard of! Do you realize how much money it would cost to do that?" But on the task level, disagreement is aimed at the *idea*, not the person: "Potentially that's a very good solution, but I'm not sure we have enough money to accomplish it."

Page 377

No matter what the group, personal antagonism leaves a bad taste in everyone's mouth and harms the performance of the group. It's essential that someone take a leadership role and bring the discussion back to the relevant issues. Let's say you are part of a committee charged with setting up a speakers' series on your campus. The discussion might go like this:

Jacob:

We should ask Alvin Johnson to speak. He's one of the university's biggest supporters.

Minh:

Are you crazy? He's a gun lobbyist. He's opposed just about every measure to limit gun violence.

Jacob: That's even more of a reason to invite him. If you had your way, none of us would be allowed to own guns, not even for hunting.

Minh: You're just another gun nut. It's people like you who stop every reasonable effort to get guns off the streets.

Leader: Just a minute. This might make a good subject for our speakers' series. We can ask Mr. Johnson and a gun-control advocate to debate each other.

This is not to say that members of a group should never disagree. In fact, a serious problem occurs when members get along so well and are so concerned about maintaining the harmony of the group that they will not disagree with one another about anything. When this happens, there is no chance to reach the best decision by exploring an array of perspectives, opinions, and information. The aim is not for groups to avoid conflict but to keep it at the task level so it will not degenerate into personal feuding.⁴

Encourage Full Participation

If a group is to work effectively, all members must contribute fully and share their ideas with one another. Every member of a group should take responsibility for encouraging other members to participate. You can do this, first of all, by listening attentively. After all, how would you like to speak in a group where everybody else appears bored or distracted?

If there are one or two quiet members in the group, you can draw them into the discussion by asking their opinions and showing interest in their ideas. When a member speaks, you can say, “I never knew that; can you tell us more about it?” Conversely, try to avoid negative comments that will squelch a speaker before he or she has finished—comments like “Oh, no, that never works” or “What a terrible idea.” Supportive comments create goodwill among group members and make everyone feel free to discuss their ideas without ridicule or embarrassment.

If you are shy or afraid your ideas will be taken too critically, you may be unwilling to participate at first. To overcome your diffidence, remember that your contribution is necessary to the group. At the very least, you can help provide a supportive environment for discussion by listening, reacting, and encouraging the free exchange of ideas.⁵

Keep the Discussion on Track

In some groups the discussion proceeds like a stream-of-consciousness exercise. Here is a hypothetical example in which a town planning board is considering installing a new traffic light at a busy intersection:

Aaron: You know, we're going to have trouble getting cars to come to a full stop even if we do put in a traffic light.

Dawn:

Tell me about it! I came through there yesterday and hit my brakes, and the car just kept going. Maybe I need the brakes adjusted, though.

Sharif:

Get ready to pay through the nose. I had a brake job on my car last week, and it was nearly twice as much as last time.

Austin: That's nothing. Have you looked at lawnmowers lately? And if you think lawnmowers are high. . . .

Camila: Who mows lawns? I had my yard planted with ground cover and put gravel over the rest. It's . . .

Leader: Excuse me, folks, but weren't we talking about the traffic light?

Every member has a responsibility to keep the discussion on track and to intervene if the group wanders too far afield. There is nothing wrong with a little casual conversation, but it shouldn't be allowed to get out of hand. When working in a problem-solving group, make sure the group's ultimate goal is always in the forefront. Do your best to see that discussion proceeds in an orderly fashion from one point to the next and that the group does not get bogged down in side issues.

On the other hand, you need to guard against the tendency to progress to a solution too quickly, without thoroughly exploring the problem. If you feel your group is taking the easy way out and jumping at an easy solution, try to make the other members aware of your concern. By suggesting that they talk about the problem in more detail, you may bring out vital information or ideas.

There are systematic ways to keep the discussion on track and to avoid hasty group decisions. Research shows that if your group follows a tested method of decision making, it will have a better chance of reaching a satisfactory outcome.⁶ We turn, therefore, to the most common decision-making technique for small groups—the reflective-thinking method.



In effective groups, all members participate fully and interact positively with each other. They also feel that their contributions are respected and valued by the full group.

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The Reflective-Thinking Method

The **reflective-thinking method** is derived from the writings of the American philosopher John Dewey. It offers a step-by-step process for discussion in problem-solving groups and consists of five steps: (1) defining the problem; (2) analyzing the problem; (3) establishing criteria for solving the problem; (4) generating potential solutions; (5) selecting the best solution. As we look at these steps, we'll illustrate each by following a single group through the entire reflective-thinking process.

Define the Problem

Before a problem-solving group can make progress, it must know exactly what problem it is trying to solve. Defining the problem for group discussion is akin to settling on a specific purpose for a speech. Unless it is done properly, everything that follows will suffer.

The best way to define the problem is to phrase it as a **question of policy**. As we saw in

Page 379

 **Chapter 16**, questions of policy inquire about the necessity or practicality of specific courses of action. They typically include the word “should.” For example:

What measures should our school take to protect free speech on campus?

What should the federal government do to deal with income inequality?

What policy should the United States adopt with respect to the exploitation of child labor in other countries around the world?

When phrasing the question for discussion, your group should follow several guidelines. First, make sure the question is as clear and specific as possible. For example:

Ineffective: What should be done about on-campus security?

More Effective: What measures should our school take to improve on-campus security for students?

Second, phrase the question to allow for a wide variety of answers. Be especially wary of questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. For example:

Ineffective: Should the city build a new elementary school?

More Effective: What steps should the city take to deal with increasing enrollment in the elementary schools?

Third, avoid biased or slanted questions. For example:

Page 380

Ineffective: How can we keep predatory student-loan vendors from ripping off students?

More Effective: What changes, if any, should be made in the practices of student-loan vendors?

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More Effective:

What changes, if any, should be made in the practices of student-loan vendors?

Fourth, make sure you pose a single question. For example:

Ineffective:

What revisions should the college consider in its admissions requirements and in its graduation requirements?

More Effective: What revisions should the college consider in its admissions requirements?

More Effective: What revisions should the college consider in its graduation requirements?

To clarify this first step of the reflective-thinking method, let's see how our model problem-solving group defined the problem:

As a class project, the group set out to discuss the problem of rising costs for attending college. Following the reflective-thinking method, they began by defining the problem. After several false starts, they phrased the problem this way: "What steps should our school take to reduce student costs for attending college?"

Analyze the Problem

After the problem has been defined, the group begins to analyze it. Too often, groups (like individuals) start mapping out solutions before they have a firm grasp of what is wrong. This is like a doctor prescribing treatment before fully diagnosing the patient's ailment. If your group investigates the problem as thoroughly as possible, you will be in a much better position to devise a workable solution.

In analyzing the problem, pay particular attention to two questions. First, how severe is the problem? Investigate its scope. Determine how many people it affects. Assess what might happen if it is not resolved. Second, what are the causes of the problem? Check the history of the problem and learn what factors contributed to it.

As you might imagine, analyzing the problem requires research. Effective group decisions depend on having the best information available. You can get this information in the same way you gather materials for a speech. Sometimes you can rely on your own knowledge and experience. More often, you need to get information from other sources—by looking on the Internet, by interviewing someone with expertise on the topic, or by working in the library (see [Chapter 7](#)). When meeting with your group, make sure you have done the research assigned to you so you can offer complete and unbiased information.

Let's return now to our sample group and see how it analyzed the problem of rapidly escalating student costs for attending college:

Three more solutions were rejected because they were economically impractical. Increasing financial aid would hurt many students because the funds would have to come from student fees. Raising out-of-state tuition would drive away too many out-of-state students. And decreasing dorm costs would make it impossible to provide minimally acceptable services.

The proposal to reduce funds for faculty research was also rejected since most research money comes from government, corporations, and foundations. Finally, the suggestion to reduce administrative "fat" was rejected as too costly because a group would have to be established to audit all administrative duties.

After refining the suggestions, the group finally reached consensus on a solution that included the following provisions: (1) A student should not have to spend more than \$200 on required books for any single course. (2) The university should authorize the student government to organize food, book, and clothing co-ops. (3) The student government should conduct five fund-raising projects each academic year. (4) Each professor should teach one more class a year.

Once consensus has been reached, the group is ready to present its findings.

Presenting the Recommendations of the Group

The work of a problem-solving group does not end with the last stage of the reflective-thinking process. Once a group has agreed on its recommendations, it usually needs to present them to somebody. A business group might report to the president of the company or to the board of directors. A presidential commission reports to the president and to the nation at large. A classroom group reports to the instructor and to the rest of the class. The purpose of such reports is to present the group's recommendations clearly and convincingly.

Sometimes a group will prepare a formal written report. Often, however, the written report is supplemented with—or replaced by—an oral report, a symposium, or a panel discussion.

Oral Report

An **oral report** is much the same in content as a written report. If the group has a designated leader, she or he will probably deliver the report. Otherwise, the group will select one person for the job.

If you are picked to present your group's report, you should approach it as you would any other speech. Your task is to explain the group's purpose, procedures, and recommendations. Your report should have three main sections. The introduction will state the purpose of the report and preview its main points. The body will spell out the problem addressed by your group, the criteria set for a solution, and the solution being recommended. The conclusion will summarize the main points and, in some cases, urge that the group's recommendations be adopted.

As with any other speech, you should adapt your report to the audience. Use supporting materials to clarify and strengthen your ideas, and consider whether visual aids will enhance your message. Make sure your language is accurate, clear, vivid, and appropriate. Rehearse the report so you can deliver it fluently and decisively. Afterward, you—and possibly other members of the group—may be called on to answer questions from the audience.

Symposium

A **symposium** consists of a moderator and several speakers seated together in front of an audience. If the group presenting the symposium has a designated leader, she or he will typically be the moderator. The moderator's job is to introduce the topic and the speakers. Each speaker delivers a prepared speech on a different aspect of the topic. After the speeches, there may be a question-and-answer session.

The symposium is often used for group reports in speech classes. One way to organize it is to have each member of the group present a brief talk sketching the group's work and decisions during one stage of the reflective-thinking process. Another way is to have each speaker deal with a major issue relating to the discussion topic. A group dealing with capital punishment, for example, might have one speaker present the group's conclusion on the issue of whether capital punishment is an effective deterrent to crime, another speaker present the group's position on the morality of capital punishment, and so forth.

All the speeches should be carefully planned. They should also be coordinated with one another to make sure the symposium reports on all important aspects of the group's project.

Panel Discussion

A **panel discussion** is essentially a conversation in front of an audience. The panel should have a moderator who introduces the topic and the panelists. Once the discussion is under way, the moderator may interject questions and comments as needed to focus the discussion. The panelists speak briefly, informally, and impromptu. They talk to each other, but loudly enough for the audience to hear. As with a symposium, a panel discussion may be followed by a question-and-answer session.

Because of its spontaneity, a panel discussion can be exciting for participants and audience alike. But, unfortunately, that spontaneity inhibits systematic presentation of a group's recommendations. Thus the panel discussion is seldom used by problem-solving groups, although it can work well for information-gathering groups.

If you are a participant in a panel discussion, beware of the common fallacy that no serious preparation is required. Although you will speak impromptu, you need to study the topic ahead of time, analyze the major issues, and map out the points you want to make. An effective panel discussion also requires planning by the moderator and panelists to decide what issues will be discussed and in what order. Finally, all panelists must be willing to share talking time, so the discussion is not monopolized by one or two people.

Whatever method your group uses to present its findings, you will benefit from the public speaking guidelines given throughout this book. The techniques of effective speech remain the same whether you are one person addressing an audience, part of a small group of people working to solve a problem, or a participant in a symposium or a panel discussion.

Summary

A small group consists of three to twelve people assembled for a specific purpose. A problem-solving small group is formed to solve a particular problem. When such a group has effective leadership, it usually makes better decisions than individuals do by themselves.

Most groups have a designated leader, an implied leader, or an emergent leader. Some groups have no specific leader, in which case all members of the group must assume leadership responsibilities. An effective leader helps a group reach its goals by fulfilling procedural needs, task needs, and maintenance needs.

Apart from leadership, all members of a group have five basic responsibilities. You should commit yourself to the goals of your group, fulfill your individual assignments, avoid interpersonal conflict within the group, encourage full participation by all members, and help keep the group on track.

Your group will also be more successful if it follows the reflective-thinking method, which offers a step-by-step process for decision making in problem-solving groups. The method consists of five steps: (1) defining the problem as clearly and specifically as possible; (2) analyzing the problem to determine its severity and causes; (3) establishing criteria for evaluating solutions; (4) generating a wide range of potential solutions; (5) selecting the best solution(s).

Once your group has agreed on its recommendations, it usually has to make an oral report or participate in a symposium or a panel discussion. Whichever kind of oral presentation your group gives will call for skills of effective speechmaking.

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Key Terms

dyad ( 372)

small group ( 372)

problem-solving small group ( 372)

leadership ( 372)

implied leader ( 373)

emergent leader ( 373)

designated leader ( 373)

procedural needs ( 374)

task needs ( 374)

maintenance needs ( 374)

hidden agenda ( 376)

reflective-thinking method ( 378)

question of policy ( 379)

criteria ( 381)

brainstorming ( 382)

consensus ( 383)

oral report ( 384)

symposium ( 385)

panel discussion ( 385)

- What are the five major responsibilities of every participant in a small group?
- What are the stages of the reflective-thinking method? Explain the major tasks of a group at each stage.
- What are the three methods for presenting orally the recommendations of a problem-solving group?

End Notes

1. Gloria J. Galanes and Katherine Adams, *Effective Group Discussion: Theory and Practice*, 15th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2019).
2. See Kyle R. Andrews, Franklin J. Boster, and Christopher J. Carpenter, "Persuading in the Small Group Context," in James Price Dillard and Lijiang Shen (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Persuasion: Developments in Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), pp. 354–370, for a review of scholarship on this subject.
3. For more on the many dimensions of group leadership, see John W. Gastil, *The Group in Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 2010), pp. 139–166.
4. Consult J. Dan Rothwell, *In Mixed Company: Communicating in Small Groups and Teams*, 11th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), for more detail on dealing with conflict in small groups.
5. For a concise, practical look at the roles and responsibilities of group participants, see Susan A. Wheelan, Maria Akerlund, and Christian Jacobsson, *Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2020).
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7. For research on this subject, see Michele H. Jackson and Marshall Scott Poole, "Idea-Generation in Naturally Occurring Contexts: Complex Appropriation of Simple Group Procedure," *Human Communication Research*, 29 (2003), pp. 560–591.