COMPETENT COMMUNICATION



Lisa Coleman, Thomas King and William Turner
Southwest Tennessee Community College

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Front Matter





Competent Communication







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Competent Communication

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This text was compiled on 04/16/2026

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Lisa Inzer Coleman is a long-time associate professor of communication and theatre at Southwest Tennessee Community College. She began her career at STCC as a member of the English Department before moving to the Department of Communication, Graphic & Fine Arts. She holds a B.S.E in English and Speech/Drama from Henderson State University and an M.A. in Communication from the University of Arkansas. She is a course coordinator for her department. Her involvement in this OER began in 2019 when she was selected as a "Gatekeeper Fellow." The aim of the Gatekeeper program is to redesign "gatekeeper" courses such as Fundamentals of Communication to make them more relevant and equitable. This textbook is a product of the redesign process.

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*Special thanks to Patsy Fancher, Dept. Chair of Communication, Graphic & Fine Arts, for her assistance with the cover page.

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Licensing

*A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.*

Publisher Information

The creation of *Competent Communication* began in the Fall of 2019 when Southwest Tennessee Community College launched a Gatekeeper initiative. This initiative involved identifying high enrollment courses that showed significant equity gaps. Fundamentals of Communication (COMM 2025) was identified as one of the courses with equity gaps. Two of the Communication faculty members (Lisa I. Coleman and Tracy McLaughlin) were selected as Gatekeeper fellows and charged with redesigning the course from a lens of equity. In the fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020, the Gatekeeper Fellows researched best practices for equitable teaching. One of the best practices identified for this Gatekeeper course was the use of open education resource materials in the classroom. Since some students struggle to buy textbooks because of the expense, using OERs could help close equity gaps and ultimately increase retention and ultimately graduation rates. Gatekeeper Fellows also agreed that the Fundamentals of Communication course needed to be refreshed and made more relevant and interesting.

Thus, we utilized the research from the Gatekeeper course, along with a 2020 Tennessee Board of Regents OER Grant, and developed this OER digital textbook. The decision was made to move away from the public speaking approach of the current COMM 2025 course to a hybrid approach focusing on 8 "competencies" identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers as being essential for career success. The name for the textbook, *Competent Communication*, was chosen, in part, because each chapter addresses one or more of these competencies.

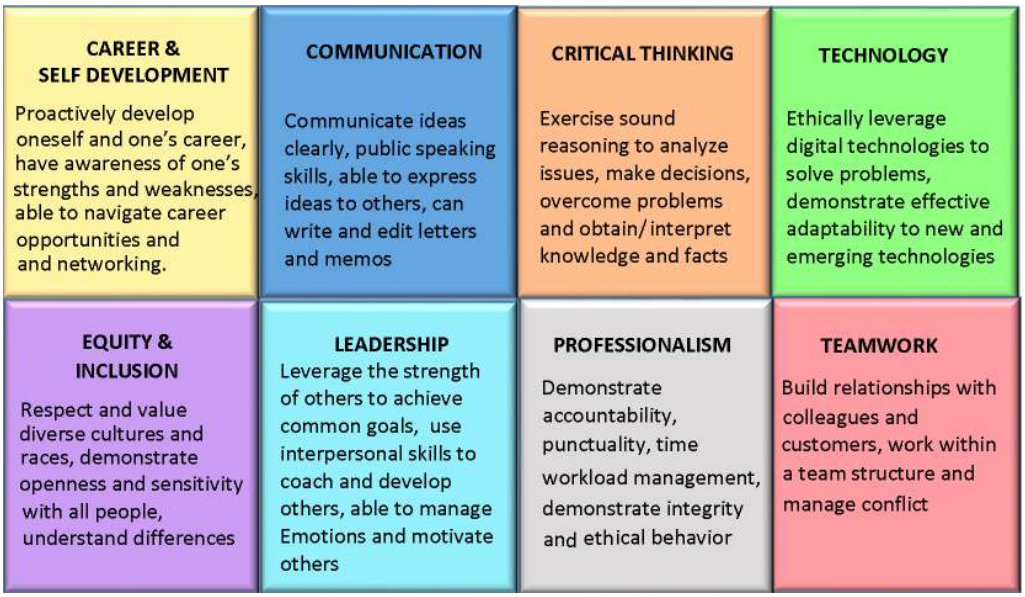


Figure 1: A Look at Eight Essential Career Competencies. Source: "10 Steps to Career Development Success," Adapted from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Competencies by Southwest Tennessee Community College's Career Services Department.

- **Chapter 2** (Communication and Culture) - Global and Intercultural Fluency
- **Chapters 3 - 5** (Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Communication, Listening) - Oral and Written Communication/Global and Intercultural Fluency
- **Chapter 6** (Interpersonal Communication) - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving/Teamwork and Collaboration
- **Chapter 7** (Career Communication) - Professionalism and Work Ethic/Career Management.
- **Chapter 8** (Leaderships and Working in Teams) - Leadership/Teamwork and Collaboration.
- **Chapter 9** (Mass Communication and Social Media) - Digital Technology
- **Chapters 10 - 17 (** Public Speaking) - Oral and Written Communication

Our OER textbook is called a Remix in the OER vernacular. We have utilized the LibreTexts library of OERs and their software to produce this Remix. LibreText is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to "freeing the textbook from the limitations and costs of traditional textbooks."

The grant specified that what we develop must be available to and editable by others outside our organization. In *Competent Communication*, we have attempted to create a usable, zero-cost textbook for not only our COMM 2025 course, but for any institution that may want to adopt it. The free, open nature of the text means that instructors are able to use all or part of it, and add their own materials. The redundancy of key components in the textbook is intentional. Because it is an open educational resource, some users do not access the whole text. For clarity, sometimes a concept that is explained in a preceding chapter is reviewed and re-emphasized in later chapters as needed.

Thank you for downloading *Competent Communication.*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Introduction to Competent Communication

The objective of this book is to help you develop the communication skills necessary to accomplish your professional and personal goals. In this course, you will learn about many different types of communication, ranging from interpersonal communication to workplace communication to public speaking. Developing polished, professional communication skills takes preparation, practice, and persistence. However, your effort is worthwhile. Ultimately your ability to communicate in relationships, in the classroom, and in your career should improve, opening more doors than you might anticipate.

In Chapter One, you will learn why studying communication is important; elements that are involved in the communication process; and your responsibilities as a competent communicator. Finally, you will learn about how you can apply principles of growth mindset in communication studies and your life.

1.1: Why Study Communication?

1.2: The Process of Communication

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset

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1.1: Why Study Communication?

Learning Objectives

1. Explain how studying communication can help you academically, personally, and professionally.
2. Understand the layout and content of this textbook.

As a student enrolled in a required communication course, you might be thinking, “Communication isn't my major, so why am I required to take this course?" The short answer to this question is the more skilled you are at communication, the greater potential you have to succeed in all aspects of your life. We spend most of our day communicating. In fact, when we are in the presence of other people, we are constantly communicating, whether we are conscious of what we are communicating or not. Learning about communication can help you communicate with more intention, resulting in the potential for improving your performance in your other courses, building stronger relationships, and accomplishing your career goals.

Studying Communication Can Help You Academically

In this class, you will learn about language, nonverbal communication, listening, intercultural communication, working in teams and small groups, and giving presentations. Since these skills have applications in your other college courses, communication study can help you academically.

Studying Communication Can Help You Build Stronger Relationships

In this class, you will learn about interpersonal relationships and ways to manage conflict in those relationships. You will be introduced to tools to help you better understand yourself and others—not just their words, but also the nonverbal communication cues they are sending. By applying the knowledge you learn in this class, you can potentially improve your relationships at home, at college, and at work.



Figure **1.1.1**: Communication Builds Relationships. Source: Trey Ratcliff is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Studying Communication Can Help You Professionally

A survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that “College students who wish to separate themselves from the competition during their job search would be wise to develop proficiencies most sought by employers, such as communication, interpersonal, and teamwork skills.” An individual with excellent communication skills is an asset to every organization. No matter what career you plan to pursue, competent and professional communication skills will help you succeed.

Figure 1.2 shows the results of a survey conducted in 2018 by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. This chart identifies the top eight skills employers identify as being **essential for career success.**

Each of these skills will be discussed or used in this course. Thus, the study of communication can help you succeed professionally.

CAREER & SELF DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNICATION	CRITICAL THINKING	TECHNOLOGY
Proactively develop oneself and one's career, have awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, able to navigate career opportunities and and networking.	Communicate ideas clearly, public speaking skills, able to express ideas to others, can write and edit letters and memos	Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, overcome problems and obtain/ interpret knowledge and facts	Ethically leverage digital technologies to solve problems, demonstrate effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies
EQUITY & INCLUSION	**LEADERSHIP**	**PROFESSIONALISM**	**TEAMWORK**
Respect and value diverse cultures and races, demonstrate openness and sensitivity with all people, understand differences	Leverage the strength of others to achieve common goals, use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others, able to manage Emotions and motivate others	Demonstrate accountability, punctuality, time workload management, demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior	Build relationships with colleagues and customers, work within a team structure and manage conflict

Figure **1.1.2**: A Look at Eight Essential Career Competencies. Source: "10 Steps to Career Development Success," Adapted from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Competencies by Southwest Tennessee Community College's Career Services Department.

Your Communication Textbook

Your textbook is called *Competent Communication*, in part, because each chapter addresses one or more of these eight essential competencies.

- **Chapter 2** (Communication and Culture) - Global and Intercultural Fluency
- **Chapters 3 - 5** (Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Communication, Listening); **Chapters 10 - 17 (** Public Speaking) - Oral and Written Communication
- **Chapter 6** (Interpersonal Communication) - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- **Chapter 7** (Career Communication) - Professionalism and Work Ethic/Career Management.
- **Chapter 8** (Leaderships and Working in Teams) - Leadership/Teamwork and Collaboration.
- **Chapter 9** (Mass Communication and Social Media) - Digital Technology



Figure **1.1.3**: "How to run an effective meeting" by Nguyen Vu Hung (vuhung) is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Career Advice

Communication can occur without your even realizing it. Consider the following:

Is your e-mail name professional? The appropriate form for an email to your professor or in a business e-mail contains some form of your name. While an e-mail name like "LazyGirl" or "DeathMonkey" may be fine for chatting online with your

friends, it may send the wrong signal to professors and prospective employers. When sending an email to a professor, always use your school email.

Is your outgoing voice mail greeting professional? If not, change it. Faculty and prospective recruiters will draw certain conclusions if, upon calling you, they get a message that screams, “Party, party, party!”

Do you have a “private” social networking on Facebook.com or another social media site? If so, consider what it says about you to employers or clients. If it is information you wouldn’t share at work, it probably shouldn’t be there.

Have you Googled yourself lately? If not, you probably should. Potential employers have begun searching the Web as part of background checking, and you should be aware of what’s out there about you. *(Organizational Behavior)*

Topics for Discussion

1. The opening of this section says, "we are constantly communicating, whether we are conscious of what we are communicating or not." How do you interpret this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

2. When you see an e-mail full of typos, poor grammar, or incomplete sentences, how do you react? Does it affect your perception of the sender? Why or why not?

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1.2: The Process of Communication

> ***I know that you believe that you understood what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.***
>
> ***– Robert J. McCloskey, former State Department spokesman***

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication.
2. Identify and describe eight elements of the communication process.
3. Explain the meaning of *Worldview* as well as its importance in communication.

Many theories have been used to describe, predict, and understand communication. In this course, we are less interested in theory than in making sure our communication leads to communication competency. But in order to achieve this result, it can be valuable to understand what communication is and how it works. Communication is a relatively complex process. If it were simple, we would have fewer misunderstandings.

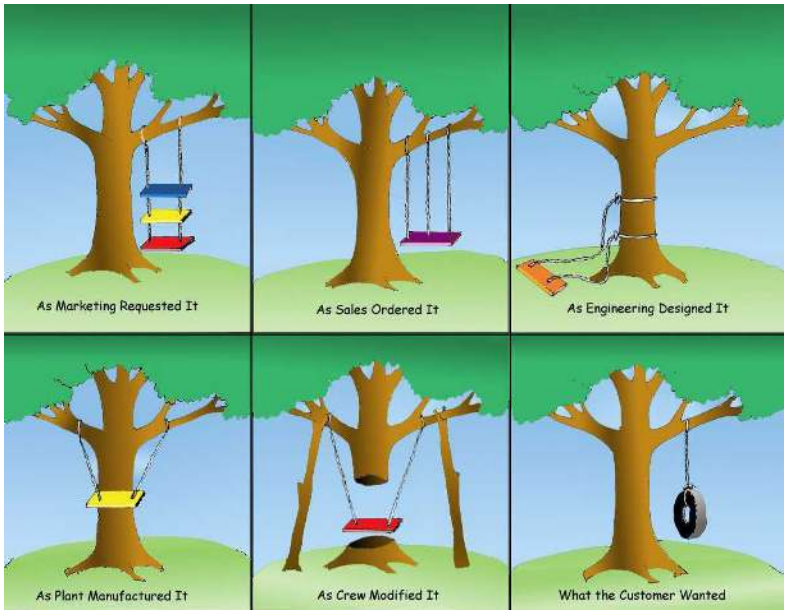


Figure **1.2.1**: We only THINK communication is simple! What the customer REALLY Wanted. (Original Author of Cartoon Unknown--Cartoon Recreated by Merrisa Carter)

A Definition of Communication

The root word of communication in Latin is the word *communicare*, which means to share or to make common (Weekley, 1967). Thus, we will define **communication** as *the process of sharing information and feelings in such a way that understanding takes place*. According to our definition, the speaker or source of the message conveys the message he or she intends to share, and the receiver interprets the message in the manner the speaker intended; thus, the two “share” meaning. (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). If you have ever thought you communicated something clearly only to find out later that your message was interpreted completely differently than you intended, you realize that "sharing meaning" can be complicated. Let's look at two important keywords in this definition.

Process

The first keyword in this definition is "**process**." A process refers to a series of steps that lead to a specific outcome. This definition is accurate but a bit misleading. The **communication process** is *dynamic, ongoing, and constantly changing.* (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). In fact, things often happen so quickly that the sender and the receiver are communicating simultaneously. Or, in conversation, the sender and the receiver may switch roles over and over, with the source becoming the receiver, and so on. Although it is useful to look at communication as a series of elements and steps, as we are doing here, we need to realize that the process of communication is not always neat and tidy, nor does it have a distinct beginning and end. For example, we don't begin communicating when we open our mouths to speak. Nor does communication END when a conversation or speech ends only to start afresh at the next encounter with our receiver. Future communication will be influenced by any previous communication.

Understanding

A second keyword is **understanding.** If the receiver does not understand what the sender means to convey or misinterprets the sender's message, communication has not occurred (McLean, 2003). The sender of the message is ultimately responsible for assuring that understanding happens. However, because humans come from a variety of cultures, life experiences, and worldviews, understanding often takes patience and persistence. The source must do his or her best to convey a message in a manner that the receiver will understand. But as receivers, we also can play a role in understanding. For example, before becoming angry over something we *think a* speaker or writer is saying, we can attempt to make certain our understanding of the message is accurate. As the cartoon at the beginning of this section illustrates, communication is complex.

A Model of the Communication Process

Since communication is a complex and ongoing process, it is difficult to determine where or with whom a communication encounter starts and ends. Models of communication simplify the process by providing a visual representation of the various aspects of a communication encounter. Some models explain communication in more detail than others, but even the most complex model still doesn't recreate what we experience in even a moment of a communication encounter. Models still serve a valuable purpose for students because they allow us to see specific concepts and steps within the process of communication. When you become aware of how communication functions, you can think more deliberately through your communication encounters, which can help you better prepare for future communication and learn from your previous communication. *(Communication in the Real World).* We will examine a visual representation of the communication process *(Figure* 1.2.2*:)* and discuss its components

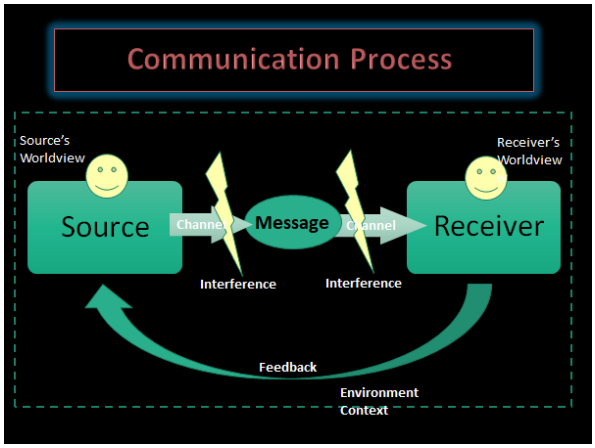


Figure 1.2.2: The Communication Process

Source

The **source** imagines, creates, and sends (encodes) the message either through speaking, writing, conversation, or another communication channel. In public speaking, the source is the person giving the speech. In written communication, the source is the person who sends the email or writes the essay. Since humans are the source of communication we are studying in this course, it is very important to realize that we are all influenced by our **worldview**, sometimes called frame of reference, which is t*he overall framework through which an individual sees, thinks about, and interprets the world.*

It is very important to realize that we are all influenced by our **worldview** because our worldview influences how we see, think about, interpret, and interact with others. Our worldview is influenced by our gender, age, education level, religion, culture, nationality, socioeconomic background, life experiences, and every other aspect of our lives that makes each of us unique. To communicate successfully, it is essential for us to become aware of our own worldview and to consider and respect the worldview of those with whom we are communicating. Chapter Two, Culture and Communication, has more to say about **worldview.**

Channel

The **channel** is the means or medium through which a message is sent. In business or social situations, common channels are face-to face (conversation, interview, public speech); written (email, text message, letter); social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram); and mass media (television, radio, newspapers). Different channels may use different codes or symbols to convey the message. The primary codes are **verbal** (words) and **nonverbal** (anything other than words, such as our attire, posture, hand gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and so on)**.** We will discuss verbal and nonverbal communication in subsequent chapters.

The channel can have a profound impact on the way a message is interpreted. Listening to a recording of a speaker does not have the same psychological impact as seeing that speaker in person or on television. One famous example of this is the 1960 presidential debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. (Figure 1.2.2) Those who listened to the debate on radio thought the debate was a tie or that Nixon won the debate, but those who watched the debate in person or on television thought Kennedy won. According to *History.com*, Kennedy, knowing that his face would be beamed to millions of black and white TV sets, took a long nap and worked on his tan on the roof of his Chicago hotel. When he finally arrived at CBS studios on the evening of September 26, he was rested and ready for action. During the debate, Kennedy looked into the camera, wore a dark suit that made him stand out from the background, and appeared to be calm after spending the entire weekend with aides practicing in a hotel room. In contrast, Nixon looked at the reporters asking him questions instead of at the camera, was sweating and pale, had facial hair stubble, and wore a grey suit that faded into the set background. Debate producer Don Hewitt would later say the Republican candidate's pale complexion and gaunt face made him look "like death warmed over." (Evans)



Figure **1.2.3**:"The Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960" by scriptingnews is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

One key to effective communication is to match your choice of a communication channel with the goal of the message (Barry & Fulmer, 2004). As you will see when you examine Figure **1.2.4**, channels vary in their "**information-richness."** Information-rich channels convey nonverbal as well as verbal information and allow for immediate feedback from the receiver. Research shows that effective managers tend to use more information-rich communication channels than less effective managers. For example, a channel that is medium in communication richness such as a letter or email is a good choice when the sender wants a record of the content, does not need an immediate response, is physically separated from the receiver, doesn't require a lot of feedback from the receiver, or when the message is complicated and may take some time to understand. Face-to-face, on the other hand, is an information-rich communication channel and makes more sense when the sender is conveying a sensitive or emotional message, needs feedback immediately, and does not need a permanent record of the conversation. (*Organizational Behavior*)

Information Channel	Information Richness
Face-to-face conversation	High
Videoconferencing	High
Telephone conversation	High
E-mails	Medium
Handheld devices	Medium
Blogs	Medium
Written letters and memos	Medium
Formal written documents	Low
Spreadsheets	Low

Figure 1.2.4: Channels differ in their information richness.

Message

The **message** is the meaning conveyed to the receiver, whether intended or unintended. (McLean, 2005) Do not make the mistake of thinking the message is created only through words. Sometimes we convey a message without words or speech. When we do write or speak, words are just the beginning. The words are brought together with grammar and organization; thus, these will become part of the message. The message also consists of the way you say your words; in a speech or conversation, your tone of voice, your body language, and your appearance will affect the receiver's interpretation of your message. In an email and other written communication, your writing style, spelling, punctuation, and the headings and formatting you choose become part of the message. Our goal as competent communicators is to make certain the message received by our listeners or audience is the message we intend to convey.

Receiver

The **receiver** is the individual for whom the communication is intended. It is he or she who analyzes and interprets (decodes) the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source. (McLean, 2005) To better understand this component, think of a receiver on a football team. The quarterback (source) throws the football (message) to a receiver, who must see and interpret where to catch the ball. The quarterback may intend for the receiver to "catch" his message in one way, but the receiver may see things differently and miss the football (the intended meaning) altogether. Like the source, the receiver's interpretation of a message is influenced by his or her ***worldview.*** And just as the source has the responsibility to consider his or her receivers when encoding a message, a wise receiver will consider the source's worldview and how that worldview may have informed or shaped the message.

Feedback

Feedback is the receiver's response to the source and his or her message. Feedback may be in the form of words (verbal) or body language (nonverbal). Some feedback, particularly nonverbal, may be unintentional. Feedback is an important part of the communication process since it allows the source to see how accurately (or how inaccurately) the message was received. Feedback also provides an opportunity for the receiver or audience to ask for clarification, to agree or disagree, or to indicate that the source could make the message more interesting. As the amount of feedback increases, the accuracy of communication also increases (Leavitt & Mueller, 1951).

Environment

"The **environment** is the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages." (McLean, 2005) The environment can include the tables, chairs, lighting, and sound equipment that are in the room. The room itself is an example of the environment. The environment can also include factors like formal dress, that may indicate whether a discussion is open and caring or more professional and formal. People may be more likely to have an intimate conversation when they are physically close to each other, and less likely when they can only see each other from across the room. In that case, they may text each other, itself an intimate form of communication. The choice to text is influenced by the environment. As a speaker, your environment will impact and play a role in your speech. It's always a good idea to go check out where you'll be speaking before the day of the actual presentation.

Context

“The **context** of the communication interaction refers to the expectations of the individuals involved.” (McLean, 2005) A professional communication context may involve business suits (environmental cues) that directly or indirectly influence expectations of language and behavior among the participants.

A presentation or discussion does not take place as an isolated event. When you came to class, you came from somewhere. So did the person seated next to you, as did the instructor. The degree to which the environment is formal or informal depends on the contextual expectations for communication held by the participants. The person sitting next to you may be used to informal communication with instructors, but this particular instructor may be used to verbal and nonverbal displays of respect in the academic environment. You may be used to formal interactions with instructors as well, and find your classmate’s question of “Hey Teacher, do we have homework today?” as rude and inconsiderate when they see it as normal. The nonverbal response from the instructor will certainly give you a clue about how they perceive the interaction, both the word choices and how they were said.

Context is all about what people expect from each other, and those expectations are likely formed by our culture or the society we live in. Traditional gatherings like weddings or quinceañeras are often formal events. There is a time for quiet social greetings, a time for silence as the bride walks down the aisle, or the father may have the first dance with his daughter as she is transformed from a girl to womanhood in the eyes of her community. In either celebration there may come a time for rambunctious celebration and dancing. You may be called upon to give a toast, and the wedding or quinceañera context will influence your presentation, timing, and effectiveness.

Effective communicators understand the importance of the context and adapt their communication accordingly.



Figure **1.2.5**: Context plays a very important role in communication, particularly across cultures. "Marriage Matrix of Shirakawa-go : 白川郷の嫁入り" by Dakiny is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Interference

Interference, also called noise, is anything that blocks or interferes with the communication process. Noise interferes with normal encoding and decoding of the message and can affect both the source and the receiver. **External interference** can come from our surroundings, such as a student's cell phone ringing in class, a car horn blaring, conversations in the hallway, or talking in the back of a classroom. **Internal interference** comes from the inside. Perhaps the source or receiver is hungry or distracted by bad news he or she received earlier in the day.

Key Terms

channel
communication
context
external interference

information-rich channel
internal interference
message
nonverbal
receiver
source
verbal
world view

Exercises and Discussion

Communication and Understanding

1. Have you ever engaged in a conversation where, after a while, it appeared that the two of you were talking about two completely different things or were completely misunderstanding one another? How did you resolve the misunderstanding--if you did. Turn to a classmate and share your experience.

Worldview

Since each of us has a different worldview, what steps can we take to see that our message is understood by others?

Environment and Context

1. Have you ever seen a movie about a courtroom trial that shows the jury deliberating? Perhaps you have served on a jury. How is the seating arranged? Why?
2. How are products in a grocery store displayed? Why?
3. How does the physical environment of a fast-food restaurant differ from the environment of an expensive, more elegant restaurant?
4. What are some settings or occasions that have unwritten rules of contact connected to them? Explain.

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1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication competence.
2. Explain the four responsibilities of a competent communicator.

Competent Communicator

Competent communication means

- the knowledge about how to communicate effectively and appropriately and
- the ability to use and adapt that knowledge to various communication contexts

A competent communicator understands there is no *single* effective way to communicate, that communication must be adapted to the context and receiver. A competent communicator takes time to learn communication skills that will enable him or her to communicate appropriately in different communication situations.

Four Characteristics of Competent Communicators

In addition to having knowledge and the ability to adapt to various communication contexts, competent communicators also have the following four qualities in common: they are prepared, clear, concise, and ethical.

A Competent Communicator is Prepared

Whether interviewing for a job, participating in a class discussion over a reading assignment, giving a speech, writing an email, or training a new employee at work, a competent communicator has taken the time to prepare. He or she respects the receiver or audience and does not insult them by wasting their time. A competent communicator does not risk communication failure by sending a poorly written email or giving an unrehearsed speech. If you are participating in a meeting on Zoom or Microsoft Teams or using presentation technology such as PowerPoint in a speech, being prepared includes testing the equipment ahead of time to see it works properly and making certain you know how to use it.

A Competent Communicator is Clear

A message that is **clear** is understandable to the audience is said to have **clarity**. If your message lacks clarity, the audience may misinterpret what you are trying to communicate or simply give up trying to understand.

Interestingly, clarity begins with **intrapersonal communication**, which is communication within your own mind, or "self-talk." You need to have a clear idea about what you are trying to communicate before you can clearly convey your message to someone else. A communicator must carefully consider his or her audience and choose words and phrases meaningful to them, avoiding jargon or slang that may be unfamiliar.

Clarity is also important in the delivery of your message. You must deliver your message so that your audience can understand it. In written communication, grammar, sentence structure, and wording should be accurate. In conversation or public speaking, if you mumble, speak too fast, use a monotonous tone of voice, or stumble over words or phrases, clarity will suffer. If you are using a microphone, participating in a Zoom or TEAMS meeting, or using presentation technology such as PowerPoint in your speech, clarity may depend on the equipment functioning properly—which brings us back to the importance of preparation.

A Competent Communicator is Concise

A **concise** communicator is able to state ideas in a direct, relatively straightforward way without wasting time or words. A concise speaker does not ramble on and on, get off-topic, or use twenty words to describe something that could be better described in two words. It may be tempting to show how much you know by incorporating unnecessary information into your document or speech, but in doing so you run the risk of boring, confusing, or overloading your audience. Be to the point and concise in your choice of words, organization, and even visual aids.

Being concise also involves being sensitive to time constraints. How many times have you listened to a speaker say “in conclusion” only to continue speaking for what seems like forever? How many meetings and conference calls have you attended that got started late or ran beyond the planned ending time? If you are asked to give a five-minute presentation at a meeting, your coworkers will not appreciate your taking fifteen minutes, any more than your supervisor would appreciate your submitting a fifteen-page report when you were asked to write five pages. For speeches, time yourself when you rehearse and make sure you can deliver your message within the allotted number of minutes.

Since we have brought up the use of time in this section, it is important to address **punctuality** as well as conciseness. Being **punctual** means doing something at the agreed or proper time; on time. In the classroom or in business, penalties for lack of punctuality can be more serious than for lack of conciseness. Submitting a test or asking to present a speech when the due date has passed not only will likely carry a heavy grade penalty but may also communicate that the student does not prioritize or value his or her education. The same is true of consistently arriving late to class or leaving early. Not only does this behavior nonverbally communicate a poor message about the student, but it also creates interference in the classroom. Arriving late to a job interview will likely lead to missing out on that career opportunity. Being late to work may eventually lead to losing your job.



Figure **1.3.1**: Good communicators do not waste words or time. "Times! Of! The World!" by Anz-i is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

A Competent Communicator is Ethical

The word *ethical* echoes what Aristotle called *ethos*, the communicator’s good character and reputation for doing what is right. An *ethical communicator* considers the welfare of his or her audience and is guided by moral principles and standards. An ethical communication strives to do what is right and understands his or her responsibility to keep society civil. Name-calling among political figures and on social media and the preponderance of "fake news" are just a couple of examples of why a review of standards of ethical communication is needed now more than ever. Because ethics is so important, we will look at this characteristic in more detail.

Ethical communicators are egalitarian.

The word “egalitarian” comes from the root “equal.” An **egalitarian** communicator believes in equality and is inclusive of all receivers or listeners. This means using ideas and language appropriate for and inclusive of all the message’s readers or listeners, not just some of them. Egalitarian communicators respect diversity and do not speak to only those who are “like them” in terms of religion, age, gender, race, or ethnicity. In terms of your own communication, egalitarianism means avoiding stereotypical, discriminatory language. Use communication to unite, not incite or divide. We will discuss inclusive, nondiscriminatory language in Chapter Three, Elements of Verbal Communication.

Ethical communicators are respectful.

We may have also seen people hurt by sarcasm, insults, and other disrespectful forms of communication. These are behaviors a respectful communicator will avoid. Losing one’s temper and being abusive are generally regarded as showing a lack of professionalism (and could even involve legal consequences for you or your employer). When you disagree strongly with a classmate, coworker, or friend, or when you feel deeply annoyed with a difficult customer, it is important to express such sentiments respectfully. For example, instead of telling a customer, “I’ve had it with your complaints!” a respectful business communicator might say, “I’m having trouble seeing how I can fix this situation. Would you explain to me what you want to see happen?” Taking time to observe and familiarize yourself with customs and viewpoints of those from different cultures than your own is another way of showing respect. Avoid telling jokes or using language that may be offensive to others. And if you

inadvertently offend, apologize sincerely. Consider your nonverbal communication, as well. Eye-rolling and other forms of nonverbal communication can be just as disrespectful as words.

Ethical communicators are trustworthy.

Trust is a key component in communication. As a consumer, would you choose to buy merchandise from a company you did not trust? If you were an employer, would you hire someone you did not trust? Would you want to be friends with someone who betrays your trust by revealing something you told that friend in confidence? Being worthy of trust is something you earn with others. A communicator may not know something and still be trustworthy, but it's a violation of trust to pretend you know something when you don't. Communicate what you know, and if you don't know something, research it before you speak or write. If you are asked a question you don't know how to respond to, say "I don't know the answer but I will research it and get back to you" (and then make sure you follow through later). This will go over much better with listeners than trying to cover by stumbling through an answer or portraying yourself as knowledgeable on an issue that you are not. A trustworthy communicator also does not hide relevant information from an audience. As many wise communicators have observed, "Trust is hard to build but takes only seconds to destroy."

Ethical communicators do not plagiarize.

Another important ethical obligation is to avoid plagiarism in all its forms. **Plagiarism** is the act of presenting another's work or ideas as though they are your own. It is a form of theft or cheating. Plagiarism can range from copying a classmate's answers and submitting them instead of your own work all the way to submitting an outline or giving a speech written by another. Plagiarism can have extremely serious consequences in academics, such as earning an F on an assignment or failing a course. In the workplace or community, a person who plagiarizes may lose his or her job and perhaps his or her reputation. Since plagiarism has such serious repercussions, it is important to understand what plagiarism is.

Examples of plagiarism

- Copying another student's work and submitting the work as though it were your own.
- Turning in a paper, outline, or speech you wrote for a different class (unless approved by your instructor)
- Buying or "borrowing" a paper, outline, or speech from the internet and submitting it as though you wrote it
- Using large sections of chunks of information from sources without adding your own analysis and original thoughts
- Failing to acknowledge the source of ideas and research both orally and in writing.

We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it in more detail in later chapters.

Check Your Facts!

To communicate ethically, check your facts and make certain they are accurate. Here are two fact-checking tools that can help:

FactCheck is a nonpartisan project of the Annenberg Center for Public Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. http://www.factcheck.org

PolitiFact is a nonpartisan project of the St. Petersburg Times; it won a Pulitzer Prize in 2009. http://www.politifact.com

NCA Credo for Ethical Communication

The National Communication Association (NCA) is a professional organization that represents communication scholars and practitioners in the United States. The NCA's "Credo for Ethical Communication" reminds us that communication ethics is relevant across contexts and applies to every channel of communication, including media. The credo goes on to say that human worth and dignity are fostered through ethical communication practices such as truthfulness, fairness, integrity, and respect for self and others. It is up to each one of us to put ethical principles into practice. The following are some of the principles stated in the credo:

- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision-making fundamental to civil society.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.

- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

1. **What are some examples of unethical communication that you have witnessed?**
2. **Read through the whole credo. Of the nine principles listed, which do you think is most important and why? The credo can be accessed at the following link:** http://natcom.org/Tertiary.aspx?id=2119&terms=ethical%20credo.

Key Takeaways

- A competent communicator has the knowledge about how to communicate effectively and appropriately and the ability to use that knowledge to communicate in various communication contexts.
- Competent communicators are prepared, clear, punctual, concise, respectful, and ethical.
- Resources for Exploration and Research

Additional Resources

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) is a global network of communication professionals committed to improving organizational effectiveness through strategic communication. http://www.iabc.com

Explore the Web site of the National Communication Association, the largest U.S. organization dedicated to communication. http://www.natcom.org

Read The National Commission on Writing's findings about the importance of communication skills in business. http://www.writingcommission.org/pr/...or_employ.html

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1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset



Figure 1.4.1: A Scientific Explanation Behind Growth Mindset. Source: Stefanie Faye (https://youtu.be/aItZKnWL_R4)

Growth Mindset

You might wonder why we are taking time to discuss growth mindset in a communication class. The reason is that a growing body of educational research shows that individuals who are most successful in the classroom, at work, and in their personal lives have a *growth mindset* as opposed to a *fixed mindset*.

Carol Dweck, a cognitive psychologist and leading expert on mindset research, defines fixed and growth mindset in the following way:

In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.

Students with a growth mindset believe that with effort, practice, perseverance, resilience, and persistence they can “grow” or build their intelligence or strength in a certain skill, whether that skill is improving their pronunciation, building their vocabulary, writing an outline, giving a speech, or interviewing for a job.

People with a growth mindset do not avoid meeting a challenge, nor do they quit when test results in a college class or a performance review at work are disappointing. Instead, a growth-minded person is open to feedback or well-intended criticism because he or she is eager to grow and improve. Growth-minded people seek out resources and people that can help them and are willing to put in the work that improvement takes. This does not mean that the student with a growth mindset will earn an "A" on every assignment, just as it does not mean that every basketball player, with practice, will become as skilled as a professional player such as Stephen Curry or Michael Jordan. What it does mean is that a person with a growth mindset is willing to put in the effort and practice to become stronger or more accomplished.

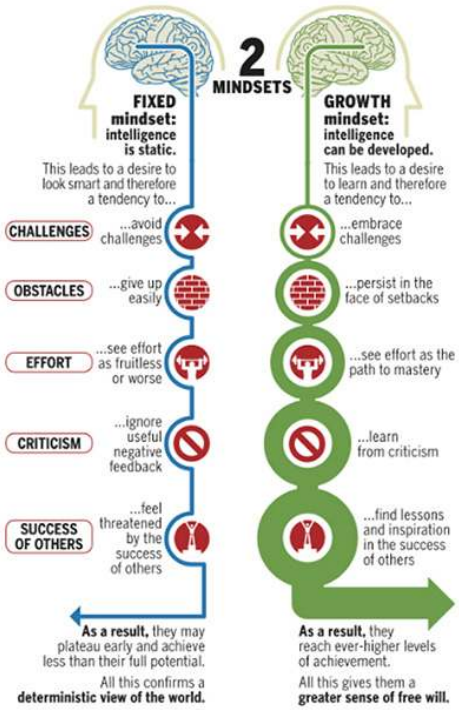


Figure **1.4.2**: A Comparison of Fixed and Growth Mind-sets. (*Transforming Education*.)

Applying a Growth Mindset to Your Fundamentals of Communication Class

Some students approach this class with the mindset that they are already good enough communicators and therefore won't have to put forth much effort. As a result, they do the bare minimum to get a passing grade. Other students might approach the class with the mindset that because they have terrible communication anxiety, they are just going to have to suffer through the class and get it out of the way. Neither attitude leads to doing their best work.

Eduardo Briceno explains more about Growth Mindset in a presentation he gave at a TEDx event. In the video he gives helpful tips for applying Growth Mindset to our lives.



Figure **1.4.3**: The Power of Belief: Mindset and Success (Eduardo Briceno: TEDxManhattanBeach)

Some of the most important takeaways from this video are that:

- Our mindset can affect every aspect of our lives.
- A growth mindset is supported by science and brain research.
- With deliberate practice and effort, you can grow your abilities and intelligence in any area.

Growth Mindset Exercise

1. List and define 3 characteristics of a growth mindset.
2. Explain why we are including a growth mindset discussion in this class.
3. Each of the following statements shows indications of a fixed mindset. On your own or with a classmate or group, change the wording to show a growth mindset.
    - My grammatical skills always lower my grade.
    - I'm a good communicator. I don't need this class.
    - I can't get to work on time because of the traffic.
    - I don't want to say anything in class because my answer is probably wrong.
    - People won't be able to understand me when I speak because English is not my first language.
    - There is nothing I can do about my speech anxiety; I'm just a nervous person.

Assignment: Growth Mindset Quiz

Instructions: Take the Mindset Quiz below and score it as directed. After you have completed this assessment, submit your answers to the following questions.

1. What were your results on the Mindset Quiz? What does this mean?
2. Did your results surprise you or were they what you expected? Explain.
3. How can you use the results of this quiz? Be specific

MINDSET QUIZ

1. Circle the number for each question which best describes you
2. Total and record your score when you have completed each of the 10 questions
3. Using the SCORE chart, record your mindset

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much	0	1	2	3
No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit	3	2	1	0
Only a few people will be truly good at sports, you have to be born with the ability	0	1	2	3
The harder you work at something, the better you will be	3	2	1	0
I often get angry when I get feedback about my performance	0	1	2	3
I appreciate when people, parents, coaches or teachers give me feedback about my performance	3	2	1	0
Truly smart people do not need to try hard	0	1	2	3
You can always change how intelligent you are	3	2	1	0
You are a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that	0	1	2	3
An important reason why I do my school work is that I enjoy learning new things	3	2	1	0

SCORE CHART
22-30 = Strong Growth Mindset
17-21 = Growth with some Fixed ideas
11-16 = Fixed with some growth ideas
0-10 = Strong fixed mindset

MY SCORE:

MY MINDSET:

Adapted from Dweck, C. S. (2006). Mindset: The new psychology of success. New York: Random House Inc.

Reference

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Culture and Communication

When you think of intercultural communication, perhaps you don't think about the next-door neighbor who just moved in from another state or the person who works as a firefighter when you work in retail. But, these are just a few of the people that you communicate with interculturally. Examining cultural differences can help us understand others and expand our communication horizons.

In this chapter, we will look at the impact of culture on behavior (2.1), cultural differences (2.2), barriers to intercultural communication (2.3), and ways to become competent intercultural communicators (2.4). Section 2.5 presents an intercultural communication activity.

2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior

2.2: Understanding Cultural Differences

2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication

2.4: Cultural Communication Competence

2.5: Intercultural Communication Activity

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2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

1. Describe what it means to be a provisional communicator.
2. Define culture and co-culture.
3. List several co-cultural groups in the United States.
4. Define intercultural communication.
5. Explain the reasons for education in intercultural communication.

Psychologists have used the term **egocentric** to describe a person who is self-focused and unable to imagine any other perspective than his or her own. Young children are naturally *egocentric*, assuming that everyone else thinks, perceives, and communicates as they do. To a certain extent, we remain egocentric even as we mature, and it can be very challenging to understand that varied perceptions, values, and beliefs exist which are equally valid as our own. However, to communicate effectively and to form satisfying personal and professional relationships, we must step away from our egotism and seek to understand the point of view, or as Chapter One calls it, the **worldview** of others. Learning about different worldviews can lead to our becoming **provisional** communicators.

Provisionalism is *the ability to accept the diversity of perceptions and beliefs, and to operate in a manner sensitive to that diversity*. Being a provisional communicator does not mean we abandon our own beliefs and values, nor does it mean we have to accept all beliefs and values as correct. Instead, provisionalism leads us to seek to understand variations in human behaviors and to understand the field of experience out of which the other person operates. Provisionalism means:

- We interpret the communication and behavior based on our own life experiences, *but then*
- We stop and consider, "How was the message intended?" or "What other factors may be motivating this communication or behavior?"

An excellent place to start understanding the communication of others is with an understanding of the impact of culture.

Culture

Culture refers to *the broad set of shared beliefs and values that form a collective vision of ourselves and others.* The tools we use, the goods we buy, the foods we each, and the clothing we wear are all influenced by our culture. Our language, religion, laws, rules of social conduct, folklore, cultural icons, and the beliefs, norms, collective memories, attitudes, values, and practices that form our worldview and which help us relate to the world are also culturally determined. (Barrett). Culture is learned, and it can be so ingrained it becomes challenging to identify how it influences our thoughts and behaviors.

Let's begin our discussion of culture with our dominant or broad culture, which is usually but not always the country or nation of our upbringing. In the United States, most citizens place a high value on self-determination, believing each individual has a fundamental right to make choices that he or she deems best for them. As long as their actions do not harm others, they feel free to follow the life path of their own choosing. If others attempt to force them to act or think in certain ways, they tend to rebel. The United States is considered an *individualistic* culture because of this belief in self-determination. Other core values shared by most United States are equality, freedom of speech and religion, and competition.

It is important to understand that other cultures may not value self-determination and individualism. Some countries emphasize doing what is best for the group (the family or the company, for instance). In such cultures, engaging in individual behaviors that reflect poorly on the group is a powerful social taboo. For example, in some Asian cultures, if a student performs poorly academically, it is seen as a reflection on the entire family, bringing shame to all. The pressures to succeed are based not on personal achievement but on maintaining the honor of the entire family. Contrast that to the United States, where students are generally seen as failing or succeeding, on their own merit.



Figure **2.1.1**: Keith: An American Professor Visits China. Source: Martin & Nakayama, 2018.

In the dominant U.S. culture, children are usually taught it is rude to stare at people, especially those markedly different from themselves. Extended gazes are unsettling and even offensive. This is not true, however, in all cultures. When Keith, the American professor shown in Figure **2.1.1** traveled to China several years ago, he had to acclimate to this cultural difference. Since he stood out as markedly different; lighter-skinned, bald, taller, and larger than average Chinese, he would regularly observe people staring at him, and many were doing so quite openly and obviously. If he had simply interpreted this staring according to his own culture, he would have drawn the conclusion that Chinese people were extremely rude. Since Keith knew from various travel books that staring is acceptable in China, he was able to understand that this behavior was perfectly appropriate within the context of the Chinese culture. If he had not learned about the culture beforehand, he might have experienced even greater **culture shock**. This term *refers to the discomfort felt when interacting in a new environment with few familiar cues to guide our communication behaviors* (Martin & Nakayama, 2018).

Be aware that cultures do not have static sets of beliefs, values, and behavior; instead, they evolve over time. In the U.S., we have seen large cultural shifts in the past 50 years. Sexual mores have changed quite dramatically, as have our attitudes about individual rights. While in the past women were restricted to a narrow range of careers, today we assume men and women are equally able to pursue the career of their choice. Attitudes toward minorities and immigrants continue to evolve. During the past 10 years, the changes in attitudes toward sexuality and the civil rights of same-sex couples are quite striking.

Another important component of worldview is determined by an individual's co-culture.

Co-Culture

It is important to know that a broad culture, like the United States, India, an other countries or societies, will also have a number of smaller cultural groups, sometimes called **co-cultures**, operating within it. A **co-culture** is *an identifiable group with its own unique traits operating within the larger culture.* For example, Keith's wife and her sister can talk for hours about all sorts of relationship issues with co-workers, with family members, and with friends while he finds such extensive conversations exhausting. Since female communication is normally more focused on relationship development and maintenance, such conversations are consistent with the feminine communication style. The masculine style is more focused on action and the bare details of events, who did what to whom, and not as focused on the nuances of relational dynamics. As someone who uses the masculine style, once Keith gets the basic details, he thinks he is informed and does not feel a need to dissect the smaller details of the event. Note that the masculine and feminine communication styles are not based on biology; men can use a feminine style and women can use a masculine style.

In the United States, various co-cultures exist, including those identified by

- Age or generation. For example Baby Boomers, Generation X, teens, senior citizens.
- Race or ethnicity. For example, Native Americans, African-Americans, Latinos, Whites.
- Differing abilities, such as a person who is deaf, a wheelchair user, or a person with Down syndrome.
- Sex, such as male or female
- Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, such as binary or LGBTQ+.
- Religion, such as Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and so on.
- Affiliation or interests, such as NASCAR fans, gamers, or even gang members.
- Region of the country or city, such as urban north, deep south.
- Occupation.
- And many more.



Figure **2.1.2**: North Dakota State Senator Richard Marcellais. Source:"Romesha Reception 12" by North Dakota National Guard is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Our verbal and nonverbal communication are influenced by our co-culture. Consider:

- The use of specific gestures, colors, and styles of dress in inner-city gangs;
- The classic Southern Accent;
- The use of regional sayings, such as “you betcha,” or “whatever” in rural Minnesota;
- The quiet nature of Native Americans who may prefer to listen and observe.
- Use of terms such as *pop*, *soda*, or *coke* to refer to carbonated beverages.



Figure **2.1.3**: Photo by **RODNAE Productions** from **Pexels** is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

In your academic and work life, you will communicate with people from many different cultures and co-cultures. These variations in lifestyle, communication behaviors, values, beliefs, art, food, and such provide a rich quilt of human experience, and for the individual who can accept and appreciate these differences, it is an invigorating experience to move among them.

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication occurs when two or more individuals who are from different cultures or co-cultures interact. Conducting business with a person from another country is one example of intercultural communication. Communication with a person from a different age group, ethnicity, or gender can also be considered intercultural communication. In other words, intercultural communication is human communication.

The Council of Europe states the importance of intercultural communication very effectively: "Mutual understanding and intercultural competence are more important than ever today because through them we can address some of the most virulent

problems of contemporary societies. Manifestations of prejudice, discrimination, and hate speech have become common, and political parties advocating extremist ideas have gained fresh momentum. These problems are linked to ... misunderstandings between people from different cultural backgrounds and affiliations. There is a felt urgency – for education that allows citizens to live together in culturally diverse societies. The ability to understand and communicate with each other across all kinds of cultural divisions is a prerequisite for making such societies work. For this reason, intercultural education can make an essential contribution to peaceful coexistence." (Barrett)

Key Terms

- culture
- co-culture
- culture shock
- intercultural communication
- provisional communicator
- egocentric
- worldview

Exercises

1. Answer the question, "who are you." In a group, discuss your answers. How many cultures or co-cultures could you identify during your discussion.
2. **Media:** Watch and discuss this video of an intercultural couple as they discuss how they negotiate cultural differences. Particularly, a Japanese man and a white U.S. American woman discuss their differences. *What We Argue About| Japanese/American Marriage* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0reQCDL968)
3. **Media:** Watch and discuss this video. Miles Best talks to an author about Black culture, and how it is American culture. Language is discussed, as well as other parts of Black culture. *Black Culture in the United States* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmdE_FlSfig)

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2.2: Understanding Cultural Differences

In this section, we will look at cultural differences through the lenses of German psychologist Geert Hofstede; American anthropologist Edward Hall, and Scottish Business Professor Charles Tidwell. By gaining a rough understanding of different cultures, we can learn what to expect and how to interact with citizens of our diverse, multicultural society.

Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture

Psychologist Geert Hofstede published his cultural dimensions model at the end of the 1970s. Since then, it's become an internationally recognized standard for understanding cultural differences. Hofstede studied people who worked for IBM in more than 50 countries and identified six dimensions that could distinguish one culture from another. These six dimensions are individualism vs. collectivism, discussed in the previous section; high power distance vs. low power distance; high certainty avoidance vs. low certainly avoidance; long-term vs. short-term orientation; masculine vs. feminine; and indulgence vs. restraint.

Individualism and Collectivism

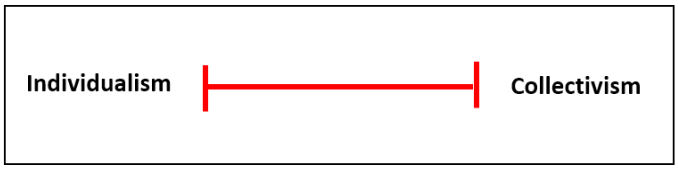


Figure **2.2.1**

Put simply, you can think if an individualistic culture as an **I** culture where members are able to make choices based on *personal preference* with little regard for others, except for close family or significant relationships. They can pursue their own wants and needs free from concerns about meeting social expectations. The **United States** is a highly individualistic culture. While we value the role of certain aspects of collectivism such as government and social organizations, at our core we strongly believe it is up to each person to find and follow his or her path in life.

In a highly collectivistic culture, a **we** culture, just the opposite is true. It is the role of individuals to fulfill their place in the *overall social order.* Personal wants and needs are secondary to the needs of society at large. There is immense pressure to adhere to social norms and those who fail to conform risk social isolation, disconnection from family, and perhaps some form of banishment. **China** is typically considered a highly collectivistic culture. In China, multigenerational homes are common, and tradition calls for the oldest son to care for his parents as they age.

High Power-Distance and Low Power-Distance

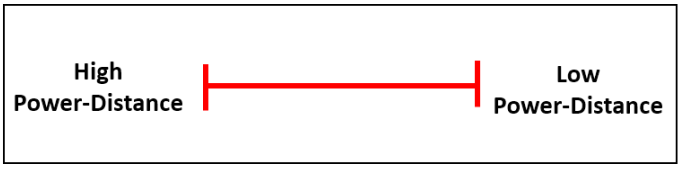


Figure **2.2.2**

Power is a normal feature of any relationship or society. How power is perceived, however, varies among cultures. In **high power-distance cultures,** the members accept some having more power and some having less power, and accept that this power distribution is natural and normal. Those with power are assumed to deserve it, and likewise, those without power are assumed to be in their proper place. In such a culture, there will be a rigid adherence to the use of titles, “Sir,” “Ma’am,” “Officer,” “Reverend,” and so on. The directives of those with higher power are to be obeyed, with little question.

In **low power-distance cultures**, the distribution of power is considered far more arbitrary and viewed as a result of luck, money, heritage, or other external variables. Those in power are far more likely to be challenged in a low power-distance culture than they would in a high power-distance culture. A wealthy person is typically seen as more powerful in western cultures. Elected officials, like United States Senators, will be seen as powerful since they had to win their office by receiving majority support. However, individuals who attempt to assert power are often faced with those who stand up to them, question them, ignore them, or otherwise refuse to acknowledge their power. While some titles may be used, they will be used far less than in high power-distance culture.

For example, in colleges and universities in the U.S., it is far more common for students to address their instructors on a first-name basis, and engage in casual conversation on personal topics. In contrast, in a high power-distance culture like **Japan**, the students rise and bow as the teacher enters the room, address them formally at all times, and rarely engage in any personal conversation.

High Uncertainty Avoidance and Low Uncertainty Avoidance

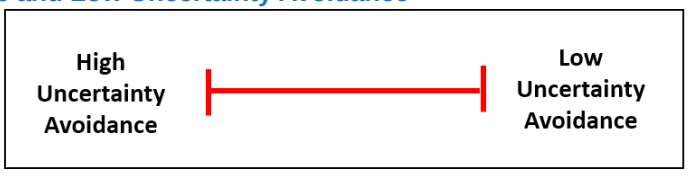


Figure **2.2.3**

This index shows the degree to which people accept or avoid something that is strange, unexpected, or different from the status quo.

Societies with high uncertainty avoidance choose strict rules, guidelines, and behavior codes. They usually depend on absolute truths or the idea that only one truth decides all proper conduct. High uncertainty avoidance cultures limit change and place a very high value on history, doing things as they have been done in the past, and honoring stable cultural norms.

Low uncertainty avoidance cultures see change is seen as inevitable and normal. These cultures are more accepting of contrasting opinions or beliefs. Society is less strict and lack of certainty is more acceptable. In a low uncertainty avoidance culture, innovation in all areas is valued. Businesses in the U.S. that can change rapidly, innovate quickly, and respond immediately to market and social pressures are seen as far more successful. Even though the U.S. is generally low in uncertainty avoidance, we can see some evidence of a degree of higher uncertainty avoidance related to certain social issues. As society changes, there are many who will decry the changes as they are "forgetting the past," "dishonoring our forebears," or "abandoning sacred traditions." In the controversy over same-sex marriage, the phrase "traditional marriage" is used to refer to a two person, heterosexual marriage, suggesting same-sex marriage is a violation of tradition. Changing social norms creates uncertainty, and for many changes are very unsettling.

Long-Term Orientation and Short-Term Orientation

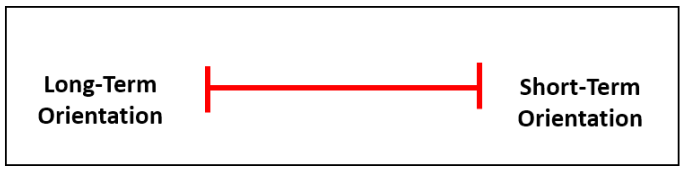


Figure **2.2.4**

People and cultures view time in different ways. For some, the "here and now" is paramount, and for others, "saving for a rainy day" is the dominant view.

In a long-term culture, significant emphasis is placed on planning for the future. For example, the savings rates in France and Germany are 2-4 times greater than in the U.S., suggesting cultures with more of a "plan ahead" mentality (Pasquali & Aridas, 2012). These long-term cultures see change and social evolution are normal, integral parts of the human condition.

In a short-term culture, emphasis is placed far more on the "here and now." Immediate needs and desires are paramount, with longer-term issues left for another day. The U.S. falls more into this type. Legislation tends to be passed to handle immediate problems, and it can be challenging for lawmakers to convince voters of the need to look at issues from a long-term perspective. With the fairly easy access to credit, consumers are encouraged to buy now versus waiting. We see evidence of the need to establish "absolute Truth" in our political arena on issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion, and gun control. Our culture does not tend to favor middle grounds in which truth is not clear-cut.

Masculine and Feminine

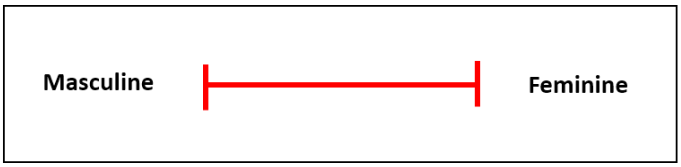


Figure **2.2.5**

Expectations for gender roles are a core component of any culture. All cultures have some sense of what it means to be a "man" or a "woman." **Masculine cultures** are *traditionally seen as more aggressive and domineering*, while **feminine cultures** are *traditionally seen as more nurturing and caring*.

In a masculine culture, such as the U.S., winning is highly valued. We respect and honor those who demonstrate power and high degrees of competence. Consider the role of competitive sports such as football, basketball, or baseball, and how the rituals of identifying the best are significant events. The 2017 Super Bowl had 111 million viewers, (Huddleston, 2017) and the World Series regularly receives high ratings, with the final game in 2016 ending at the highest rating in ten years (Perez, 2016).

More feminine societies, such as those in the Scandinavian countries, will certainly have their sporting moments. However, the culture is far more structured to provide aid and support to citizens, focusing their energies on providing a reasonable quality of life for all (Hofstede, 2012b).

Indulgence and Restraint

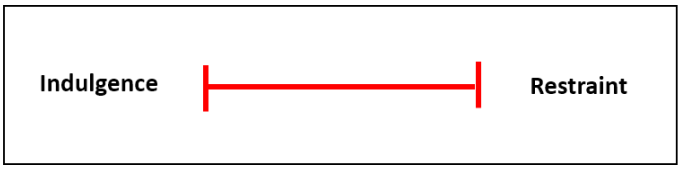


Figure **2.2.6**

A more recent addition to Hofstede's dimensions of culture, the indulgence/restraint continuum addresses the degree of rigidity of social norms of behavior. He states:

Indulgence *stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun.* ***Restraint*** *stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms (Hofstede, 2012a).*

Indulgent cultures are comfortable with individuals acting on their more basic human drives. Sexual mores are less restrictive, and one can act more spontaneously than in cultures of restraint. Those in indulgent cultures will tend to communicate fewer messages of judgment and evaluation. Every spring thousands of U.S. college students flock to places like Cancun, Mexico, to engage in a week of fairly indulgent behavior. Feeling free from the social expectations of home, many will engage in some intense partying, sexual activity, and fairly limitless behaviors.

Cultures of restraint, such as many Islamic countries, have rigid social expectations of behavior that can be quite narrow. Guidelines on dress, food, drink, and behaviors are rigid and may even be formalized in law. In the U.S., a generally indulgent culture, there are sub-cultures that are more restraint-focused. The Amish are highly restrained by social norms, but so too can be inner-city gangs. Areas of the country, like Utah with its large Mormon culture, or the Deep South with its large evangelical Christian culture, are more restrained than areas such as San Francisco or New York City. Rural areas often have more rigid social norms than do urban areas. Those in more restraint-oriented cultures will identify those not adhering to these norms, placing pressure on them, either openly or subtly, to conform to social expectations.

Hall's Cultural Variations

In addition to these 6 dimensions from Hofstede, anthropologist Edward T. Hall identified two more significant cultural variations (Raimo, 2008).

Monochronic and Polychronic

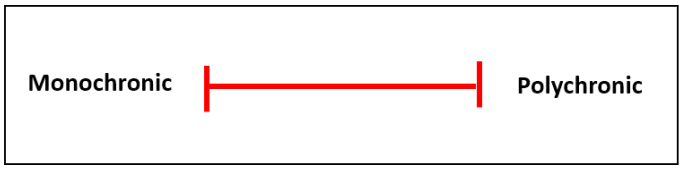


Figure **2.2.7**

Another aspect of **variations in time orientation** is the difference between monochronic and polychronic cultures. This refers to *how people perceive and value time*.

In a **monochronic culture**, like the U.S., *time is viewed as linear, as a sequential set of finite time units*. These units are a commodity, much like money, to be managed and used wisely; once the time is gone, it is gone and cannot be retrieved. Consider the language we use to refer to time: *spending* time; *saving* time; *budgeting* time; *making* time. These are the same terms and concepts we apply to money; time is a resource to be managed thoughtfully. Since we value time so highly, that means:

- Punctuality is valued. Since "time is money," if a person runs late, they are wasting the resource.
- Scheduling is valued. Since time is finite, only so much is available, we need to plan how to allocate the resource. Monochronic cultures tend to let the schedule drive activity, much like money dictates what we can and cannot afford to do,
- Handling one task at a time is valued. Since time is finite and seen as a resource, monochronic cultures value fulfilling the time budget by doing what was scheduled. Compare this to a financial budget: funds are allocated for different needs, and we assume those funds should be spent on the item budgeted. In a monochronic culture, since time and money are virtually equivalent, adhering to the "time budget" is valued.
- Being busy is valued. Since time is a resource, we tend to view those who are busy as "making the most of their time;" they are seen as using their resources wisely.

In a **polychronic culture**, like Spain, *time is far, far more fluid*. Schedules are more like rough outlines to be followed, altered, or ignored as events warrant. Relationship development is more important, and schedules do not drive activity. Multi-tasking is far more acceptable, as one can move between various tasks as demands change. In polychronic cultures, people make appointments, but there is more latitude for when they are expected to arrive. David's appointment may be at 10:15, but as long as he arrives sometime within the 10 o'clock hour, he is on time.

Consider a monochronic person attempting to do business in a polychronic culture. The monochronic person may expect meetings to start promptly on time, stay focused, and for work to be completed in a regimented manner to meet an established deadline. Yet those in a polychronic culture will not bring those same expectations to the encounter, sowing the seeds for some significant intercultural conflict.

High Context and Low Context

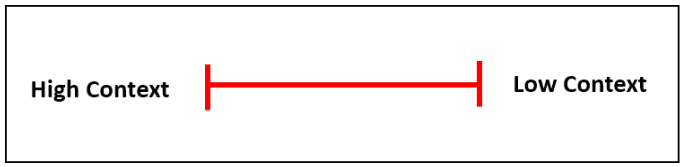


Figure **2.2.8**

The last variation in culture to consider is whether the culture is high context or low context. To establish a little background, consider how we communicate. When we communicate we use a communication package, consisting of all of our verbal and nonverbal communication. As you have learned, our **verbal communication** refers to **our** use of language, and our **nonverbal communication** refers to *all other communication variables: body language, vocal traits, and dress.*

In **low-context cultures**, *verbal communication is given primary attention*. The assumption is that people will say what they mean relatively directly and clearly. Little will be left for the receiver to interpret or imply. In the U.S. if someone does not want something, we expect them to say, "No." While we certainly use nonverbal communication variables to get a richer sense of the meaning of the person's message, we consider what they say to be the core, primary message. Those in a high-context culture find the directness of low-context cultures quite disconcerting, to the point of rudeness.

In **high-context cultures**, *nonverbal communication is as important, if not more important, than verbal communication*. How something is said is a significant variable in interpreting what is meant. Messages are often implied and delivered quite subtly. Japan is well known for the reluctance of people to use blunt messages, so they have far more subtle ways to indicate disagreement than a low-context culture. Those in low context cultures find these subtle, implied messages frustrating.

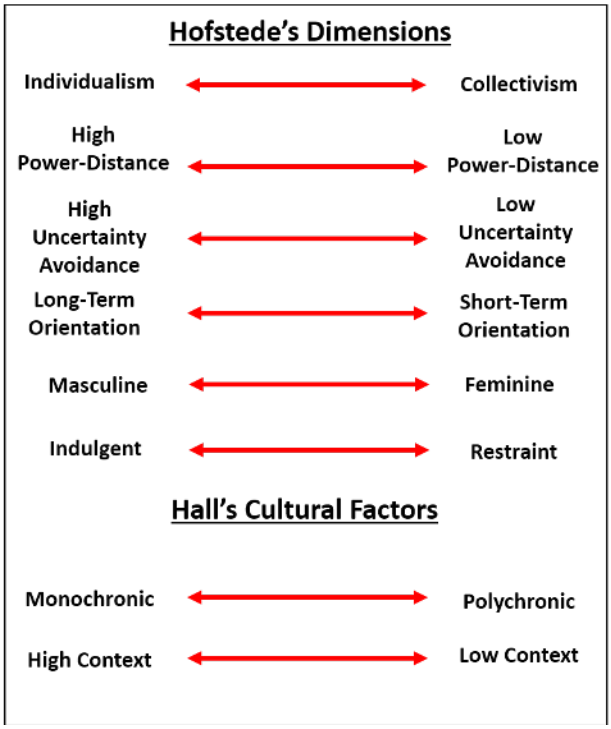


Figure **2.2.9**

In summary, Hofstede's Dimensions and Hall's Cultural Variations give us some tools to use to identify, categorize, and discuss diversity in communication. As we learn to see these differences, we are better equipped to manage inter-cultural encounters, communicate more provisionally, and adapt to cultural variations.

While intended to show only broad cultural differences, these eight variables also can be useful tools to identify variations among individuals within a given culture. We can use them to identify sources of conflict or tension within a given relationship, such as a marriage. For example, Keith tends to be a short-term oriented, indulgent, monochronic person, while his wife tends to be long-term oriented, restrained, and more polychronic. Needless to say, they frequently experience their own personal "culture clashes."

Tidwell's Insights about Culture and Nonverbal Communication

Dr. Charles Tidwell, professor of Intercultural Business Relations at Andrews University, has spent many years studying and teaching intercultural communication. He provides some valuable insights on cultural differences in dress, movements, gestures, eye contact, touch, and vocalizations. Following are notes published from his graduate course on Interpersonal Communication.

General Appearance and Dress

All cultures are concerned about how they look and make judgments based on looks and dress. Some Americans, for instance, appear almost obsessed with dress and personal attractiveness. But cultural standards on what is attractive in dress and on what constitutes modesty vary greatly. An interesting area to research is how dress is used as a sign of status in different cultures.

Movements and Posture

We send information on attitude toward a person by movements and posture (facing or leaning towards another), emotional states (tapping fingers, jiggling coins), and desire to control the environment (moving towards or away from a person). There are more than 700,000 possible motions we can make — so it is impossible to categorize them all! But just be aware the body

movement and position are key ingredients in sending messages. Consider the following actions and note cultural differences:

- Slouching (seen as rude in most Northern European areas)
- Hands in the pocket (disrespectful in Turkey)
- Sitting with legs crossed (offensive in Ghana, Turkey)
- Showing soles of feet. (offensive in Thailand, Saudi Arabia)
- Even in the US, there is a considerable difference in acceptable posture

Gestures

It is impossible to catalog them all. But we need to recognize that an acceptable gesture in one's own culture may be offensive in another. In addition, the amount of gesturing varies from culture to culture. Some cultures are animated; others are restrained. Restrained cultures often feel animated cultures lack manners and overall restraint. Animated cultures often feel restrained cultures lack emotion or interest. Even simple things like using hands to point and count differ. People in the US point with the index finger; Germany with the little finger; and the Japanese with the entire hand (in fact most Asians consider pointing with the index finger to be rude). In counting with the fingers, Germans use the thumb to indicate the number 1; the middle finger is the symbol for 1 in Indonesia.

Facial Expressions

While many facial expressions such as smiling, crying, or showing anger, sorrow, or disgust are recognized worldwide, the intensity varies from culture to culture. Many Asian cultures suppress facial expressions as much as possible. Many Mediterranean (Latino / Arabic) cultures exaggerate grief or sadness while most American men hide grief or sorrow. Some see "animated" expressions as a sign of a lack of control. Too much smiling is viewed as a sign of shallowness in some cultures. Women smile more than men.

Eye Contact and Gaze

In the USA, eye contact indicates our degree of attention or interest, regulates interaction, communicates emotion, defines power and status, and has a central role in managing the impressions of others. Western cultures see direct eye to eye contact as positive and advise children to look a person in the eyes. But within the USA, differences exist. For example, African-Americans use more eye contact when talking and less when listening with the reverse being true for Anglo-Americans.

- Arabic cultures make prolonged eye contact and believe it shows interest and helps them understand the truthfulness of the other person. (A person who doesn't reciprocate is seen as untrustworthy)
- Japan, Africa, Latin American, Caribbean — avoid eye contact to show respect.

Touch

Touch is culturally determined! The basic pattern is that cultures with high emotional restraint concepts (English, German, Scandinavian, Chinese, Japanese) have little public touch; those which encourage emotion (Latino, Middle-East, Jewish) accept frequent touches. But each culture has a clear concept of what parts of the body one may not touch. The basic message of touch is to show affection or to control others (i.e. hug, kiss, hit, kick). But rules for touch vary greatly, as shown below:

- Traditional Koreans (and many other Asian countries) don't touch strangers., especially members of the opposite sex.
- Islamic and Hindu Cultures: typically don't touch with the left hand. To do so is a social insult. The left hand is for toilet functions. It is mannerly in India to break your bread only with your right hand (sometimes difficult for non-Indians)
- Islamic cultures generally don't approve of any touching between genders (even handshakes). But consider such touching (including hand-holding, hugs) between same-sex to be appropriate.
- Many Asians don't touch the head. (The head houses the soul and a touch puts it in jeopardy).

Vocalizations

Vocal characterizers such as a laugh, cry, yell, moan, whine, belch, and yawn send different messages in different cultures. (Japan — giggling indicates embarrassment; India – belch indicates satisfaction) Other vocal qualifiers (volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo, and tone) also vary. Loudness indicates strength in Arabic cultures and softness indicates weakness; indicates confidence and

authority to the Germans; indicates impoliteness to the Thais; indicates loss of control to the Japanese. (Generally, one learns not to "shout" in Asia for nearly any reason!). Loudness is gender-based as well: women tend to speak higher and more softly than men.

Key Terms

- **Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture**
  - Individualism and Collectivism
  - Power Distance
  - Uncertainty Avoidance
  - Time Orientation
  - Masculine and Feminine
  - Indulgence and Restraint
- **Hall's Cultural Dimensions**
  - Monochronic and Polychronic
  - High-Context and Low-Context

Topics for Discussion

Although Hofstede's and Hall's Cultural Dimensions are useful in a study of cultures and co-cultures, it is important that we are careful not to oversimplify. Watch *The Danger of a Single Story* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg). What were key takeaways from this video?

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2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

- Analyze barriers to effective intercultural communication.
- Define and give examples of ethnocentrism.
- Define and give examples of stereotyping.

"How You See Me" series on YouTube features "real" people discussing their cultural identifies.(https://youtu.be/Fls_W4PMJgA?list=PLfjTXaT9NowjmBcbR7gJVFECprsobMZiX)

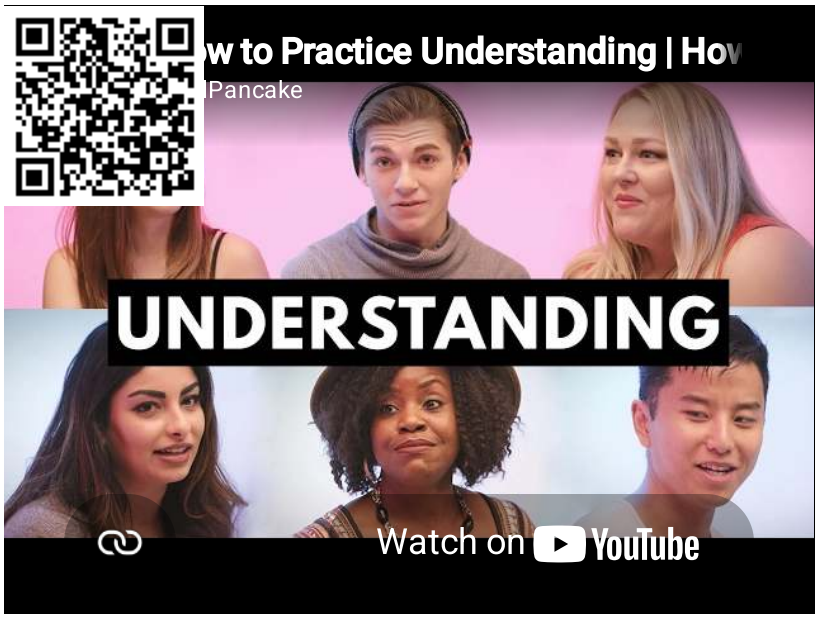


Figure **2.3.1**: How You See Me. (Nick Ross)

Barriers to Intercultural Communication

Most of us can appreciate the important of intercultural communication, yet several stumbling blocks may get in the way of a positive intercultural communication experience. Some of the most common ones are anxiety,

Anxiety

It is not unusual to experience some level of discomfort in communicating with individuals from other cultures or co-cultures. It may be that we feel as though we will do or say the wrong thing. This can make the interaction awkward or can lead us to avoid opportunities for intercultural communication. Although not as detrimental as ethnocentrism or stereotypes, anxiety can prevent us from making intercultural connections that will enrich our lives.

Assumption of Similarities

Although you know differently, many people mistakenly assume that simply being human makes everyone alike. However, as we've discussed, values, beliefs, and attitudes can vary vastly from culture to culture. Those who assume a person from another cultural background is just like them will often misread or misinterpret and perhaps even be offended by any intercultural encounter. In intercultural communication, assume differences in communication style will exist that you may be unaware of. It is important to avoid interpreting another individual's behavior through your own cultural lens.

Ethnocentrism

Where did you start reading on this page? The top left corner. Why not the bottom right corner, or the top right one? In English, we read left to right, from the top of the page to the bottom. But not everyone reads the same. If you read and write Arabic or Hebrew,

you will proceed from right to left. Neither is right or wrong, simply different. Americans tend to say that people from England drive on the “wrong” side of the road, rather than on the “other” side. You may find it hard to drive on the other side of the road while visiting England, but for people in the United Kingdom, it is normal and natural. A high level of appreciation for one’s own culture can be healthy; a shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But **ethnocentrism** can lead to disdain or dislike for other cultures and could cause misunderstanding and conflict. **Ethnocentrism** assumes *our culture or co-culture is superior to or more important than others and evaluates all other cultures against it.* To dismantle ethnocentrism, we must recognize that our views of the world, what we consider right and wrong, normal or weird, are largely influenced by our cultural standpoint and that our cultural standpoint is not everyone's cultural standpoint. This ethnocentric bias has received some challenge recently in United States’ schools as teachers make efforts to create a multicultural classroom by incorporating books, short stories, and traditions from non-dominant groups.

Ethnocentrism shows up in large and small ways. A "small" way might be in disdain for other cultures' or co-cultures' food preferences. Some individuals express disgust at other cultures’ eating meat from a dog or guinea pig, for example, while they don’t question their own habit of eating cows or pigs. A "large" and one of the most horrific examples of ethnocentrism in history can be seen is in the Nazi’s elevation of the Aryan race in World War II and the corresponding killing of Jews, Gypsies, gays and lesbians, and other non-Aryan groups.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation — almost any characteristic. They may be positive, such as all Asian students are good at math, but are most often negative, such as all overweight people are lazy. Stereotyping is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account.

Stereotypes are frequently expressed on TV, in movies, chat rooms and blogs, and in conversations with friends and family. Further research has found that stereotypes are often used outside of our awareness, making it very difficult to correct them. And when we are distracted or under time pressure, these tendencies become even more powerful (Stangor & Duan, 1991). Still, it’s crucial to try to recognize our own stereotypic thinking. Treating individuals according to rigid stereotypic beliefs is detrimental to all aspects of the communication process and can lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Prejudice

Prejudice is a negative attitude and feeling toward an individual based solely on one’s membership in a particular social group, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, religion, sexual orientation, profession, and many more (Allport, 1954; Brown, 2010). An example of prejudice is having a negative attitude toward people who are not born in the United States and disliking them because of their status as "foreigners."

Because it is often difficult to recognize our own prejudices, several tests have been created to help us recognize our own "implicit" or hidden biases. The most well-known implicit measure of prejudice—the *Implicit Association Test (IAT)*—is frequently used to assess stereotypes and prejudice (Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2007). In the IAT, participants are asked to classify stimuli that they view on a computer screen into one of two categories by pressing one of two computer keys, one with their left hand and one with their right hand. Furthermore, the categories are arranged such that the responses to be answered with the left and right buttons either “fit with” (match) the stereotype or do not “fit with” (mismatch) the stereotype.

When our prejudices and stereotypes are unchallenged, they can lead to action in the forms of discrimination and even violence. **Racial discrimination** is discrimination against an individual based solely on membership in a specific racial group. There have been a number of shocking highly publicized instances in which African-Americans were killed by vigilantes or law enforcement, one of the more disturbing being the case of George Floyd. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd died after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for over 8 minutes; almost 3 of those minutes were after Floyd was unconscious. (Dovidio et al., 2010). And in late 2020, "the United Nations **issued a report** that detailed "an alarming level" of racially motivated violence and other hate incidents against Asian Americans." According to a Pew Research Report, "32% of Asian adults say they have feared someone might threaten or physically attack them...with the majority of Asian adults (81%) saying violence against them is increasing. (Pew Research Center, Ap. 11, 2021) Mexican Americans and other Latinx groups are also targets, both of citizens and police. (Dovidio et al., 2010)

Discussions about stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and discrimination are unsettling to some. However, we must recognize these attributes in ourselves and others before we can take steps to challenge and change their existence.

Key Terms

- Anxiety
- Ethnocentrism
- Stereotyping
- Prejudice
- Racial discrimination

Exercises

For Discussion

1. Have you ever felt as though you were stereotyped? Explain when this happened and how it made you feel. Have you ever been guilty of stereotyping others, perhaps unintentionally?
2. Discuss examples of stereotypes you have read about or seen in media.
3. If you would like to develop more understanding of prejudice, see some of the short videos at undertandingprejudice.org at this link:https://secure.understandingprejudice.org/multimedia/
4. What are some forms of discrimination other than racial discrimination? Have you ever experienced or witnessed what you thought was discrimination? Explain.

Activities: Experiencing Intercultural Barriers Through Media

1. **Activity 1:** When watching the following video, notice all of the stereotypes people who are native to Alaska face, and think about how you'd approach a conversation with someone from the area. Try to consider the situation from another perspective.
2. What People Get Wrong About Alaska Natives: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDU4PkSqWsQ
3. **Multimedia:** Comedian and news anchor Trevor Noah discusses trying a taco for the first time. More importantly, look at the misunderstanding that happens in the use of language in the clip. Think about whether you may have had misunderstandings like these with friends from other cultures. *Trevor Noah: That's Racist - Tacos*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDk5ajNDgZc&list=TLPQMTEwMTIwMjBTkibtm_xuXQ&index=2
4. **Multimedia:** Biracial actresses from Sister, Sister discuss their marriages. One of the twins is married to an African American man, and the other is married to a white man. Think about your own experience with interracial couples, or even your own experience being part of an interracial couple. How do you react when you hear such things? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngwvHYqYGS0
5. **Ethnocentrism and Mobility** - Read the article "The Inevitability of Ethnocentrism Revisited: Ethnocentrism Diminishes As Mobility Increases," located at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4672305/. What does the article say about in-group and out-groups? How does mobility reduce out-group hostility? Does traveling help reduce ethnocentrism?

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2.4: Cultural Communication Competence

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate sensitivity in co-cultural communication.
- Explain the meaning and characteristics of intercultural communication competence.

Hofstede, Hall, and Tidwell's insights are particularly helpful in understanding broad cultural differences. However, we are also engaged in intercultural communication when we are communicating with people of a different race, age, and gender than our own. In this section, we will share thoughts on co-cultural communication and explain the characteristics of intercultural communication competence.

Co-Cultural Communication

Hofstede, Hall, and Tidwell's insights are particularly helpful in understanding broad cultural differences. However, we are also engaged in intercultural communication when we are communicating with people of different races, ages, and genders than our own. When you are communicating with what you perceive as a different co-culture than your own, here are some things to keep in mind.

Age or Generational Differences

Age and generational differences show up in family relationships, in the classroom, and in the workplace. For example, teenage children and their parents or grandparents may have differences of opinion about many issues. Remember the “OK, Boomer” phenomenon from 2019? This phrase was used whenever younger people want to ignore or dismiss something a person of an older generation said. Can you think of behaviors or even words that may be demeaning to people of a different generation than your own?

Race

Sometimes individuals don’t communicate with people of different races because they haven’t experienced such friendships before, and so there is uncertainty. Talk with people from different races backgrounds, and ask about experiences. With people who are of different backgrounds, listen and then believe their experience, and understand privilege. Even things as simple as the emoji for a thumbs up tends to be first in a white skin tone, but brown skin tone emojis exist as well. . Know that bias can creep into conversations, but understand that, apologize for it, and make a commitment to change behaviors.

Gender

Think critically about your own attitudes toward gender roles. Just because a woman takes on more traditionally feminine roles in a relationship doesn’t mean it’s wrong, unless she doesn’t want to do so. Or if a male and female attend a movie together and the male cries but the female doesn’t remember self-expression can come in different modes for people.

Differing Abilities

People who have a disability should be addressed as you would address anyone else. If someone appears to have cerebral palsy, uses a wheelchair, and has an attendant with her to help facilitate communication, converse and make eye contact with the person using the wheelchair, not with the attendant. When someone who you perceive to have Down syndrome orders food at a restaurant, ask that person, not others, what he or she wants. Expect people with a disability to be able to function independently until they ask for help. When someone who is blind is walking down the hall, don’t grab his or her arm. Rather, if it appears if he needs help, ask him if he needs it. With communicating with a person who is deaf, make lots of eye contact, and feel free to write something down on paper if other ways of communicating aren’t working. Sign language interpreters often help in larger-group situations; however, once again, make eye contact and converse with the person who is deaf, not with the interpreter.

Developing Intercultural Communication Competence

The best intercultural communicators are open-minded people who are genuinely interested in other cultures, who take the time to learn about other cultures and co-cultures, and who take the opportunity to engage with and listen to others. **Intercultural communication competence** is a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills applied that allows us to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from ourselves,
- interact appropriately, effectively, and respectfully with them,
- establish positive and constructive relationships, and
- understand our own multiple cultural affiliations and how these affiliations may affect our own attitudes and behaviors.

Taking the time to learn about other cultures can improve intercultural competence. Many people begin by asking questions or doing research on a particular culture or co-culture. Food is also a great way to find out about a culture, so consider visiting international restaurants. Find out if an international club exists at your college and, if so, join it. Participating in study abroad programs is yet another way to learn about different cultures.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you have learned about the impact of cultures and co-cultures on our own behavior as well as the behavior of others. We discussed the importance of effective intercultural communication, as well as intercultural communication barriers. Finally, we addressed the meaning of intercultural competence and gave suggestions for competent co-cultural communication.

Ideas for Speeches

Topics for further research.

Intercultural Communication is a rich source of topics for speeches and papers. If you are interested in speaking about a specific culture, here are resources you can use in your research.

- Access the **A to Z World Culture** guide at

http://www.atozworldculture.com/#mode=country&regionId=7&uri=country-content&nid=20.36&key=country-culture

Popular travel location etiquette guides and be found at

- Thailand
- China
- Japan
- Britain
- India
- Saudi Arabia
- See the **World's Most Interesting Taboos**: https://www.wheretraveler.com/play/worlds-most-intriguing-taboos

Key Term

intercultural communication competence- a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills applied that allows us to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from ourselves,
- interact appropriately, effectively, and respectfully with them,
- establish positive and constructive relationships, and
- understand our own multiple cultural affiliations and how these affiliations may affect our own attitudes and behaviors.

Learning Activities

1. Select and watch one of these videos on bridging cultural differences. https://www.ted.com/playlists/411/bridging_cultural_differences After you select a video, write and submit your answers to the following questions:

- Explain why you selected this video. For example, what about the video drew your attention?
- What specific culture or co-culture did the speaker in the video represent?
- What were the most important points that the speaker made or attempted to make in this video? What did you learn, as a result?
- What is your reaction to this video? In what way might you use this knowledge or understanding you gained?

2. Think of suggestions you might add to those for Co-Cultural Communication section. Was a co-culture that has been left out that you think should be added? Explain.
3. **American Dream Quiz**: A recent quiz was created about "privilege" to determine how many roadblocks people have encountered on their search for the American Dream. Do the quiz, located at https://movingupusa.com/calc/. What was your score, and were you surprised? How many of the things that you consider roadblocks have been within your control?
4. Teen Vogue asks six women about Halloween costumes that co-opt their cultures. See their answers and views on cultural appropriation here: https://youtu.be/d6Y5cARFJw8
5. Complete the Intercultural Activity in 2.5.

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2.5: Intercultural Communication Activity

Test Your Intercultural Communication Competence

Take the intercultural communication competence quiz found at https://www.londonschool.com/lsic/resources/intercultural-quiz/. Continue taking the quiz until you score 20 out of 20, then take a picture or screenshot of your results. Submit your results to the instructor along with answers to these questions.

1. How many times did you take the test before earning a perfect score?
2. What answer or answers surprised you or do you find particularly interesting?
3. Based on this quiz alone, if you were given the assignment to research another country and its culture, which country would you choose and why?

Acknowledgment

The London School of International Communication. "Test Your Intercultural Competence." https://www.londonschool.com/lsic/re...cultural-quiz/. 2021.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Verbal Elements of Communication

Have you ever turned in a paper that you thought was excellent only to find that your instructor questioned or even marked through many of the words you used? Or perhaps you said something in a conversation that you thought was harmless only to learn later that you unintentionally offended your listener? If so, you are not alone. Some of the most common problems in communication step from the use of words.

Verbal Communication means communication through words or language. You might find it helpful to think of verbal communication as *what* we say, whereas nonverbal communication, discussed in another chapter, is *how* we say what we say.

Words are arbitrary symbols used to represent objects, ideas, or feelings. **Language,** on the other hand, is a system of human communication using a particular form of spoken or written words or other symbols. Language consists of the use of words in a structured way.

Words and language help us understand others' wants, needs, and desires. They help us build emotional connections that are vital to all human beings. But used thoughtlessly, they can create conflict and hurt. In this chapter, you will learn about how words work, different types of words, and how to improve verbal communication.

3.1: How Words Work

3.2: Types of Language

3.3: Formal and Informal Language

3.4: Improving Verbal Communication

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3.1: How Words Work

Learning Outcomes

1. Discover 3 different rules that govern the use of words and language.
2. Determine the level of abstraction of a word
3. Illustrate your ability to move from abstract to concrete terms.

One person might call a shopping cart a buggy, and another person might call it a cart. There are several ways to refer to a carbonated beverage, such as “soda,” “Coke,” “pop,” “soft drink,” or simply “drink.” A pacifier for a baby is sometimes called a “paci,” “binkie,” “sookie,” or “mute button.” These examples illustrate that meanings are in people, not in words, and different people -- depending on their background -- may use different words to represent the same object.

Words and Meaning

Fortunately, rules exist that govern the use of words and language. These rules help us communicate clearly and understand the meaning. Three types of rules are particularly important: semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic.

Semantic Rules

Semantic rules are the dictionary meaning of the word. Although we have dictionary definitions to guide us, it is important to remember that many words in the English language have multiple definitions, and the meaning can change based on the context in which the word is used. For instance, the word **fly** by itself does not mean anything. It makes more sense if we put the word into a context by saying things like, “There is a fly on the wall;” “I will fly to Dallas tomorrow;” “That girl is so fly;” or “The fly on your pants is open!” We would not be able to communicate with others if we did not have semantic rules. Think of the word "pass." How many definitions can you think of for that one word?

Since many words have multiple meanings, a speaker should select words carefully and, if necessary, define words or use visual aids to clarify meaning. A careful listener will comprehend that many words have multiple meanings and will consider the context of the communication and ask questions for clarification if needed.

Syntactic Rules

Syntactic rules govern how we help guide the words we use. Syntactic rules can refer to the use of grammar, structure, and punctuation to help effectively convey our ideas. For instance, we can say “Where are you” as opposed to “where you are,” which can convey a different meaning and have different perceptions. The same thing can happen when you don’t place a comma in the right place. The comma can make a big difference in how people understand a message.

You may be familiar with the Star Wars character, Yoda, who often speaks with different rules. He has said, “Named must be your fear before banish it you can” and “Happens to every guy sometimes this does.” This example is a good reminder that syntactic rules can vary based on culture or background.

Another example is Figure **3.1.1**. In this case, we learn the importance that a comma can make in written language. In the first instance, “Let’s eat grandma!” is quite different than the second one, “Let’s eat, grandma!” The first implies cannibalism and the second is a family dinner. As the image says, punctuation saves lives.

It is important to understand and correctly apply rules governing punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar. Failure to follow syntactic rules interferes with your ability to communicate effectively and professionally.

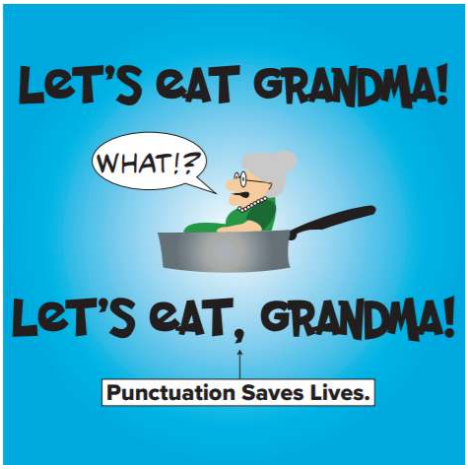


Figure **3.1.1**: Commas Matter

Pragmatic Rules

Pragmatic rules help us interpret messages by analyzing the context of the interaction. We need to consider the words used, how they are stated, our relationship with the speaker, and the objectives of our communication. For instance, the words “I want to see you now” would mean different things if the speaker was your boss versus your lover. One could be a positive connotation, and another might be a negative one. The same holds true for humor. If we know that the other person understands and appreciates sarcasm, we might be more likely to engage in that behavior and perceive it differently from someone who takes every word literally. If we aren’t sure the person we are communicating with would appreciate our sarcastic humor and might take our joking literally, it is best to avoid sarcasm.

Most pragmatic rules are based on culture and experience. An example would be “Want to have a drink?”, which usually implies an alcoholic beverage, whereas “Would you like something to drink?” does not imply that the drink has to contain alcohol.

It is common for people to text in capital letters when they are angry or excited. For instance, “I love you” might be perceived differently from “I LOVE YOU!!!” Thus, when communicating with others, you should also realize that pragmatic rules can impact the message.

It is important to analyze the context of the communication when you are attempting to understand the meaning of a message. It is also important to be sensitive to communicators from other cultures who may are not familiar with some of the pragmatic rules of the English language.

Level of Abstraction

Abstract words refer to intangible qualities, ideas, and concepts. These words indicate things we know only through our intellect, like "truth," "honor," "kindness," and "grace." **Concrete** words, on the other hand, are words that refer to tangible, qualities or characteristics, things we know through our senses. Words and phrases like "102 degrees," "obese Siamese cat," and "deep spruce green" are concrete and paint a clearer, more vivid picture for your receiver.

In 1941, linguist S.I. Hayakawa created what is called the **abstraction ladder** (Figure **3.1.2**). The abstraction ladder starts with the most abstract or general term at the top, with each rung on the ladder becoming more and more specific, down to the most specific term (interpersonal communication). You can see that as we move down the ladder, the topic becomes more fine-tuned and meaningful.

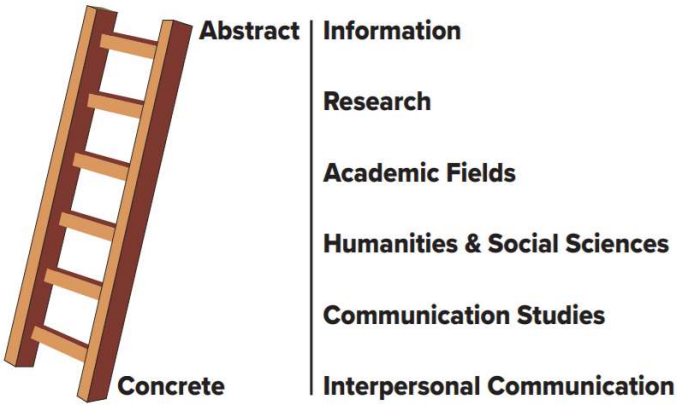


Figure **3.1.2**: Abstraction Ladder

In our daily lives, we tend to use high levels of abstraction all the time. It takes too long to say something, so people tend to be abstract. However, abstractions can create confusion. Strive to use concrete, specific language that is more likely to be understood than general, abstract terms.

Words and Meanings

Words can have denotative and connotative meanings. The **denotative** meaning is the dictionary definition of a word. Denotative words are precise and do not imply an emotional association. If you are new to the English language and asked an American acquaintance what a car or a phone is, you would likely be asking for the denotative meaning of those words. Words can have a **connotative** meaning, which is a subjective definition or an emotional association with the word. Beth Parent explains that connotative meaning goes beyond the dictionary definition of the word to what is suggested or implied. Depending on how a word has been used over time, or the context in which it is being used, the term may have a positive, negative, or neutral connotation.

Consider the words group, clique, club, and gang. All four have basically the same denotative meaning: a gathering of people. Each of these words has a different connotative meaning, however.

- **Group** has a neutral connotation. The word simply describes a cluster or gathering. It does not inspire either positive or negative feelings.
- **Clique** also means a group of people, but it carries a negative connotation. This is because "clique" is typically used in circumstances where the group is known for excluding others.
- **Gang** is defined as an organized group, but it has very negative connotations. The use of this term suggests criminal activity and/or violent behavior.
- **Club** also refers to a group of people, but this word has a more positive connotation because a club is a collection of people that voluntarily come together for a shared passion or purpose

When choosing words to use in writing or conversation, it's important to consider both types of meaning. At times, such as during a persuasive speech, connotative words can be very helpful. However, if you aren't fully aware of the connotation of a word you use in speaking or writing, you may choose a word that leads to confusion or even to your receiver taking offense.

Key Takeaways

- Rules that govern language are important because they help up understand others and help others understand us.
- Words have denotative and connotative meanings. Denotations are the dictionary definition, and connotations are what the words imply.
- Sometimes confusion occurs because people are too abstract in their language. To be clear and concise in language, you need to be descriptive and specific as possible.

Exercises

1. For each of the sentences below, determine if the bold word has a positive or negative connotation. (Adapted from Parent, Beth. *Yourdictionary.com*)
   - How long have you been dieting? Maybe too long. You look so **skinny**.
   - I can tell you put a lot of work into your paper. It is **extraordinary**.
   - I hope to look like my sister when I grow up. She is **gorgeous**.
   - I know that Eddie and I are the same age, but he is just so **juvenile**.
   - It's certainly **unusual** to use Comic Sans font on a resume.
2. First, work alone. For each word on the list write down the percentage of certainty from 0-100% you would feel if you were to use the word in a sentence. For example, if I were to use the word "Probably," I might mean there is a 90% chance that something will take place. What level of certainly does the word represent in your mind? After you have completed your list, compare your results with members of your class. What does this exercise teach you about words and their meanings? (Adapted from Hamilton, Cheryl with Cordell Parker. ***Communicating for Results: A Guide for Business and Professions,*** *4th* ed. Wadsworth, 1989.)

	Word	Percentage of Certainly
1.	Probably	_____
2.	Possibly	_____
3.	Maybe	_____
4.	Definitely	_____
5.	Certainly	_____
6.	Unlikely	_____

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3.2: Types of Language

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand how naming and identity can influence perceptions.
2. Comprehend how language can impact affiliation with others.
3. Identify the difference between sexist and racist language.

By now, you can know some of the rules that govern language and word choice. In this section, we will understand some of the ways that words can impact us or even reveal aspects of our personal identity. This section will look at names, how we use language to express affiliation, and ways in which the words we use can express bias. To be effective communicators, we need to realize the different ways that language can be significant and instrumental.

Names and Identity

New parents typically spend a great deal of time trying to pick just the right name for their newborn because they know that names can impact other people's perceptions. Our names impact how we feel and how we behave. Our names sometimes may even impact how we are treated and possibly even how we view ourselves. For instance, if you heard that someone was named Stacy, you might think that person was female, nice, and friendly, and you would be surprised if that person turned out to be male, mean, and aggressive.

People with unusual names tend to have more emotional distress than those with common names. Names impact our identity because others will typically have negative perceptions of unusual names or unique spellings of names. Names can change over time and can gain acceptance. For instance, the name Madison was not even considered a female first name until the movie *Splash* in the 1980s.

Some names are very distinctive, which also makes them memorable and recognizable. Think about musical artists or celebrities with unique names. It helps you remember them, and it helps you distinguish that person from others.

Some of the names encompass some cultural or ethnic identity. In the popular book, *Freakonomics*, the authors showed a relationship between names and socioeconomic status. They discover that a popular name usually starts with high socioeconomic families, and then it becomes popular with lower socioeconomic families. Hence, it is very conceivable to determine the socioeconomic status of people you associate with based on their birth date and name. Figure **3.2.1** shows some of the more popular baby names for girls and boys, along with names that are non-binary.



Figure **3.2.1**: Popular Baby Names

Affiliation

When we want others to associate with us or have an **affiliation** with us, we might change the way we speak and the words we use. All of those things can impact how other people relate to us. Researchers found that when potential romantic partners employed the same word choices regarding pronouns and prepositions, then interest also increased. At the same time, couples that used similar

word choices when texting each other significantly increased their relationship duration. This study implies that we often inadvertently mimic other people's use of language when we focus on what they say.

If you have been in a romantic relationship for a long period, you might create special expressions or jargon for the other person, and that specialized vocabulary can create greater closeness and understanding. The same line of thinking occurs for groups in a gang or persons in the military. If we adapt to the other person's communication style or **converge**, then we can also impact perceptions of affiliation. Research has shown that people who have similar speech also have more positive feelings for each other. However, speech can also work in the opposite direction when we **diverge**, or when we communicate in a very different fashion. For instance, a group from another culture might speak the same dialect, even though they can speak English, in order to create distance and privacy from others.

Language to Avoid

Most of the language we have discussed so far can be used as long as it suits the audience and communication context. However, biased language is always inappropriate. **Biased language** refers to words that are offensive because they demean others. This type of language usually expresses an unfair or stereotypical attitude toward a person's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability, or illness. Sometimes biased language goes beyond being demeaning or hurtful; it may even lead to violence.

Sexist language can be defined as "words, phrases, and expressions that unnecessarily differentiate between females and males or exclude, trivialize, or diminish either sex." Think about how language has changed over the years. We used to have occupations that were highly male-dominated, and the words we used to describe them indicated this. For instance, policemen, firemen, and chairmen are now police officers, firefighters, and chairpersons. The same can also be said for some formerly female-dominated occupations. For instance, stewardess, secretary, and waitress have been changed to flight attendant, office assistant, and server.

Racist language conveys a bias toward a racial group, often implying that one racial group is superior to another race.

In "Unbiased Language: Quick Guide to Bias-Free Writing," Michelle Meleen explains that "using unbiased language is challenging because it requires an understanding of what constitutes biased language in the first place." To remove biased language from your vocabulary, she advises the following steps:

- **know your own biases** - self-reflect to see what exclusive language is part of your everyday speech; understand what prejudices you might have against certain groups
- **focus on what's relevant** - in writing or speaking, only include information and details about things like race or age when necessary
- **recognize and acknowledge differences** - the purpose of bias-free language is not to imply differences don't exist, but to treat them professionally and respectfully
- **think small** - be as specific as possible rather than lumping people into broad categories
- **avoid labels** - some common labels are offensive while others are preferred by the individuals or group you're describing; be aware of modern terminology accepted by those individuals or that group
- **when in doubt, ask** - check organization websites or consult with a representative from the population you are describing; get a second opinion before publishing or turning in work that may read as biased

Communicators who use unbiased language speak or write in ways that are free from gender or group stereotypes. Meleen provides many examples of how you can change biased terminology into unbiased terminology at (https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/style-and-usage/unbiased-language.html).

You may remember when there was a debate in the United States about whether former President Trump's use of the phrase "Chinese Virus" when referring to the coronavirus was racially insensitive. The argument for its racial insensitivity was that the President used the term as an "other" technique to allow his followers to place blame on Chinese people for the coronavirus. Partly as a result of the use of the phrase "Chinese Virus," there were numerous violent attacks against individuals of Asian descent within the United States. The people that are generally inflamed by this type of rhetoric generally don't take the time to distinguish among people they label as "other." This is just one example of the power of language and the need to choose words carefully. For guidance on replacing sexist or biased language with inclusive terms, examine the table below.

Figure **3.2.2**: Replacing Sexist or Biased Language with Inclusive Terms

Sexist or Biased Language	Inclusive Term
Businessman	business owner, business executive, or business person
cancer victim; AIDS victim	cancer patient; a person living with AIDS
chairman	chairperson or chair
confined to a wheelchair	uses a wheelchair
congressman	congressperson
Eskimo	Inuit or Aleut
fireman	firefighters
freshman	first-year student
Indian (when referring to U.S. indigenous peoples)	Native American or specific tribe
policeman	police officer
man or mankind	people, humanity, or the human race
man-hours	working hours
man-made	manufactured, machine-made, or synthetic
manpower	personnel or workforce
illegal alien	immigrant
old people or elderly	older adults
Oriental	Asian, Asian American, or the specific country of origin
postman or mailman	postal worker or mail carrier
steward or stewardess	flight attendant
suffers from diabetes	has diabetes; a person living with diabetes

Key Takeaways

- Our name can affect how we feel about ourselves and even how we are treated.
- We can increase affiliation with others through converging our language to others. We can decrease affiliation with others through diverging our language with others.
- Sexism and racism can be displayed through our language choices. It is important to be aware of the words we use so that we do not come across as sexist or racist.

Learning Activities

- If you are not certain of the origin of your own name, research it. Why did your parents choose your given name? Do you like your name? Why or why not? What is the meaning or derivation of your surname? Does your surname come from your father, mother, or another relative? If you are from a country other than the United States, do your naming traditions vary from those in the United States? Explain. Would you pass any part of your name on to your child? Why or why not?

- Engage in a normal conversation with a friend or family member. Without having them know what you are doing, slowly and subtly converge your communication style to theirs. Record your observations. Then, with the same person, try to diverge your communication style. Re-record your observations. Ask if the person noticed any communication changes. How did it make them feel? How did you feel? Why?

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3.3: Formal and Informal Language

Learning Outcomes

1. Differentiate between informal and formal language.
2. Determine the different types of informal language.
3. Understand improper language and biased language.

Competent communicators adapt their words to their audience and the communication context. For example, in a text to your best friend, you are going to use more casual words and grammar than in a paper you turn in to your English professor. One of these contexts calls for formal language whereas informal language is fine for the other.

Formal vs. Informal Language

Formal language is official and academic language. You should use formal language in papers, written discussions, tests, research papers, resumes, and cover letters.

Figure **3.3.1**: Formal vs. Informal Language

Formal Language	Informal Language
Used in carefully edited communication.	Used in impromptu, conversational communication.
Used in academic or official content.	Used in everyday communication.
The sentence structure is longer and more complicated.	The sentence structure is short, choppy, and improvised.
The emphasis is on grammatical correctness.	The emphasis is on easily understood messages using everyday phrases.
Speakers/writers may avoid the use of contractions.	Speakers/writers actively include contractions.
Avoid the inclusion of emotionally laden ideas and words.	It allows for the inclusion of emotions and empathy.
Language should be objective.	Language can be subjective.
Language should avoid the use of colloquialisms.	It's perfectly appropriate to use colloquialisms.
Only use an acronym (CEO) after it has clearly been explained or spelled out once.	People use acronyms without always clearly spelling out what it means.
All sentences should be complete (clear subjects and verbs).	Sentences may be incomplete (lacking a clear subject and/or verb).
Arguments are supported by facts and documented research.	Arguments are supported by personal beliefs and opinions.
Language is gender-neutral.	Language includes gender references.

Informal Language

Informal language is a common, everyday language, which might include slang words. It is casual and continually changing. We use informal language when we talk to others, and when you look at your text messages, you will probably see several examples of informal language.

Jargon

Jargon is the specialized or technical language of a specific group or profession that may not be understood by outsiders. If you are really into cars or computers, you probably know a lot about the different parts and functions as well as terms or jargon that a general audience wouldn't understand. Jargon is usually appropriate when communicating with others in your profession or group but should be avoided unless you are certain the people you are speaking to are familiar with the terms. *Your Dictionary.com*

provides a list of commonly heard jargon phrases used in the business world. (https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-jargon-in-the-workplace.html).

- Blue-sky thinking - A creative idea that doesn't always have a practical application
- Think outside the box - Don't limit your thinking; use your creativity
- The helicopter view - An overview of a job or a project
- Drink our own champagne - A phrase meaning that a business will use the same product that they sell to their customers. The champagne is an indicator of a good product.
- Heavy lifting - The most difficult aspects of a project, as in, "Bill is doing all the heavy lifting for us!"
- Hammer it out - To type something up
- Win-win situation - A solution where all parties are satisfied with the results

Chances are you have heard a few of these jargon phrases, but others may be new to you. Take a minute and think through all of the jargon you hear on an average day.

Colloquialisms

What do you call a carbonated beverage? Is it a soda, soft drink, a Coke, or a pop? The colloquialism you use is most likely determined by where you grew up. **Colloquialisms** are informal words that vary from region to region. Examples might be “wanna” instead of “want to” or “gonna” instead of “going to.”

How many of these colloquialisms do you use?

- Ballpark - used to describe something that is close to accurate
- Bomb - to do terribly on a test
- Flake - a person who cancels plans regularly or the act of regularly canceling plans
- Raincheck - a promise to reschedule plans that had to be canceled
- Ride shotgun - to sit in the front passenger seat of a car
- Go bananas, or go nuts – go insane or be very angry
- Pop into my head – to have a new thought
- Wanna – want to
- Y’all – you all
- Yinz – you all

Slang

Slang refers to informal words that are used within certain groups, such as young adults and teens. You most certainly use different slang expressions than your parents or grandparents. Slang is often used in conversations with those who are similar and have experience with each other and should be avoided in academic and professional writing (including emails), speeches and presentations, and even in class and group discussions (unless you are absolutely certain everyone else uses the same slang as you). How many of these slang expressions do you use?

- Bye Felicia (saying goodbye to someone you don’t like)
- The Tea (gossip)
- Bro (typically a male friend)
- Cash (money)
- Cheesy (cheap or tacky)
- Ship (wanting people to be in a relationship, whether real or fictional)
- Frenemy (someone who is both a friend and an enemy)
- Thirsty (being overly eager or desperate)
- Throw Shade (to insult another person)
- YOLO (you only live once)
- Woke (being acutely aware of social injustice within society)

What is common slang today could be completely outdated tomorrow? Dominic-Madori Davis gives examples of slang expressions from Gen. Z (people born 1997 ---) along with their Baby Boomer (people born 1946 – 1964) equivalent.

Gen Z: That movie was **fire**; you have to check it out.

Baby Boomer: I liked that movie; it was **groovy**.

Gen Z: You really look **salty** right now. What happened?

Baby Boomer: You really look **hacked off**. What happened?

Gen Z: Their dress at prom was a **lewk.**

Baby Boomer: Yeah, they were all **decked out.**

Idioms

Idioms are expressions or figures of speech that are used in everyday speech that has been given meaning over time because of common usage. Idioms can be especially hard to grasp for new residents or citizens because the actual words in the idiom have very little relationship to the overall meaning of the phrase. Do you know the meaning of the following idioms?

- Stir up a hornet's nest
- Bite off more than you can chew
- Under the weather
- Sat on a fence
- The ball is in your court

Clichés

A **cliché** is a once-clever word or phrase that has lost its impact through overuse. If you spoke or wrote in clichés, how would others react? Let's try it. How do you react when you read this sentence: "A cliché is something to avoid like the plague, for it is nothing but a tired old warhorse, and if the shoe were on the other foot, you too would have an ax to grind"? As you can see, the problem with clichés is that they often sound silly or boring. Clichés are sometimes seen as a symptom of lazy communication—the person using the cliché hasn't bothered to search for original words to convey the intended meaning. As a result, they can be obstacles to successful communication. Avoid cliches in academic or professional writing and speeches.

Textspeak

Textspeak is the language and spelling that people use when they are writing text messages. Textspeak is fine in your personal life but is inappropriate for academic assessments and most communication in the workplace. Most students realize that textspeak is inappropriate in essays and research papers, but the words and grammar still show up where they shouldn't, such as emails between students and instructors, or on classroom discussion boards. Although emails and discussion boards are less formal than research papers, they still should be written with care and consideration for the reader. It is important to use capital letters when called for and to use punctuation appropriately, important details that are often omitted in textspeak.

Mindfulness Activity



For an entire day, take a minute to pause before you text or email someone. When we text or email someone, we typically just put our thoughts together in a quick fashion. Take a second to decide how you plan to use your words. Think about which words would be best to get our message across effectively. After you have typed your message, take another few minutes to reread the message. Be mindful of how others might interpret it. Would they understand what you intend to communicate, or is it possible they might misinterpret your message? What can you do to make certain your message is conveyed accurately?

Researchers have found that when college students can address their emotions and are mindful of their feelings, it can enhance written communication with others.[31] After doing this activity, try to be more mindful of the things that you send to other people.

Key Takeaways

- Formal language is more careful and more mannered than everyday speech, whereas informal language is appropriate in casual conversation.
- Informal language includes (1) Jargon, or technical language; (2) Colloquialism, or informal expressions; (3) Slang, or nonstandard language; (4) Idioms, or expressions or figures of speech; (5) clichés, or sayings that are overused and predictable.

Exercises

- Create a list of jargon or slang words that you use and what they mean. Ask your parents or grandparents to share some of the slang they grew up hearing. Compare your lists.
- Create a list of colloquialisms or idioms. Find an international student and see if these words make sense. What was confusing or unclear?
- Ask an international friend or classmate to share clichés that are used in his or her culture, or locate clichés through research. See if you can find an American equivalent of each cliché.

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3.4: Improving Verbal Communication

Learning Outcomes

1. Examine ways to improve your verbal communication
2. Realize the importance of checking for understanding.

In this chapter, you have learned about several aspects of verbal communication. To be a successful communicator, it is extremely important that you also know how to use words in the most effective way. In this segment, we will examine ways we can improve our verbal communication.

The words we use and the grammatical structure of how we use those words can impact our communication success in school, work, and our personal lives. Here are some tips to help you improve your verbal skills.

Choose Words Appropriate for Your Audience and the Communication Context

Your word choice should be determined by the audience you are communicating with and the communication context. Choose words that will have meaning to your listeners and that are appropriate for the situation. For example, using profanity in a classroom discussion might be understood by your listeners, but would be inappropriate for the setting. Using “textspeak” on a class discussion board or an email to your instructor would be inadvisable because textspeak is too informal. Be aware that many words may have both denotative and connotative meanings, and that you need to choose and use words consciously and strategically. Always avoid biased language, which is inappropriate for all contexts.

Define Unfamiliar Terms

Even when you are careful to craft your message clearly and concisely, some of your receivers may not understand every word you say or write. As a conscientious communicator, you know it is your responsibility to give listeners every advantage in understanding your meaning. Yet your presentation would fall flat if you tried to define each and every term—you would end up sounding like a dictionary! The solution is to be aware of any words you are using that may not be familiar to your receiver, and provide clues to meaning in the process of making and supporting your points. Give examples to illustrate each concept. Use parallels from everyday life. Rephrase unfamiliar terms in different words.

Choose Specific, Concrete Words

Think back to the ladder of abstraction discussed earlier in the chapter, and choose specific, concrete words that paint as vivid and accurate a mental picture as possible for your listeners. If you use language that is vague or abstract, your meaning may be lost or misinterpreted. Your paper or presentation will also be less dynamic and interesting than it could be.

- **Abstract:** Clumber spaniels are big dogs.
- **Concrete:** The Clumber Spaniel Club of America describes the breed as a “long, low, substantial dog,” standing 17 to 20 inches high and weighing 55 to 80 pounds.

- **Abstract:** It is important to each a healthy diet during pregnancy.
- **Concrete**: Eating a diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy products can improve your health during pregnancy and boost your chances of having a healthy baby.

Check for Understanding

Check to see that your message is understood. If you are giving a speech or are engaged in conversation, one way to do this is to stay alert to nonverbal feedback. If your listeners are frowning or otherwise indicating confusion, it is important to check for understanding. Even if listeners are smiling and nodding at you when you talk, this does not necessarily mean that they comprehend. Let's say you are training a new employee for an important job responsibility. Even though the employee might be nodding and smiling, it is still a good idea to ask questions to evaluate understanding. But instead of asking a question like "Did you understand everything?" it would be more beneficial to say, "Let's go back through this so I can make sure I explained this clearly. What did you understand me to say?"

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the definition of verbal communication and the various rules that govern language. To be an effective verbal communicator, it is important to understand that many words have both denotative and connotative meanings. Some words, such as slang, jargon, idioms, and colloquialisms, should be avoided in academic writing or speeches because they are too informal and are likely to be confusing to some audience members. However, no matter how carefully you choose your words, the meaning of words can vary from person to person. ("Meanings are in people, not words.")

The words you use can impact how others will see you and perhaps how they see one another. It is important to use language ethically. Always avoid biased wording that stereotypes and demeans others.

Finally, this chapter discusses ways of improving verbal communication to increase the likelihood that our messages will create the desired effect on our listener or reader.

Key Terms

- Abstract
- Abstraction Ladder
- Affiliation
- Biased Language
- Cliché
- Colloquialism
- Connotation
- Denotation
- Formal Language
- Idiom
- Informal Language
- Jargon
- Language
- Personal Function
- Racist Language
- Sexism
- Sexist Language
- Slang

Exercises

- Go through the various key terms within this chapter. Did you know all of the definitions before reading this chapter? Which terms did you find difficult to understand? Why?
- Read a speech from either Vital Speeches of the Day or American Rhetoric. After reading/watching a speech, find a video where the speaker was interviewed. Watch how the speaker sounds when both giving a speech and when answering questions. Analyze the speaker's use of both language awareness and adaptation.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Nonverbal Elements of Communication

You may have heard sayings such as "actions speak louder than words" or "what you see is what you get" or "it's not what he said, it's HOW he said it." All of these phrases remind us of the importance of nonverbal communication, the focus of this chapter.

4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition

4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

4.4: Functions of Nonverbal Communication

4.5: Interpreting Nonverbal Communication

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4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition

> *What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say. – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Learning Objectives

- Define nonverbal communication.
- Explain why humans continue to use nonverbal communication, even after they learn to speak.
- Understand different types of nonverbal communication.
- Understand that use of voice is also considered nonverbal communication.

Your brother comes home from school and walks through the door. Without saying a word, he walks to the refrigerator, gets a drink, and turns to head for the couch in the family room. Once there, he plops down, stares straight ahead, and sighs. You notice that he sits there in silence for the next few minutes. At this time, he never speaks a word. Is he communicating? If your answer is yes, how would you interpret his actions? How do you think he is feeling? What types of nonverbal communication was your brother using? Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication is essential in our everyday interactions. While nonverbal and verbal communications have many similar functions, nonverbal communication has its own set of functions for helping us communicate with each other. Before we get into the types and functions of nonverbal communication, let's examine what is meant by *nonverbal communication.*



Figure **4.1.1**: Image of two silhouettes. (CC BY-NC-ND; joel zobel via https://flic.kr/p/528J1n)

What is Nonverbal Communication?

Nonverbal communication can be defined as communication without words. It includes readily-observable behaviors such as facial expressions, eye contact, touching, and tone of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as dress, posture, and the spatial difference between two or more people. Everything communicates, including material objects physical space, and the way we use time. Although verbal communication can be turned off, nonverbal communication cannot. **Even silence speaks.**

Dr. Tricia Jones writes in "Nonverbal Communication for Educators" (*Creducation.org)* that nonverbal communication skills are developed at a very young age. "Young children know far more than they can verbalize and are generally more adept at reading nonverbal cues than adults are because of their limited verbal skills and their recent reliance on the nonverbal to communicate. As children develop verbal skills, nonverbal channels of communication do not cease to exist but rather they become entwined in the total communication process." Humans continue to use nonverbal communication for many reasons, as shown in the insert below.

Why Humans Continue to Use Nonverbal Communication

1. Words have limitations. There are numerous areas where nonverbal communication is more effective than verbal (describing the shape of something, or providing quick direction, for instance).
2. We can't control nonverbal behaviors as easily as spoken words. Since nonverbal communication may be unconscious, it tends to be more genuine than words.
3. Nonverbal signals can express feelings inappropriate to state: social etiquette limits what can be said, but nonverbal cues can communicate thoughts.

4. A separate communication channel is useful to help send complex messages: a speaker can add enormously to the complexity of the verbal message through simple nonverbal signals." (Jones)

Nonverbal Communication in Action

The following video is a compilation of three clips from the old television series, *The Lucy Show*. You can watch the first two clips without sound and guess what is happening. The third shows how nonverbal communication can be misinterpreted. Watching a person's face, shoulders, hands, and even listening to their tone is important to understanding nonverbal language.



Figure **4.1.1**: Contributed to YouTube by Mari Bryson. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh47wWr_Hbw

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4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

- List four important characteristics of nonverbal communication and explain each.

Nonverbal Communication Uses Multiple Channels

We use a **single channel** (words) when we communicate verbally versus **multiple channels** when we communicate nonverbally. Try this exercise. Say your first and last name at the same time. You quickly find that this is an impossible task. Now, pat the top of your head with your right hand, wave with your left hand, smile, shrug your shoulders, and chew gum at the same time. While goofy and awkward, our ability to do this demonstrates how we use multiple nonverbal channels simultaneously to communicate.

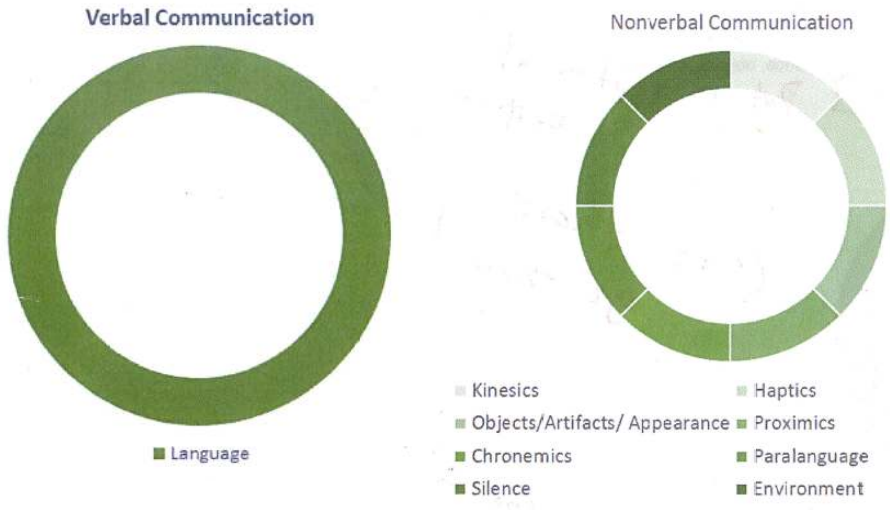


Figure **4.2.1*A***: Verbal Communication Uses a Single Channel. Figure **4.2.1*B***: Nonverbal Communication Uses Multiple Channels. (CC BY-SA; Spaynton via Wikipedia)

In the verbal communication chapter, we learned that meaning is in people, not in words. The same is true of nonverbal communication, but even more so. Attempting to accurately decode nonverbal signals such as eye contact, facial expressions, body movements, clothing, personal artifacts, and tone of voice when they all may be happening at the same time can be very difficult. Despite this difficulty, we learn to decode nonverbal communication as babies. How effectively we interpret these nonverbal signals may be influenced by our gender, with some research suggesting that women are much better than men at accurately interpreting the many nonverbal cues we send and receive (Gore).



Figure **4.2.2**: How do you interpret this student's nonverbal communication? (CC BY-SA; Spaynton via Wikipedia)

Nonverbal Communication is Continuous and Ongoing

Whereas verbal communication is **distinct**, nonverbal communication in face-to-face interactions is **continuous,** ongoing, and in constant motion. Words have a distinct beginning and end, and we can simply stop talking to end verbal communication. However,

we can't turn off nonverbal communication. Our posture, eye contact (or lack of eye contact), facial expressions, and physical appearance are *always* communicating something about us, whether intentional or unintentional.

Nonverbal Communication Can Be Conscious or Unconscious

Normally, humans use language or verbal communication **consciously** while we use nonverbal communication **unconsciously**. Conscious communication is communication we *think* about and choose deliberately. If you ever heard the statement as a child, "Think before you speak" you were being told a fundamental principle of verbal communication. Realistically, it's nearly impossible not to think before we speak. When we speak, we do so consciously and intentionally.

When we engage in unconscious communication, we do not think about or plan the message we communicate. Much of our nonverbal communication is unconscious. For example, when something funny happens, you probably do not think, "Okay, I'm going to smile and laugh right now." Instead, you react unconsciously, displaying your emotions through these nonverbal reactions.

Of course, not all nonverbal communication is unconscious. At times we certainly make conscious choices to use or withhold nonverbal communication. For example, before and during a job interview, the interviewee makes conscious decisions about wardrobe, posture, and eye contact. Because much nonverbal communication is unconscious, many of us tend to believe what we see over what we hear.

Can We "Read" Nonverbal Communication?

Can we really accurately interpret the nonverbal communication used by others? Some seem to think so. Counselor Michele Meleen lists the following positive nonverbal behaviors:

- learning in
- direct eye contact
- head nodding
- firm handshake

In contrast, here are some negative nonverbal behaviors:

- arms crossed over the chest
- nail biting
- hand placed on the cheek
- tapping or drumming fingers
- head in hands
- locked ankles
- fig-leaf pose
- using a mobile device when someone else is speaking

For a fun take on "reading nonverbal communication, watch these "reads: from the television show, Seinfeld: https://youtu.be/L8VOuGQD60U

Nonverbal Communication is Culture-Bound

Researchers such as Psychologist Paul Ekman have come to believe there are certain core emotional expressions conveyed by the face that are **interpreted the same way across cultures**. SADF(I)SH is a mnemonic device to remember the emotions that are recognized (somewhat) across the world:

Sadness
Anger
Disgust
Fear
Interest--there is some support for this one, but not as clear as the other ones.

Surprise
Happiness



Figure **4.2.4**: Six Emotions Recognized Universally (Wikimedia)

Although some facial expressions may be recognized all over the world, as you learned in the chapter on Culture and Communication, most nonverbal communication varies greatly from one culture to the next. This is what we mean by nonverbal communication as "culture-bound." For this reason, if you travel to different regions of the world, it is very important to research and find out what is appropriate before you visit.

Key Takeaways

Let us sum up the ways in which nonverbal communication is unique:

- Nonverbal communication uses multiple channels simultaneously as opposed to verbal communication, which uses one.
- Nonverbal communication is continuous, whereas verbal communication is distinct.
- Nonverbal communication can be both conscious and unconscious; verbal communication is conscious.
- Certain nonverbal communication is universally understood, although nonverbal communication for the most part is culture-bound.

Now that you have a definition of nonverbal communication, and can identify characteristics of nonverbal communication, let's examine what counts as nonverbal communication.

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4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Understand and explain six primary types of nonverbal communication.
- Learn how to record a speech or deliver an effective virtual presentation.

As we discussed previously, when it comes to nonverbal messages, there are often multiple things going on at once. Let's gain a better understanding by looking at the types of nonverbal communication.

Kinesics

Kinesics is *the study of how we use body movement and facial expressions*. We interpret a great deal of meaning through body movement, facial expressions, hand gestures, and eye contact. In the United States, engaging in consistent **eye contact** makes you appear confident, at ease, and interested. Use a relaxed, steady gaze and be careful not to stare at the other person. Looking directly at someone with sincerity reveals that you are open and engaging in your communication style. **Facial expressions** are a primary method of sharing emotions and feelings (Ekman & Friesen; Scherer, Klaus, & Scherer). For example, imagine yourself at a party and you see someone across the room you are attracted to. What sort of nonverbal behaviors do you engage in to let that person know? Likewise, what nonverbal behaviors are you looking for from him or her to indicate that it's safe to come over and introduce yourself? Many people believe they can easily interpret the meanings of body movements and facial expressions in others. The reality is, it is almost impossible to determine an exact meaning. Even so, we know that kinesics can communicate liking, social status, and even relationship responsiveness (Mehrabian).

Haptics

Haptics is *the study of touch*. Touch is the first type of nonverbal communication we experience as humans and is vital to our development and health (Dolin & Booth-Butterfield; Wilson, et al.). Those who don't have positive touch in their lives are less healthy both mentally and physically than those who experience positive touch. We use touch to share feelings and relational meanings. Hugs, kisses, handshakes, or even playful roughhousing demonstrate relational meanings and indicate relational closeness. In Western society, touch is largely reserved for family and romantic relationships. In contrast, an exchange student from Brazil recognized the differences in touch between cultures when arriving in the United States. She was surprised when someone hesitated to remove an eyelash from her face and apologized for touching her. In her country, no one would hesitate to do this act. She realized how much more physical touch is accepted and even expected in her culture. On the negative side, touch can also be used to intimidate others. If in doubt about the appropriateness of touch in a specific situation, it is best to avoid it.

Personal Appearance

Personal Appearance is another type of nonverbal communication. This category includes hairstyle and clothing, as well as **objects** you carry with you (mobile phone, purse, etc.) and **artifacts** you use to adorn the body, such as jewelry, piercings, and necklaces, Even the automobile you drive is a form of nonverbal communication. Your choices express meanings about what you value and the image you wish to put forth. As with most communication, our choices for personal appearance, objects, and artifacts occur within cultural contexts. Consider the recent trendiness and popularity of tattoos. While once associated primarily with prison and armed services, tattoos have become mainstream and are used to articulate a variety of personal, political, and cultural messages.

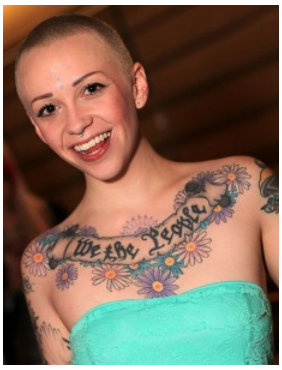


Figure 4.3.1: Tattoos, hair style, dress, and makeup are all part of personal appearance. Image of woman with tattoos. (CC BY-SA; Michael Dorausch via Wikipedia)

Proxemics

Proxemics is the *study of our use of space*. One aspect of proxemics has to do with how closely we stand to others. The distance may vary based on cultural norms and the type of relationship existing between the parties. Edward T Hall (1966) identified four distance zones that are commonly observed by North Americans.

- **Intimate distance** - (0" to 18") This zone extends from actual touching to eighteen inches. It is normally reserved for those with whom one is intimate. At this distance the physical presence of another is overwhelming. Those who violate the intimate space of others are likely to be perceived as intruders.
- **Personal distance** (18" to 4') This zone extends from eighteen inches to four feet. This is the distance of interaction of good friends or other close acquaintances.
- **Social distance** (4' to 12') This zone exists from four to twelve feet. It seems to be an appropriate distance for casual friends and acquaintances to interact.
- **Public distance** (12' to 25') This zone extends from twelve up to twenty-five or more feet. This is the distance for most public speeches. At this distance, a speaker becomes formal.

Hall's system provides useful insight into the constructive use of space for various interactions. It should be noted, however, that appropriate distance is determined by many variables, including the situation, the nature of the relationship, the topic of conversation, and the physical constraints which are present. Dr. Tricia Jones points out that **vertical distance** is also included in proxemics. Just as the horizontal distance between people communicates something, so does the vertical distance. In this case, however, vertical distance is often understood to convey the degree of dominance or sub-ordinance in a relationship. Looking up at or down on another person can be taken literally in many cases, with the higher person asserting greater status. People who work with small children should realize that children will interact more comfortably with a communicator when they are in the same vertical plane. On the other hand, in a situation of conflict, a person might stand to use vertical distance to their advantage. (*Creducation.com*)

Our **environment** includes *the way we use spaces we occupy*, such as our homes, rooms, cars, or offices. Think of your home, room, automobile, or office space. What meanings can others perceive about you from these spaces? What meanings are you trying to send by how you keep them? Think about spaces you use frequently and the nonverbal meanings they have for you. Most educational institutions intentionally paint classrooms in dull colors. Why? Dull colors on walls have a calming effect, theoretically keeping students from being distracted by bright colors and excessive stimuli. Contrast the environment of a classroom to that of a fast-food restaurant. These establishments have bright colors and hard plastic seats and tables. The bright colors generate an upbeat environment, while the hard plastic seats are just uncomfortable enough to keep patrons from staying too long–remember, it's FAST food (Restaurants See Color As Key Ingredient). People and cultures place different emphasis on the use of space as a way to communicate nonverbally.

Case In Point: Feng Shui

Feng Shui, which means wind and water, is the ancient Chinese art of living in harmony with our environment. Feng Shui can be traced as far back as the Banpo dwellings in 4000 BCE. Behind Feng Shui is the belief that the way we use our environment and organize our belongings affects the energy flow (chi) of people in that space and the person or people who created the

environment. The inclusion or exclusion and placement of various objects in our environments can be used to create a positive impact on others. The theory is to use the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth to design a space. Feng Shui is applicable to cities, villages, homes, and public spaces. The Temple of Heaven in Bejing, China, is an example of Feng Shui architecture. To keep harmony with the natural world, the Temple houses the Hall of Annual Prayer which is comprised of four inner, 12 middle, and 12 outer pillars representing the four seasons, 12 months, and 12 traditional Chinese hours.



Figure 4.3.2: Example of Feng Shui via a chair/vase combination. (CC BY-NC-ND; ash.wu via https://flic.kr/p/isyU5D)

Chronemics

Chronemics is *the study of how people use time*. Are you someone who is always early or on time? Or, are you someone who arrives late to most events? Our use of time communicates a variety of meanings to those around us. Think about the person you know who is most frequently late. How do you describe that person based on their use of time? Now, think about someone else who is always on time. How do you describe that person? Is there a difference? If so, these differences are probably based on their use of time. In the U.S., we place a high value on being on time and respond more positively to people who are punctual. However, in many Arab and Latin American countries, time is used more loosely, and punctuality is not necessarily a goal to achieve. You may have heard the expression, "Indian time" to refer to "the perception of time [that] is circular and flexible" (Harris, Shutiva). This is the belief that activities will commence when everyone is present and ready; not according to an arbitrary schedule based on a clock or calendar. Neither approach is better than the other, but the dissimilar uses of time can create misunderstandings among those from different cultural groups.

Paralanguage

While the types of nonverbal communication we've discussed so far are non-vocal, this form of nonverbal communication is actually vocal (noise is produced). **Paralanguage** is the term we use to describe *vocal qualities or vocalizations.* Our vocal qualities or the manner in which we say words often expresses greater meaning than the actual words themselves.

Paralanguage includes

- **Volume**: the softness or loudness of a voice
- **Rate**: how quickly or slowly we speak
- **Pitch**: highness or lowness of a voice
- **Inflection**: variations in pitch that add meaning to our sentences. An upward inflection is when there is a change in pitch going from a lower to a higher note. In most cases, an upward inflection is used for a question or to indicate insincerity or surprise. A downward inflection is a change in pitch from a higher to a lower note. A downward inflection is used when making a statement.
- **Vocalizations**: sounds that have meaning, such as "uh-huh," "shhh," and "mmm."
- **Silence/pause:** a break where there is no sound. Sometimes silence is unintentional and other times intentional. A well-placed pause or use of silence is an art that can add impact and emphasis to a message.
- **Nonfluencies:** words or sounds that interrupt the flow of your sentences. Examples of common nonfluencies are *uh*, *uhm*, *like*, and *you know.*

Paralanguage adds important information to our message. Paralanguage can show our excitement and enthusiasm or can indicate our unease about what we are saying. It can keep our listeners alert or put them to sleep. The *best* paralanguage complements our words and makes our voice pleasing and interesting to our listeners. Through effective paralanguage, we can emphasize important words in our sentences and can clue our listeners into whether we are asking a question or making a statement. There are also times when we can intentionally use paralanguage to contradict our words. Sarcasm and incongruence are two examples of this.

When you use sarcasm, your paralanguage is intended to contradict the verbal message. However, sometimes using sarcasm can backfire when listeners do not pick up our paralinguistic cues and focus primarily on the verbal message.

Silence also serves as a type of paralanguage. Have you ever experienced the “silent treatment” from someone? What meanings did you take from that person’s silence? Silence is powerful because the person using silence may be refusing to engage in communication with you. Likewise, we can use silence to regulate the flow of our conversations. Silence has a variety of meanings and, as with other types of nonverbal communication; context plays an important role in interpreting the meaning of silence.

Finally, we come to nonfluencies. ***Nonfluencies*** are words or sounds that interrupt the flow of your sentences. Most of us naturally use nonfluencies in conversation, with *uh*, *uhm*, *like*, and *you know* among the most common. Nonfluencies are often a way of buying time while we think of our next words. Although common, they can become a distraction or even an annoyance to our listeners. Overuse of nonfluencies, particularly in professional communication such as a job interview or during a speech, can diminish a speaker's credibility. One of the best ways to limit nonfluencies is to simply practice pausing silently instead of filling each silence with a sound.

Nonverbal Communication Now: Boosting Power Through Your Nonverbal Communication

Body language affects how others see us, but it may also change how we see ourselves. Social psychologist Amy Cuddy argues that "power posing" -- standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don't feel confident -- can boost feelings of confidence, and might have an impact on our chances for success. Cuddy's talk was presented at an official TED conference, and was featured by TED editors on the home page.

What is your opinion of Cuddy's views? Try "power posing" a few times and see what you think.

Click here: https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_...re?language=en

With an understanding of the definition of nonverbal communication and the types of nonverbal communication, let’s consider the various functions nonverbal communication serves in helping us communicate. (Ekman; Knapp; Malandro & Barker).

Recording Effective Smartphone Videos

When it comes to recording or giving virtual presentations, "It's not just what you say, it's how you say it." Here are some suggestions for recording effective videos or giving effective virtual presentations using your smartphone or other recording technology.

1. Record with your camera placed horizontally, not vertically.



2. Raise the camera so it is at or close to eye level. Use a stack of books to add some height, if necessary. If you don't have a tri-pod, check out these instructions for making your own. https://fixthephoto.com/diy-iphone-tripod.html

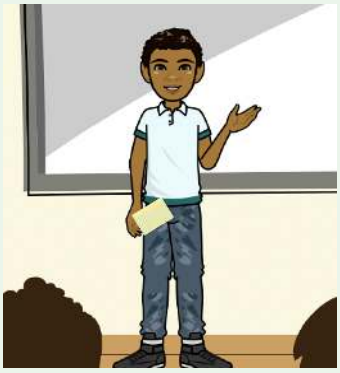


3. Make sure your face is well lit. The light source should be in front of you, behind the camera, or above your head, not behind it.

4. Chose a quiet, distraction-free environment. The background should be neat and tidy. Turn the television off. Close the door to bar barking dogs, inquisitive cats, or crying children.

5. Look directly into the camera. This gives the appearance of eye contact. Do not look at the keyboard, the ceiling, or the screen. DO NOT READ to the audience.

6. If you are recording a speech or formal presentation, you will be expected to stand up and place the camera far enough away from you so that your body language will be visible to the instructor.



7. Make certain your microphone works well.

8. Use effective paralanguage to capture your audience's interest and convey enthusiasm. Pronounce words correctly and say them distinctly. Use vocal variety, modifying your rate, inflections, and volume to keep the attention of the audience. Avoid speaking in a monotone.

9. Keep both feet planted firmly on the floor with your weight distributed equally between both feet.

10. Use occasional natural hand gestures. Hand gestures make you appear more conversational and animated. Smile. Dress professionally. Do not wear a hat or head covering unless it is required by your religion.

11. Record your rehearsal and watch the recording. This is one of the best ways to see areas for improvement.

Images 1 and 2 are provided by the Office of Communications, Amherst College.

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4.4: Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Explain and demonstrate 8 functions of nonverbal communication.
- Explain what happens when a mixed message is received.
- Understand the importance of the Mehrabian Equation.

You learned that there are many categories of nonverbal communication. But what functions do they serve?

We use nonverbal communication to repeat verbal communication.

For example, we may point in a specific direction while explaining directions, or we may nod or give a shake of our head to duplicate the verbal messages of “yes” or “no.”

We use nonverbal communication to replace verbal communication.

If someone asks you a question, instead of a verbal reply “yes," you may choose to simply nod your head without the accompanying verbal message. When we replace verbal communication with nonverbal communication, we use nonverbal cues that are easily recognized by others such as a wave, head-nod, or head-shake. Shaking the head side-to-side to indicate "no," or to show disbelief or disapproval is used by infants to refuse food or drink; even children born deaf and blind shake their heads to refuse objects or to show others they do not wish to be touched. (Givens).

We use nonverbal cues to complement or contradict verbal communication.

If a friend tells you that she recently received a promotion and a pay raise, you can show your enthusiasm in a number of verbal and nonverbal ways. If you exclaim, “Wow, that’s great! I’m so happy for you,” while at the same time smiling and hugging your friend, you are using nonverbal communication to complement what you are saying. Unlike duplicating or replacing, nonverbal communication that complements cannot be used alone without the verbal message. If you simply smiled and hugged your friend without saying anything, the interpretation of that nonverbal communication would be more ambiguous than using it to complement your verbal message. Sometimes nonverbal messages can be used to contradict the verbal message. For example, a "wink" may contradict a stated message.

We use nonverbal communication to accent the verbal message.

For instance, you may be upset with a family member and state, “I’m very angry with you.” To accent or accentuate your feelings, you might use paralanguage to vocally emphasize the word “very.” ("I'm VERY angry with you"). Parents might tell their children to “come here.” If they point to the spot in front of them dramatically, they are accenting the “here” part of the verbal message.

We use nonverbal communication to regulate communication.

Rarely, if ever, would we approach someone and say, “I’m going to start a conversation with you now. Okay, let’s begin.” Instead, we might smile, make eye contact, move closer, or face the person directly — all nonverbal behaviors that indicate our desire to interact. Likewise, we do not generally end conversations by stating, “I’m done talking to you now” unless there is a breakdown in the communication process. Instead, we may look at our phone, look in the direction we wish to go, or stay silent to indicate an impending end in the conversation. If our listener doesn't respond to our nonverbal cues, we may say something to the effect, “I really need to get going now.”

We use nonverbal communication to indicate relationships

Take a few moments today to observe the nonverbal communication of people you see in public areas. What can you determine about their relational standing from their nonverbal communication? For example, romantic partners tend to stand close to one another and touch frequently. On the other hand, acquaintances generally maintain greater distances and touch less than romantic partners. Those who hold higher social status often use more space when they interact with others. In the United States, it is

generally acceptable for women in platonic relationships to embrace and be physically close while males are often discouraged from doing so. Contrast this to many other nations where it is custom for males to greet each other with a kiss or a hug and hold hands as a symbol of friendship. We make many inferences about relational standing based on the nonverbal communication of those with whom we interact and observe. Imagine seeing a couple talking to each other across a small table. They both have faces that looked upset, red eyes from crying, closed body positions, are leaning into each other, and are whispering emphatically. Upon seeing this, would you think they were having a "breakup conversation"?

We use nonverbal communication to express emotions

While we can certainly tell people how we feel, we more frequently use nonverbal communication to express our emotions. Conversely, we tend to interpret emotions by examining nonverbal communication. For example, a friend may be feeling sad one day and it is probably easy to tell this by her nonverbal communication. Not only may she be less talkative but her shoulders may be slumped and she may not smile. One study suggests that it is important to use and interpret nonverbal communication for emotional expression, and ultimately relational attachment and satisfaction (Schachner, Shaver, & Mikulincer). Research also underscores the fact that people in close relationships have an easier time reading the nonverbal communication of emotion of their relational partners than those who aren't close. Likewise, those in close relationships can more often detect concealed emotions (Sternglanz & DePaulo).

We use nonverbal communication to demonstrate and maintain cultural norms

We've already shown that some nonverbal communication is universal, but the majority of nonverbal communication is culturally specific. For example, in the United States, people value their personal space; thus, they maintain greater distance from others than is common in many other cultures. If you visit New York City, you might observe that any time someone accidentally touches you on the subway he or she might apologize profusely for the violation of personal space. Cultural norms of anxiety and fear surrounding issues of crime, terrorism, and a global pandemic appear to cause people to be more sensitive to others in public spaces, highlighting the importance of culture and context.

Westerners who are visiting China might be shocked that shoppers there do not observe the personal distance that is common in the United States. In China, shoppers may ram their shopping carts into others' carts when they want to move around them. This is not an indication of rudeness, but a cultural difference in the negotiation of space.

Similarly, in many Asian cultures, frequent touch in crowded public spaces goes unnoticed because space is not used in the same way as in the United States. For example, watch this short video below which shows subway pushers in Japan whose job it is to pack the train.



Figure **4.4.1**: Japanese Subway Pushers Pack the Morning Train. (Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9Xg7ui5mLA)

Mixed Messages

A mixed message is when your nonverbal communication and verbal communication send two different messages. Imagine that you visit your boss's office and she asks you how you're enjoying a new work assignment. You may feel obligated to respond positively because it is your boss asking the question, even though you may not truly feel this way. However, your nonverbal communication--such as a hesitation in answering or a frown-- may contradict your verbal message, sending a **mixed message** to your boss.

Social psychology professor Albert Mehrabian explored the relative impact of various channels of communication in terms of the power they have to convey our feelings and attitudes to others. Specifically, he studied the relative effectiveness of words alone compared to the nonverbal channels of voice (paralanguage), facial expressions, and body language. His study gave rise to the Mehrabian Equation. According to the Mehrabian Equation, when a message is broken down into three components--words, speaker's voice, and body language

• **7%** of the impact of a message is communicated with **words (verbal communication).**

• **38%** of the message is **paralinguistic (speaker's voice and vocalizations)**.

• **55%** of the message is in **facial expressions and other forms of body language**.

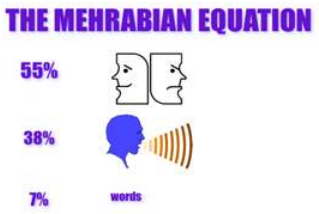


Figure **4.4.2**: The Mehrabian Equation: Comparing words, paralanguage, and body language. (Wikimedia)

It is important to note that Mehrabian's research found that **93%** of communication is nonverbal. Clearly, paying attention to our nonverbal communication and attempting to keep it consistent with our verbal message is vital for delivering messages that communicate what we intend them to.

Key Takeaway

We use nonverbal communication in many ways, including to show emotions, demonstrate cultural norms, regulate communication, and complement/contradict, accent, emphasize, or replace verbal communication. In the case of a mixed message, Mehrabian's studies showed that nonverbal communication was most important to meaning (55%), followed by paralanguage (38%) and verbal (7%).

Nonverbal Communication and Service Industries: When Nonverbal Communication Goes Wrong

Analyze the nonverbal communication used by the employee in this video clip. Using terms you learned in this and the previous segment (Types of Nonverbal Communication), point out specific problems. If you were this employee's supervisor, what advice would you give him?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7lGqmZprx0

Nonverbal Communication and You: Nonverbal Communication and Getting a Job

You may be thinking that getting the right degree at the right college is the way to get a job. Think again! It may be a good way to get an interview, but once at the interview, what matters? *College Journal* reports that "Body language comprises 55% of the force of any response, whereas the verbal content only provides 7%, and paralanguage, or the intonation — pauses, and sighs given when answering — represents 38% of the emphasis." If you show up to an interview smelling of cigarette smoke, chewing gum, dressed inappropriately, and listening to music on your phone, you're probably in trouble.

About.Com states that these are some effective nonverbal practices during interviews:

- Make eye contact with the interviewer for a few seconds at a time.
- Smile and nod at appropriate times when the interviewer is talking, but don't overdo it. Don't laugh unless the interviewer does first.
- Be polite and keep an even volume. Don't be too loud or too quiet.
- Maintain good posture. Don't slouch.
- Do not sit down until the interviewer invites you to take a seat.
- Relax and lean forward a little towards the interviewer so you appear interested and engaged.
- Don't lean back. You will look too casual and relaxed.
- Keep your feet on the floor and your back against the lower portion of the chair.
- Pay attention.
- Listen.
- Don't interrupt.
- Stay calm. Even if you had a bad experience at a previous position or were fired, keep your emotions to yourself and do not show anger or frown.
- Not sure what to do with your hands? Hold a pen and your notepad or rest an arm on the chair or on your lap, so you look comfortable. Don't let your arms fly around the room when you're making a point. Gesture naturally.
- See more guidelines in Chapter 7, Career Communication.

Eat Like a Lady

In Japan, it is considered improper for women to be shown with their mouths open in public. Not surprisingly, this makes it difficult to eat particular foods, such as hamburgers. So, in 2013, the Japanese burger chain, Freshness Burger, developed a solution: the liberation wrapper. The wrapper, or mask, hides women's mouths as they eat thus allowing them to maintain the expected gendered nonverbal behavior for the culture. To read and see more about this, **click here**.

Reference

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4.5: Interpreting Nonverbal Communication

Lesson Objectives

- To explain why it is important to exercise caution when interpreting the nonverbal communication of others.
- To explain nonverbal learning disabilities and how they may impact nonverbal communication.

As you have learned, we communicate and interpret the communication of others through our own cultural lens or worldview. It is important to keep this in mind and exercise caution about making assumptions or judgments about others based solely on their nonverbal communication; otherwise your conclusions may be inaccurate and unkind. Nonverbal communication is influenced by many different factors, including culture and co-culture, gender, and age. Nonverbal communication disabilities or social skills disorders may also affect another's nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal Communication Disabilities

Some children and adults may have a nonverbal learning disability. These individuals have a difficult time interacting with others, communicating in a group, or beginning a conversation. They may also have difficulty conforming to group norms required in the classroom. In addition, they may have a hard time showing empathy for others, or resolving conflicts. Some school children may show varying levels of disregard for acceptable behavior, for example, active listening, and paying attention to or following directions.

It is important that we are aware of the kinds of disabilities related to nonverbal communication. If you are a family member or teacher of an individual with this type of disability, you can help by modeling the specific social skills and nonverbal communication skills. Teachers sometimes use modeling in the classroom during a class meeting or open focus groups specifically dedicated to problem-solving. Modeling can be done with the use of role playing, simulations, and games.

Nonverbal social skills disorders or inability to read emotions is also associated with Asperger's syndrome, a mild form of Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD). You can learn more information about various types of Nonverbal Learning Disabilities from the articles, books, and websites provided below. (Jones)

Resources for Nonverbal Learning Disabilities

Promoting Social Skills Among Students With Nonverbal Learning Disabilities from Teaching Exceptional Children, JAN/FEB 2002 Author: Stephanie Morris
Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 66-70. Copyright 2002 CEC. Link to Article: http://www.dldcec.org/pdf/Article9.pdf

There is an informative article describing Asperger's Syndrome on Wikipedia at the link below:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asperger_syndrome

Please check out the article on ADHD (ADD) respectively at the link below:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adhd

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you have learned that we define nonverbal communication as communication without words. It includes facial expressions, eye contact, touching, personal appearance, and use of personal space. One difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that verbal communication uses one channel while nonverbal communication occurs through multiple channels simultaneously. As a result, verbal communication is distinct while nonverbal communication is continuous. For the most part, nonverbal communication is enacted at an unconscious level while we are almost always conscious of our verbal communication. As a result, if we receive a mixed message, we tend to believe the nonverbal over the verbal message. Finally, even though some facial expressions are recognizable by people all over the world, nonverbal communication is heavily influenced by culture.

There are many types of nonverbal communication including kinesics, haptics, personal appearance, objects, artifacts, proxemics, chronemics, and paralanguage. These types of nonverbal communication help us share meanings in our interactions.

Since most nonverbal communication is strongly influenced by culture, it is extremely important to exercise caution when interpreting another's nonverbal behavior. We learned that some individuals have nonverbal communication disabilities or other conditions that affect their nonverbal behavior.

Chapter Terms

- artifacts
- chronemics
- continuous
- conscious
- distinct
- environment
- Feng Shui
- haptics
- inflections
- intimate distance
- kinesics
- mixed messages
- nonverbal communication
- nonfluencies
- paralanguage
- personal appearance
- personal distance
- pitch
- proxemics
- public distance
- rate
- silent treatment
- social distance
- vertical distance
- volume
- continuous
- distinct
- silence
- unconscious

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. List four reasons humans use nonverbal communication even after developing the ability to use language.

2. In this chapter you learned that verbal communication uses one channel. However, when we communicate nonverbally, we can use multiple channels at the same time. Pretend your best friend or significant other has forgotten to meet you for an important engagement. Explain how you might use multiple channels to communicate your disappointment.

3. While verbal communication is distinct, nonverbal communication is continuous and ongoing. Explain your understanding of the continuous and ongoing nature of nonverbal of communication

4. Agree or disagree: In face-to-face interactions, we are *always* communicating nonverbally.

5. Discuss a time when it would be advisable to be conscious of and perhaps even practice your nonverbal communication.

6. What sorts of nonverbal signals might imply that a friend or acquaintance partner is nervous or distressed.

7. Are any facial expressions interpreted in the same way across many different cultures? Explain.

8. Why is nonverbal communication referred to as “culture bound” communication? Give examples.

9. Think of an environment where you spend a lot of time –such as your home, room automobile, or office space. What impressions might others form about you based on this environment?

10. What are some personal artifacts or objects that you often have with you? Explain.

11. In the United States, we have a very strict view of time and value punctuality. Discuss a culture where time is viewed differently.

12. What nonfluencies do you commonly or occasionally use? What is the danger of overusing nonfluencies? What can you do to limit your use of nonfluencies?

13. In "Recording Effective Smartphone Videos," you were given many tips for recording a speech or presenting virtually. In your opinion, what are the five most important guidelines? Are any guidelines missing that need to be added?

14. Explain how nonverbal communication can be used to regulate the flow of conversation or communication.

15. According to studies done by Albert Mehrabian, if a listener is in doubt about a speaker's meaning, what channel or channels will have the greatest impact on his or her interpretation?

16. Have you communicated with someone you knew or suspected had a nonverbal communication disability? Why did you suspect this? How did it affect his or her treatment by others?

17. Have you ever had your nonverbal cues misinterpreted? For example, someone thought you liked him or her because your proxemics suggested a desire for an intimate relationship or perhaps someone thought you were unfriendly when that wasn't your intention. How did you correct the misinterpretation?

18. What kind of nonverbal communication do you use every day? What does it accomplish for you?

19. Now that you have learned about paralanguage and its importance in communication, formulate a list of guidelines or suggestions for using the voice professionally in the workplace and in public speeches.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Listening

Listening is a primary means through which we learn new information, which can help us meet instrumental needs as we learn things that help us complete certain tasks at work or school and get things done in general. The act of listening to our relational partners provides support, which is an important part of relational maintenance and helps us meet our relational needs. Listening to what others say about us helps us develop an accurate self-concept, which can help us more strategically communicate.

5.1: Listening vs. Hearing

5.2: Five Stages of Listening

5.3: Listening Styles and Types

5.4: Poor Listening Habits

5.5: Improving Listening Competence

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5.1: Listening vs. Hearing

Learning Objectives

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



Figure **5.1.1**: "Angry Man With Megaphone" by cosimoilvecchio is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

"Are you listening to me?" You may have been asked this question because the speaker thinks you are nodding off or daydreaming. Many of us mistakenly think of listening as a "passive" activity. We think we just need to sit there and let words wash over us. Yet the reality is different. Effective listening demands active participation.

In our sender-oriented society, listening is often overlooked as an important part of the communication process. Yet research shows that adults spend about 45 percent of their time listening, which is more than any other communicative activity. In some contexts, we spend even more time listening than that. On average, workers spend 55 percent of their workday listening, and managers spend about 63 percent of their day listening. (Hargie)

O, the Oprah Magazine featured a cover article with the title, "How to Talk So People *Really* Listen: Four Ways to Make Yourself Heard." This title leads us to expect a list of ways to leave the listening to others and insist that they do so, but the article contains a surprise ending. The final piece of advice is this: "You can't go wrong by showing interest in what other people say and making them feel important. In other words, the better *you* listen, the more you'll be listened to" (Jarvis, 2009).



Figure **5.1.2**: Zach Graves – The Importance of Listening – licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

The adage, "We have two ears but only one mouth" serves as an important reminder that listening is often even more important than talking. Yet many of us think that listening is the same thing as hearing and therefore put very little effort into the process. The

reality is quite different.

Listening vs. Hearing

Hearing is an automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort. We are surrounded by sounds most of the time, such as airplanes, lawnmowers, furnace blowers, the rattling of pots and pans, and so on. We hear those incidental sounds and, unless we have a reason to do otherwise, we train ourselves to ignore them. We learn to filter out sounds that mean little to us, just as we choose to hear our ringing phones and other sounds that are more important to us.



Figure **5.1.3**: Hearing vs. Listening - licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Listening, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. Listening is *active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker*. We do not always listen at our best; later in this chapter, we will examine some of the reasons and strategies for becoming more active critical listeners.

Benefits of Listening

Today, you can gain a great deal of information and entertainment through reading and electronic recordings rather than through real-time listening. If you become distracted and let your attention wander, you can go back and replay a recording. However, much of what we need to hear at work and in our personal relationships isn't recorded and can't be replayed. There are many benefits to listening effectively and competently in real-time, including the five compelling benefits discussed in the next paragraph.

Since listening is a primary means through which we learn new information, good listening skills help us **complete tasks effectively** at home, at work or school, and get things done in general. Second, when we listen attentively to others, we are showing support for them; thus, effective listening helps us **build and maintain satisfying relationships** with those who are important to us. Third, listening to what others say about us helps us **develop an accurate self-concept**, which can help us put our best foot forward and communicate our identity in the best way possible. Fourth, effective listening skills can help us be **better students and more successful professionals**. Finally, effective listening can help us i**mprove our public speaking skills.** Clearly, effective listening has many benefits.

Key Takeaways

- Hearing is the physiological process of attending to sound within one's environment; listening, however, is a focused, concentrated approach to understanding the message a source is sending.
- Learning how to be an effective listener has numerous advantages. Effective listening can help you complete tasks efficiently, become a better partner in your relationships, serve as a reality-check for your self-indentity, become a better student, and even improve your public speaking abilities.

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5.2: Five Stages of Listening

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the receiving stage of listening.
2. Explain the understanding stage of listening.
3. Explain the remembering stage of listening.
4. Explain the evaluating stage of listening.
5. Explain the feedback stage of listening and the two types of feedback.
6. Understand the difference between formative and summative feedback.

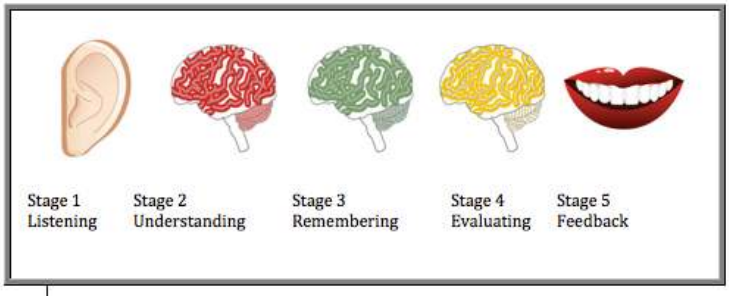


Figure **5.2.1**: Author Joseph DeVito has divided the listening process into five stages: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding through feedback. DeVito, J. A. (2000).

Stage 1: Receiving

Receiving is the intentional focus on hearing a speaker's message, which happens when we filter out other sources so that we can isolate the message and avoid the confusing mixture of incoming stimuli. At this stage, we are still only hearing the message. Notice in Figure **5.2.1** that this stage is represented by the ear because it is the primary tool involved with this stage of the listening process.

During a crowded event in an outdoor amphitheater, for example, when the person on stage starts speaking, the cheering and/or yelling is sometimes so loud that the speaker can't be heard easily despite using a speaker system. In this example, the difficulty of receiving the message is due to the external noise. This is only one example of the ways that hearing alone can require sincere effort, but you must hear the message clearly before you can continue the process of listening.

Stage 2: Understanding

In the understanding stage, we attempt to learn the meaning of the message, which is not always easy. For one thing, if a speaker does not enunciate clearly, it may be difficult to tell what the message was—did your friend say, "I think she'll be late for class," or "my teacher delayed the class"? Notice in Figure **5.2.1** that stages two, three, and four are represented by the brain because it is the primary tool involved with these stages of the listening process.

Even when we have understood the words in a message, because of the differences in our backgrounds and experience, we sometimes make the mistake of attaching our own meanings to the words of others. For example, say you have made plans with your friends to meet at a certain movie theater, but you arrive and nobody else shows up. Eventually, you find out that your friends are at a different theater all the way across town where the same movie is playing. Everyone else understood that the meeting place was the "west side" location, but you misunderstood it as the "east side" location and therefore missed out on part of the fun.

The consequences of ineffective listening in a classroom can be much worse. When your professor advises students to get an "early start" on your speech, he or she probably hopes that students will begin their research right away and move on to developing a thesis statement and outlining the speech as soon as possible. However, students in your class might misunderstand the instructor's meaning in several ways. One student might interpret the advice to mean that as long as she gets started, the rest of the assignment will have time to develop itself. Another student might instead think that to start early is to start on the Friday before the Monday due date instead of Sunday night.

As mentioned more than once in this textbook, *meanings are in people, not in words*. This means that much of our understanding of others is influenced by our own perceptions and experiences. Therefore, at the understanding stage of listening, we should be on the lookout for places where our perceptions might differ from those of the speaker, and be willing to ask questions to clarify the speaker's meaning.

Stage 3: Remembering

Remembering begins with listening; if you can't remember something that was said, you might not have been listening effectively. Researchers Wolvin and Coakley note that the most common reason for not remembering a message after the fact is because it wasn't really learned in the first place (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). However, even when you are listening attentively, some messages are more difficult than others to understand and remember. Complex messages that are filled with detail call for keen listening skills. Moreover, if something distracts your attention even for a moment, you could miss out on information that explains other new concepts you hear when you begin to listen fully again.

You can improve your memory of a message by processing it meaningfully—that is, by applying it in ways that are meaningful to you (Gluck, et al., 2008). Instead of simply repeating a new acquaintance's name over and over, for example, you might remember it by associating it with something in your own life. "Emily," you might say, "reminds me of the Emily I knew in middle school," or "Mr. Impiari's name reminds me of the Impala my father drives." Keep in mind that if understanding has been inaccurate, recollection of the message will be inaccurate too.

Stage 4: Evaluating

The fourth stage in the listening process is evaluating or thinking critically about the message. We might think, "This makes sense" or conversely, "This is very odd." Because everyone embodies biases and perspectives learned from widely diverse sets of life experiences, evaluations of the same message can vary widely from one listener to another. Even the most open-minded listeners will have opinions of a speaker, and those opinions will influence how the message is evaluated. People are more likely to evaluate a message positively if the speaker speaks clearly, presents ideas logically, and gives reasons to support the points made.

Unfortunately, personal opinions sometimes result in prejudiced evaluations. Imagine you're listening to a speech given by someone from another country and this person has an accent that is hard to understand. You may have a hard time simply understanding the speaker's message. Some people find a foreign accent to be interesting or even exotic, while others find it annoying or even take it as a sign of ignorance. If a listener has a strong bias against foreign accents, the listener may not even attempt to attend to the message. If you mistrust a speaker because of an accent, you could be rejecting important or personally enriching information. Good listeners have learned to refrain from making these judgments and instead to focus on the speaker's meanings.

Stage 5: Responding Through Feedback

Feedback--response to the message--is the fifth and final stage of the listening process. Although Figure 5.2.1 represents this stage of listening by the lips because we often give feedback in the form of words, feedback can be either v*erbal* or *nonverbal.* Almost anything a listener says or does can be interpreted as feedback. Making eye contact and nodding your head when a classmate or instructor is speaking are examples of positive nonverbal feedback. On the other hand, looking at your mobile phone would likely be construed as negative nonverbal feedback. Positive verbal feedback could be saying, "great job" or telling the speaker you found his or her message interesting.

Formative Feedback

Not all responses occur at the end of the message. Formative feedback is a natural part of the ongoing transaction between a speaker and a listener. As the speaker delivers the message, a listener signals his or her involvement with focused attention, note-taking, nodding, and other *nonverbal* behaviors that indicate understanding or failure to understand the message. These signals are important to the speaker, who is interested in whether the message is clear and accepted or whether the content of the message is meeting the resistance of preconceived ideas. Speakers can use this feedback to decide whether additional examples, support materials, or explanation is needed.

Summative Feedback

Summative feedback is given at the end of the communication. When you attend a political rally, a presentation given by a speaker you admire, or even a class, there are verbal and nonverbal ways of indicating your appreciation or disagreement. Maybe you'll stand up and applaud a speaker you agreed with or just sit staring in silence after listening to a speaker whose message you didn't appreciate. In other cases, a speaker may be attempting to persuade you to donate to a charity, so if the speaker asks for money and you make a donation, you are providing feedback on the speaker's effectiveness. At the same time, we do not always listen most carefully to the messages of speakers we admire. Sometimes we simply enjoy being in their presence, and our summative feedback is not about the message but about our attitudes toward the speaker. If your feedback is limited to something like, "I just love your voice," you might be indicating that you did not listen carefully to the content of the message.

There is little doubt that by now, you are beginning to understand the complexity of listening and the great potential for errors. By becoming aware of what is involved with active listening and where difficulties might lie, you can prepare yourself both as a listener and as a speaker to minimize listening errors with your communication.

Key Takeaways

- The receiving stage of listening is where an individual hears a message being sent by a speaker.
- The understanding stage of listening occurs when a receiver interprets or attaches meaning to the message.
- The remembering stage of listening is when a listener either places information into long-term memory or forgets the information presented.
- The evaluating stage of listening occurs when a listener thinks critically about and judges the content of the message or the character of the speaker.
- The responding stage of listening occurs when a listener provides verbal or nonverbal feedback to the speaker or message.
- During the responding stage of listening, listeners can provide speakers with formative or summative feedback. Formative feedback is given while the speaker is engaged in the act of communicating. Summative feedback is given when the communicator has concluded the message.

Exercises

- Reflect on your listening in class or in other settings where remembering information is important. What helps you remember important information? What keeps you from remembering important information accurately?
- Give an example of a time when you felt that your message was misunderstood or you felt as though the listener dismissed it. How did you know your message had been misunderstood or rejected? As a communicator, is there anything you could have done differently?
- Make a list of positive formative feedback you and other listeners could give during a lecture or a classmate's speech. How might this positive feedback affect the communicator?
- Make a list of negative feedback you and other listeners might give during a lecture or speech. How might this negative feedback affect the communicator?

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5.3: Listening Styles and Types

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the nature of listening styles.
2. Explain the people listening style.
3. Explain the action listening style.
4. Explain the content listening style.
5. Explain the time listening style.
6. Understand the basic types of listening: discriminative, information, critical, and empathetic.



Figure 5.3.1: Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

If listening were easy, and if all people went about it in the same way, teaching listening would be much easier. One reason for the complexity of teaching listening is that people have different ways of listening. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, as long ago as 325 BC, recognized that listeners in his audience were varied in **listening styles**.

Styles of Listening

Part of the potential for misunderstanding is the difference in listening styles. In an article in the *International Journal of Listening*, authors Watson, Barker, and Weaver identified four listening styles: people, action, content, and time.

People

The **people-oriented listener** is one that is interested in the speaker. People-oriented listeners listen to the message in order to learn how the speaker thinks and feels about the message. For instance, when people-oriented listeners hear an interview with a famous rap artist, they are likely to be more curious about the artist as an individual than about music, even though the people-oriented listener might also appreciate the artist's work. If you are a people-oriented listener, you might have certain questions you hope will be answered such as: Does the artist feel successful? What's it like to be famous? What kind of educational background does he or she have? In the same way, if we're listening to a doctor who responded to the earthquake crisis in Haiti, we might be more interested in the doctor as a person than in the state of affairs for Haitians. Why did he or she go to Haiti? How did he or she get away from his or her normal practice and patients? How many lives did he or she save? We might be less interested in the equally important and urgent needs for food, shelter, and sanitation following the earthquake. The people-oriented listener is likely to be more attentive to the speaker than to the message.

Action

Action-oriented listeners are primarily interested in finding out what the speaker wants. Does the speaker want votes, donations, volunteers, or something else? It's sometimes difficult for an action-oriented speaker to listen to details such as the descriptions, evidence, and explanations with which the speaker builds their case.

Action-oriented listening is sometimes called task-oriented listening. This type of listener seeks a clear message about what needs to be done and might have less patience for listening to the reasons behind the task. This can be especially true if the reasons are complicated. For example, when you're a passenger on an airplane waiting to push back from the gate, a flight attendant delivers a brief speech called the preflight safety briefing. The flight attendant does not read the findings of a safety study or the regulations about seat belts. The flight attendant doesn't explain that the content of the speech is actually mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration. Instead, the attendant says only to buckle up so we can leave. An action-oriented listener finds "buckling up" a more compelling message than a message about the underlying reasons.

Content

Content-oriented listeners are interested in the message itself, whether it makes sense, what it means, and whether it's accurate. When you give a speech or lead a meeting at work, many members of your audience will be content-oriented listeners who will be interested in learning from you. Therefore, you have an obligation to represent the truth in the fullest way you can. You can emphasize an idea, but if you exaggerate, you could lose credibility in the minds of your content-oriented audience. You can advocate ideas that are important to you, but if you omit important limitations, you are withholding part of the truth and could leave your audience with an inaccurate view.

Imagine you're delivering a speech on the plight of orphans in Africa. If you just talk about the fact that there are over forty-five million orphans in Africa but don't explain why, you'll sound like an infomercial. In such an instance, your audience's response is likely to be less enthusiastic than you might want. Instead, content-oriented listeners want to listen to well-developed information with solid explanations.

Time

People using a **time-oriented listening** style prefer a message that gets to the point quickly. Time-oriented listeners can become impatient with slow delivery or lengthy explanations. This kind of listener may be receptive for only a brief amount of time and may become rude or even hostile if the communicator expects a longer focus of attention. Time-oriented listeners convey their impatience through eye-rolling, shifting about in their seats, checking their phones, and other inappropriate behaviors. If you've been asked to speak to a group of middle school students, you need to realize that their attention spans are simply not as long as those of college students. This is the important reason why speeches or conversations with young audiences must be shorter or include more variety than speeches to adults.

In your professional future, some audience members will have real time constraints, not merely perceived ones. Imagine that you've been asked to speak about a new project to the board of directors of a local corporation. Chances are the people on the board of directors are all pressed for time. If your speech is long and filled with overly detailed information, time-oriented listeners will simply start to tune you out as you're speaking. Obviously, if time-oriented listeners start tuning you out, they will not be listening to your message. This is not the same thing as being a time-oriented listener who might be less interested in the message content than in its length.

Just as there are many different listening styles, people also engage in different types of listening.

Listening Types

Listening serves many purposes, and different situations require different types of listening. The type of listening we engage in affects our communication and how others respond to us. For example, when we listen to empathize with others, our communication will likely be supportive and open, which will then lead the other person to feel "heard" and supported and hopefully view the interaction positively. (Bodie)

The four main types of listening we will discuss are discriminative, informational, critical, and empathetic. (Watson)

Discriminative Listening

Discriminative listening occurs mostly at the receiving stage of the listening process. Here we engage in listening to scan and monitor our surroundings in order to focus on particular sounds. For example, we may focus our listening on a dark part of the yard while walking the dog at night to determine if the noise we just heard presents us with any danger. Or we may look for a particular nonverbal cue to let us know our conversational partner received our message. (Hargie) In the absence of hearing impairment, we have an innate and physiological ability to engage in discriminative listening. Although this is the most basic form of listening, it provides the foundation on which more intentional listening skills are built. This type of listening can be refined and honed. Think of how musicians, singers, and mechanics exercise specialized discriminative listening to isolate specific sounds and how parents train themselves to listen to sounds from their baby's room that might indicate the baby is in distress. (Watson)

Informational Listening

Informational listening entails listening with the goal of comprehending and retaining information. This type of listening is common in contexts ranging from a student listening to an informative speech to an out-of-towner listening to directions to the nearest gas station. We also use informational listening when we listen to news reports, voice mail, and briefings at work. Since retention and recall are important components of informational listening, good concentration and memory skills are key. These also happen to be skills that many college students struggle with, at least in the first years of college, but will be expected to have mastered once they get into professional contexts. In many professional contexts, informational listening is important, especially when receiving instructions. I caution my students that they will be expected to process verbal instructions more frequently in their profession than they are in college. Most college professors provide detailed instructions and handouts with assignments so students can review them as needed, but many supervisors and managers will expect you to take the initiative to remember or record vital information. Additionally, many bosses are not as open to questions or requests to repeat themselves as professors are.

Critical Listening

Critical listening entails listening with the goal of analyzing or evaluating a message based on information presented verbally and information that can be inferred from context. A critical listener evaluates a message and accepts it, rejects it, or decides to withhold judgment and seek more information. As constant consumers of messages, we need to be able to assess the credibility of speakers and their messages and identify various persuasive appeals and faulty logic (known as fallacies), which you can learn more about in the chapter on Persuasive Speaking. Critical listening is important during persuasive exchanges, but I recommend always employing some degree of critical listening, because you may find yourself in a persuasive interaction that you thought was informative. Critical-listening skills are useful when listening to a persuasive speech in this class and when processing any of the persuasive media messages we receive daily. You can see judges employ critical listening, with varying degrees of competence, on talent competition shows like *Rupaul's Drag Race*, *America's Got Talent* and *The Voice*.



Figure **5.3.2**: We support others through empathetic listening. (Thinkstock. *A Primer on Communication Studies)*

Empathetic Listening

Empathetic listening is the most challenging form of listening and occurs when we try to understand or experience what a speaker is thinking or feeling. Empathetic listening is distinct from sympathetic listening. While the word *empathy* means to "feel into" or "feel with" another person, *sympathy* means to "feel for" someone. Sympathy is generally more self-oriented and distant than empathy. (Bruneau) Empathetic listening is other-oriented and should be genuine. Because of our own egocentrism, empathetic listening can be difficult. It's often much easier for us to tell our own story or to give advice than it is to really listen to and empathize with someone else. We should keep in mind that sometimes others just need to be heard and our feedback isn't actually desired.

Empathetic listening is key for dialogue and helps maintain interpersonal relationships. In order to reach dialogue, people must have a degree of open-mindedness and a commitment to civility that allows them to be empathetic while still allowing them to believe in and advocate for their own position. An excellent example of critical and empathetic listening in action is the international Truth and Reconciliation movement. The first TRC in the United States occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina, as a means of processing the events and aftermath of November 3, 1979, when members of the Ku Klux Klan shot and killed five members of the Communist Worker's Party during a daytime confrontation witnessed by news crews and many bystanders. The goal of such commissions is to allow people to tell their stories, share their perspectives in an open environment, and be listened to. (http://www.greensborotrc.org/truth_reconciliation.php).

Key Takeaways

- A listening style is a general manner in which an individual attends to the messages of another person.
- People-oriented listeners pay attention to the personal details of a speaker and not to the speaker's actual message.
- Action-oriented listeners pay attention to the physical actions a speaker wants the listener to engage in.
- Content-oriented listeners pay attention to the meaning and credibility of a speaker's message.
- Time-oriented listeners pay attention to messages that are short and concise as a result of limited attention spans or limited time commitments.
- Discriminative listening is the most basic form of listening, and we use it to distinguish between and focus on specific sounds. We use informational listening to try to comprehend and retain information. Through critical listening, we analyze and evaluate messages at various levels. We use empathetic listening to try to understand or experience what a speaker is feeling.

Exercises

1. The recalling stage of the listening process is a place where many people experience difficulties. What techniques do you use or could you use to improve your recall of certain information such as people's names, key concepts from your classes, or instructions or directions given verbally?
2. Getting integrated: Identify how critical listening might be useful for you in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic.
3. Listening scholars have noted that empathetic listening is the most difficult type of listening. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Which style of listening best describes you and why? Which style do you have the most difficulty with or like the least and why?
5. As you prepare for presenting a speech, identify ways that you can adapt your message to each of the listening styles noted in this section.

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5.4: Poor Listening Habits

Learning Objectives

1. Identify your own poor listening habits.
2. Understand the types of noise that can affect a listener's ability to attend to a message.
3. Explain how a listener's attention span can limit the listener's ability to attend to a speaker's message.
4. Analyze how a listener's personal biases can influence her or his ability to attend to a message.
5. Define receiver apprehension and the impact it can have on a listener's ability to attend to a message.

Numerous tests confirm that we are inefficient listeners. Studies have shown that immediately after listening to a 10-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, and retained 50 percent of what was said. Within 48 hours, that drops off another 50 percent to a final level of **25 percent efficiency**. In other words, we often comprehend and retain only one-fourth of what we hear. We all want to be more than 25 percent efficient. Poor listening causes us many personal and professional problems. It's not difficult to see the many problems inefficient listeners can create for themselves and others.

Poor Listening Habits

The **International Listening Association** identifies many listening habits that can interfere with our ability to listen effectively. Here, we will analyze a few of the most common habits.

Interrupting the Speaker

Conversations unfold as a series of turns, and conversational turn-taking has been likened to a dance where communicators try to avoid stepping on each other's toes. One of the most frequent glitches in the turn-taking process is an interruption, but not all interruptions are considered "bad listening." An interruption could be unintentional if we misread cues and think a person is done speaking only to have him or her start up again at the same time we do. Sometimes interruptions are more like overlapping statements that show support ("I think so too.") or excitement about the conversation ("That's so cool!"). Supportive paralanguage like "uh-huh," as we learned earlier, also overlaps with a speaker's message. All these interruptions are not typically thought of as evidence of bad listening unless they become distracting for the speaker or are unnecessary. Unintentional interruptions can still be considered bad listening if they result from mindless communication. So if you interrupt unintentionally, but because you were only half-listening, then the interruption is still evidence of bad listening. Or if you interrupt the speaker in an attempt to dominate the conversation, you are engaged in poor listening. Hijacking the speaker's message with "That reminds me..." or "That's nothing, let me tell you about..." is evidence of an attempt to hijack the conversation.

Faking or pretending to pay attention

Do you have a friend or family member who repeats stories? If so, then you've probably engaged in fake listening as a politeness strategy. Outwardly visible signals of attentiveness are an important part of the listening process, but when they are just an "act," are bad listening behaviors. Although it is a bad listening practice, we all understandably engage in faking attention from time to time, especially if the friend just needs a sounding board and isn't expecting advice or guidance. We may also pseudo-listen to a romantic partner to prevent hurting their feelings. On the other hand, some of us constantly fake attention when we can't really afford to do so, such as in the classroom and at work. We should avoid faking attention as much as possible and should definitely avoid making it a listening habit. Although we may get away with it in some situations, each time we risk being "found out," which could have negative consequences.

Giving in to Internal and External Distractions

Our ability to process more information more quickly than a speaker can talk often leads to internal distractions. While people speak at a rate of 125 to 175 words per minute, we can process between 400 and 800 words per minute. (Owen Hargie, *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2011), 195. This gap between speech rate and thought rate gives us an opportunity to engage in thoughts unrelated to the message. Because of this gap, it is impossible to give one message our "undivided attention," but we can occupy other channels in our minds with thoughts related to the central message. For example, using some of your extra cognitive processing abilities to repeat, rephrase, or reorganize messages coming from one source allows you to use that extra capacity in a way that reinforces the primary message.

A common problem for many in listening is that we give in to external barriers such as technology.

Technology, Multitasking, and Listening

Do you like to listen to music while you do homework? Do you clean your apartment while talking to your mom on the phone? Do you think students should be allowed to use laptops in all college classrooms? Your answers to these questions will point to your preferences for multitasking. If you answered "yes" to most of them, then you are in line with the general practices of the "net generation" of digital natives for whom multitasking, especially with various forms of media, is a way of life. Multitasking is a concept that has been around for a while and emerged along with the increasing expectation that we will fill multiple role demands throughout the day. Multitasking can be pretty straightforward and beneficial—for example, if we listen to motivating music while working out. But multitasking can be very inefficient, especially when one or more of our concurrent tasks are complex or unfamiliar to us. (Fleura Bardhi, Andres J. Rohm, and Fareena Sultan, "Tuning in and Tuning out: Media Multitasking among Young Consumers," *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 9 (2010): 318.)

Media multitasking specifically refers to the use of multiple forms of media at the same time, and it can have positive and negative effects on listening. The negative effects of media multitasking have received much attention in recent years, as people question the decreasing attention span within our society. Media multitasking may promote inefficiency because it can lead to distractions and plays a prominent role for many in procrastination. The numerous options for media engagement that we have can also lead to a feeling of chaos as our attention is pulled in multiple directions, creating a general sense of disorder. And many of us feel a sense of enslavement when we engage in media multitasking, as we feel like we can't live without certain personal media outlets.

Media multitasking can also increase efficiency, as people can carry out tasks faster. The links to videos and online articles included in this textbook allow readers like you to quickly access additional information about a particular subject to prepare for a presentation or complete a paper assignment. Media multitasking can also increase engagement. Aside from just reading material in a textbook, students can now access information through an author's blog or Twitter account.

Media multitasking can produce an experience that feels productive, but is it really? What are the consequences of our media- and the technology-saturated world? Although many of us like to think that we're good multitaskers, some research indicates otherwise. For example, student laptop use during class has been connected to lower academic performance. (Carrie B. Fried, "In-Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning," *Computers and Education* 50 (2008): 906–14. This is because media multitasking has the potential to interfere with listening to multiple stages of the process. The study showed that laptop use interfered with receiving, as students using them reported that they paid less attention to the class lectures. This is because students used the laptops for purposes other than taking notes or exploring class content. Of the students using laptops, 81 percent checked the e-mail during lectures, 68 percent used instant messaging, and 43 percent surfed the web. Students using laptops also had difficulty with the interpretation stage of listening, as they found less clarity in the parts of the lecture they heard and did not understand the course material as much as students who didn't use a laptop. The difficulties with receiving and interpreting obviously create issues with recall that can lead to lower academic performance in the class. Laptop use also negatively affected the listening abilities of students not using laptops. These students reported that they were distracted, as their attention was drawn to the laptop screens of other students. Although these examples are about laptops, cell phones have now taken over as likely distractions to listening.

1. What are some common ways that you engage in media multitasking? What are some positive and negative consequences of your media multitasking?
2. What strategies do you or could you use to help minimize the negative effects of media multitasking?
3. Should laptops, smartphones, and other media devices be used by students during college classes? Why or why not? What restrictions or guidelines for use could instructors provide that would capitalize on the presence of such media to enhance student learning and help minimize distractions?

From the book A Primer on Communication Studies (v. 1.0).



Figure 5.4.1: Ian T. McFarland – Listen – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Factors that Interfere with Listening

Some of the factors that interfere with good listening might exist beyond our control, but others are manageable. It's helpful to be aware of these factors so that they interfere as little as possible with understanding the message.

Noise

Noise is one of the biggest factors to interfere with listening; it can be defined as anything that interferes with your ability to attend to and understand a message. There are many kinds of noise, but we will focus on only the four you are most likely to encounter in public speaking situations: physical noise, psychological noise, physiological noise, and semantic noise.

Physical noise consists of various sounds in an environment that interfere with a source's ability to hear. Construction noises right outside a window, planes flying directly overhead, or loud music in the next room can make it difficult to hear the message being presented by a speaker even if a microphone is being used. It is sometimes possible to manage the context to reduce the noise. Closing a window might be helpful. Asking the people in the next room to turn their music down might be possible. Changing to a new location is more difficult, as it involves finding a new location and having everyone get there. If you are responsible for organizing a meeting at work or school, consider the environment and, if possible, choose a setting where external noise won't interfere with communication and listening.

Psychological noise consists of distractions to a speaker's message caused by a receiver's internal thoughts. For example, if you are preoccupied with personal problems, it is difficult to give your full attention to understanding the meanings of a message. The presence of another person to whom you feel attracted, or perhaps a person you dislike intensely, can also be psychosocial noise that draws your attention away from the message.

Physiological noise consists of distractions to a speaker's message caused by a listener's own body. Maybe you're listening to a speech in class around noon and you haven't eaten anything. Your stomach may be growling and your desk is starting to look tasty. Maybe the room is cold and you're thinking more about how to keep warm than about what the speaker is saying. In either case, your body can distract you from attending to the information being presented.

Semantic noise occurs when a receiver experiences confusion over the meaning of a source's word choice. While you are attempting to understand a particular word or phrase, the speaker continues to present the message. While you are struggling with a word interpretation, you are distracted from listening to the rest of the message. One of the authors was listening to a speaker who mentioned using a sweeper to clean carpeting. The author was confused, as she did not see how a broom would be effective in cleaning carpeting. Later, the author found out that the speaker was using the word "sweeper" to refer to a vacuum cleaner; however, in the meantime, her listening was hurt by her inability to understand what the speaker meant.

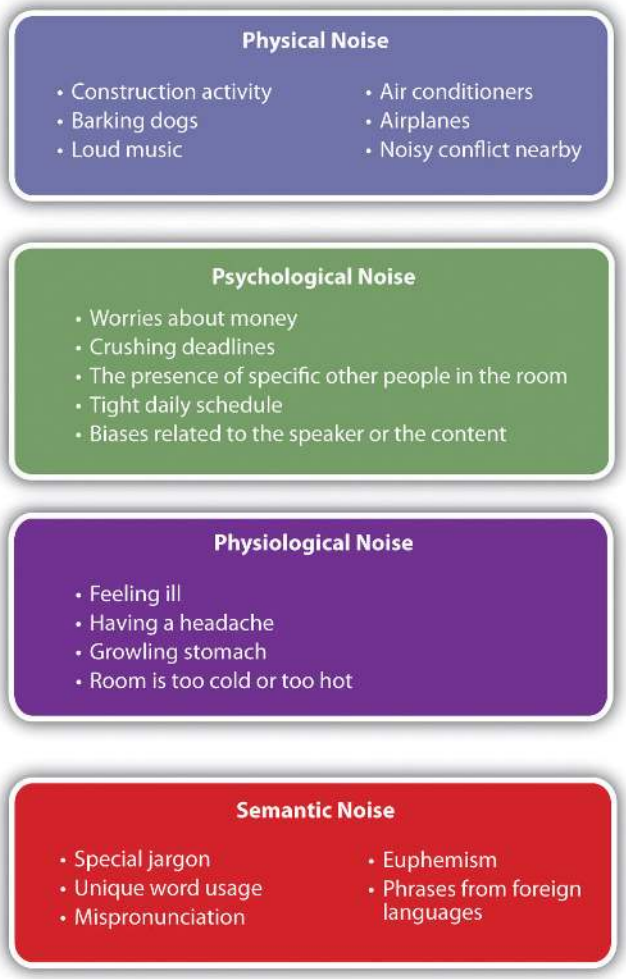


Figure **5.4.2**: Types of Noise

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

Attention Span

A person can only maintain focused attention for a finite length of time. In his 1985 book *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, New York University's Steinhardt School of Education professor Neil Postman argued that modern audiences have lost the ability to sustain attention to a message (Postman, 1985). More recently, researchers have engaged in an ongoing debate over whether Internet use is detrimental to **attention span** (Carr, 2010). Whether or not these concerns are well-founded, you have probably noticed that even when your attention is "glued" to something in which you are deeply interested, every now and then you pause to do something else, such as getting a drink of water, stretching, or looking out the window.

The limits of the human attention span can interfere with listening, but listeners and speakers can use strategies to prevent this interference. As many classroom instructors know, listeners will readily renew their attention when the presentation includes frequent breaks in pacing (Middendorf & Kalish, 1996). For example, a fifty- to seventy-five-minute class session might include some lecture material alternated with questions for class discussion, video clips, handouts, and demonstrations. Instructors who are adept at holding listeners' attention also move about the front of the room, writing on the board, drawing diagrams, and intermittently using slide transparencies or PowerPoint slides.

If you have instructors who do a good job of keeping your attention, they are positive role models showing strategies you can use to accommodate the limitations of your audience's attention span.

Receiver Biases

Good listening involves keeping an open mind and withholding judgment until the speaker has completed the message. Conversely, biased listening is characterized by jumping to conclusions; the biased listener believes, "I don't need to listen because I already know what I think." **Receiver biases** can refer to two things: biases with reference to the speaker and preconceived ideas and **opinions** about the topic or message. Both can be considered noise. Everyone has biases, but good listeners have learned to hold them in check while listening.

The first type of bias listeners can have is related to the speaker. Often a speaker stands up and an audience member simply doesn't like the speaker or doesn't care for the way the speaker is dressed, so the audience member may not listen to the speaker's message. Maybe you have a classmate who just annoys you for some reason, or maybe you question a classmate's competence on a given topic. When we have preconceived notions about a speaker, those biases can interfere with our ability to listen accurately and competently to the speaker's message.

The second type of bias listeners can have is related to the topic or content of the speech. Maybe the speech topic is one you've heard a thousand times, so you just tune out the speech. Or maybe the speaker is presenting a topic or position you fundamentally disagree with. When listeners have strong preexisting opinions about a topic, such as the death penalty, religious issues, affirmative action, abortion, or global warming, their biases may make it difficult for them to even consider new information about the topic, especially if the new information is inconsistent with what they already believe to be true. As listeners, we have difficulty identifying our biases, especially when they seem to make sense. However, it is worth recognizing that our lives would be very difficult if no one ever considered new points of view or new information. We live in a world where everyone can benefit from clear thinking and open-minded listening. Oscar Wilde said, "Listening is a very dangerous thing. If one listens one may be convinced."

Listening or Receiver Apprehension

Listening or receiver apprehension is the fear that you might be unable to understand the message or process the information correctly or be able to adapt your thinking to include the new information coherently (Wheeless, 1975). In some situations, you might worry that the information presented will be "over your head"—too complex, technical, or advanced for you to understand adequately.

Many students will actually avoid registering for courses in which they feel certain they will do poorly. In other cases, students will choose to take a challenging course only if it's a requirement. This avoidance might be understandable but is not a good strategy for success. To become educated people, students should take a few courses that can shed light on areas where their knowledge is limited.

As a communicator, you can reduce listener apprehension by defining terms clearly and using simple visual aids to hold the audience's attention. You don't want to underestimate or overestimate your audience's knowledge on a subject, so good audience analysis is always important. If you know your audience doesn't have special knowledge on a given topic, you should start by defining important terms. Research has shown us that when listeners do not feel they understand a speaker's message, their apprehension about receiving the message escalates. Imagine that you are listening to a speech about chemistry and the speaker begins talking about "colligative properties." You may start questioning whether you're even in the right place. When this happens, apprehension clearly interferes with a listener's ability to accurately and competently understand a speaker's message. As a speaker, you can lessen the listener's apprehension by explaining that colligative properties focus on *how much* is dissolved in a solution, not on *what* is dissolved in a solution. You could also give an example that they might readily understand, such as saying that it doesn't matter what kind of salt you use in the winter to melt ice on your driveway, what is important is how much salt you use.

Key Takeaways

- The International Listening Association has identified common habits that can lead to poor listening.
- Listeners are often unable to accurately attend to messages because of four types of noise. Physical noise is caused by the physical setting a listener is in. Psychological noise exists within a listener's own mind and prevents him or her from attending to a speaker's message. Physiological noise exists because a listener's body is feeling some sensation that prevents him or her from attending to a speaker's message. Semantic noise is caused by a listener's confusion over the meanings of words used by a speaker.

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

Learning Activities

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

Note

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5.5: Improving Listening Competence

Learning Objectives

1. Define and explain critical listening and its importance.
2. Understand six distinct ways to improve your ability to critically listen.
3. Explain what it means to be an ethical listener.
4. Apply the 10-step listening checklist to your own listening.

As a student, you are exposed to many kinds of messages. You receive messages conveying academic information, institutional rules, instructions, and warnings; you also receive messages through political discourse, advertisements, gossip, jokes, song lyrics, text messages, invitations, web links, and all other manners of communication. You know it's not all the same, but it isn't always clear how to separate the truth from the messages that are misleading or even blatantly false. Nor is it always clear which messages are intended to help the listener and which ones are merely self-serving for the speaker. Part of being a good listener is to learn when to use caution in evaluating the messages we hear.



Figure **5.5.1**: Kizzzbeth – Good Listener – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Critical listening in this context means using careful, systematic thinking and reasoning to see whether a message makes sense in light of factual evidence. Critical listening can be learned with practice but is not necessarily easy to do. Some people never learn this skill; instead, they take every message at face value even when those messages are in conflict with their knowledge. Problems occur when messages are repeated to others who have not yet developed the skills to discern the difference between a valid message and a mistaken one. Critical listening can be particularly difficult when the message is complex. Unfortunately, some speakers may make their messages intentionally complex to avoid critical scrutiny. For example, a city treasurer giving a budget presentation might use very large words and technical jargon, which makes it difficult for listeners to understand the proposed budget and ask probing questions.

Six Ways to Improve Your Critical Listening

Critical listening is first and foremost a skill that can be learned and improved. In this section, we are going to explore six different techniques you can use to become a more critical listener.

Recognizing the Difference between Facts and Opinions

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is credited with saying, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but they are not entitled to their own facts" (Wikiquote). Part of critical listening is learning to separate opinions from facts, and this works two ways: critical listeners are aware of whether a speaker is delivering a factual message or a message based on opinion, and they are also aware of the interplay between their own opinions and facts as they listen to messages.

In American politics, the issue of health care reform is heavily laden with both opinions and facts, and it is extremely difficult to sort some of them out. A clash of fact versus opinion happened on September 9, 2010, during President Obama's nationally televised speech to a joint session of Congress outlining his health care reform plan. In this speech, President Obama responded to several rumors about the plan, including the claim "that our reform effort will insure illegal immigrants. This, too, is false—the reforms I'm proposing would not apply to those who are here illegally." At this point, one congressman yelled out, "You lie!" Clearly, this congressman did not have a very high opinion of either the health care reform plan or the president. However, when the nonpartisan watch group Factcheck.org examined the language of the proposed bill, they found that it had a section titled "No Federal Payment for Undocumented Aliens" (Factcheck.org, 2009).

Often when people have a negative opinion about a topic, they are unwilling to accept facts. Instead, they question all aspects of the speech and have a negative predisposition toward both the speech and the speaker.

This is not to say that speakers should not express their opinions. Many of the greatest speeches in history include personal opinions. Consider, for example, Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, in which he expressed his personal wish for the future of American society. Critical listeners may agree or disagree with a speaker's opinions, but the point is that they know when a message they are hearing is based on opinion and when it is factual.

Uncovering Assumptions

If something is factual, supporting evidence exists. However, we still need to be careful about what evidence does and does not mean. **Assumptions** are gaps in a logical sequence that listeners passively fill with their own ideas and opinions and may or may not be accurate. When listening to a public speech, you may find yourself being asked to assume something is a fact when in reality many people question that fact. For example, suppose you're listening to a speech on weight loss. The speaker talks about how people who are overweight are simply not motivated or lack the self-discipline to lose weight. The speaker has built the speech on the assumption that motivation and self-discipline are the only reasons why people can't lose weight. You may think to yourself, what about genetics? By listening critically, you will be more likely to notice unwarranted assumptions in a speech, which may prompt you to question the speaker if questions are taken or to do further research to examine the validity of the speaker's assumptions. If, however, you sit passively by and let the speaker's assumptions go unchallenged, you may find yourself persuaded by information that is not factual.

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

Figure 5.5.2: Facts vs. Assumptions

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

Be Open to New Ideas

Sometimes people are so fully invested in their perceptions of the world that they are unable to listen receptively to messages that make sense and would be of great benefit to them. Human progress has been possible, sometimes against great odds, because of the mental curiosity and discernment of a few people. In the late 1700s when the technique of vaccination to prevent smallpox was introduced, it was opposed by both medical professionals and everyday citizens who staged public protests (Edward Jenner Museum). More than two centuries later, vaccinations against smallpox, diphtheria, polio, and other infectious diseases have saved countless lives, yet popular opposition continues.

In college, at work, and in our personal lives, we must be open to new ideas. Let's face it, people have a tendency to filter out information they disagree with and to filter in the information that supports what they already believe. Nicolaus Copernicus was a sixteenth-century astronomer who dared to publish a treatise explaining that the earth revolves around the sun, which was a violation of Catholic doctrine. Copernicus's astronomical findings were labeled heretical and his treatise was banned because a

group of people at the time were not open to new ideas. In May of 2010, almost five hundred years after his death, the Roman Catholic Church admitted its error and reburied his remains with the full rites of Catholic burial (Owen, 2010).

While the Copernicus case is a fairly dramatic reversal, listeners should always be open to new ideas. We are not suggesting that you have to agree with every idea that you are faced with in life; rather, we are suggesting that you at least listen to the message and then evaluate the message.

Rely on Reason and Common Sense

If you are listening to a conversation, advertisement, or speech and your **common sense** tells you that the message is illogical, you very well might be right. You should be thinking about whether the viewpoints expressed seem credible and coherent. In this way, your use of common sense can act as a warning system for you.

In a recent speech, the speaker argued that fireworks (the public kind, not the personal kind people buy and set off in their backyards) were environmentally hazardous because of litter. Although there is certainly some paper that makes it to the ground before burning up, the amount of litter created by fireworks displays is relatively small compared to other sources of litter, including trash left behind by all the spectators watching fireworks at public parks and other venues. It just does not make sense to identify a few bits of charred paper as a major environmental hazard.

If the message is inconsistent with things you already know, if the argument is illogical, or if the language is exaggerated, you should investigate the issues before accepting or rejecting the message. Often, you will not be able to take this step during the presentation of the message; it may take longer to collect enough knowledge to make that decision for yourself.

However, when you are a public speaker, you should not give a speech based only on your common sense. You must also be able to back up your common-sense statements with evidence from reputable sources. That's why it's necessary for public speakers to cite sources and refer to the works of scholars whose research is irrefutable, or at least highly credible.

Relate New Ideas to Old Ones

As both a speaker and a listener, one of the most important things you can do to understand a message is to relate new ideas to previously held ideas. Imagine you're giving a speech about biological systems and you need to use the term "homeostasis," which refers to the ability of an organism to maintain stability by making constant adjustments. To help your audience understand homeostasis, you could show how homeostasis is similar to adjustments made by the thermostats that keep our homes at a more or less even temperature. If you set your thermostat for seventy degrees and it gets hotter, the central cooling will kick in and cool your house down. If your house gets below seventy degrees, your heater will kick in and heat your house up. Notice that in both cases your thermostat is making constant adjustments to stay at seventy degrees. Explaining that the body's homeostasis works in a similar way will make it more relevant to your listeners and will likely help them both understand and remember the idea because it links to something they have already experienced.

If you can make effective comparisons while you are listening, it can deepen your understanding of the message. If you can provide those comparisons for your listeners, you make it easier for them to give consideration to your ideas.

Take Notes

Note-taking is a skill that improves with practice. You already know that it's nearly impossible to write down everything a speaker says. In fact, in your attempt to record everything, you might fall behind and wish you had divided your attention differently between writing and listening.

Careful, selective note-taking is important because we want an accurate record that reflects the meanings of the message. However much you might concentrate on the notes, you could inadvertently leave out an important word, such as *not*, and undermine the reliability of your otherwise carefully written notes. Instead, if you give the same care and attention to listening, you are less likely to make that kind of a mistake.

It's important to find a balance between listening well and taking good notes. Many people struggle with this balance for a long time. For example, if you try to write down only key phrases instead of full sentences, you might find that you can't remember how two ideas were related. In that case, too few notes were taken. At the opposite end, extensive note-taking can result in a loss of emphasis on the most important ideas.

To increase your critical listening skills, continue developing your ability to identify the central issues in messages so that you can take accurate notes that represent the meanings intended by the speaker.

Listen Ethically

Ethical listening rests heavily on honest intentions. We should extend to speakers the same respect we want to receive when it's our turn to speak. We should be facing the speaker with our eyes open. We should not be checking our cell phones. We should avoid any behavior that belittles the speaker or the message.



Figure **5.5.3**: Ben Smith – String telephone – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Scholars Stephanie Coopman and James Lull emphasize the creation of a climate of caring and mutual understanding, observing that "respecting others' perspectives is one hallmark of the effective listener" (Coopman & Lull, 2008). Respect, or unconditional positive regard for others, means that you treat others with consideration and decency whether you agree with them or not. Professors Sprague, Stuart, and Bodary also urge us to treat the speaker with respect even when we disagree, don't understand the message, or find the speech boring.(Sprague, et al., 2010)

Doug Lippman (1998) (Lippman, 1998), a storytelling coach, wrote powerfully and sensitively about listening in his book:

> *Like so many of us, I used to take listening for granted, glossing over this step as I rushed into the more active, visible ways of being helpful. Now, I am convinced that listening is the single most important element of any helping relationship.*
>
> *Listening has great power. It draws thoughts and feelings out of people as nothing else can. When someone listens to you well, you become aware of feelings you may not have realized that you felt. You have ideas you may have never thought before. You become more eloquent, more insightful.…*
>
> *As a helpful listener, I do not interrupt you. I do not give advice. I do not do something else while listening to you. I do not convey distraction through nervous mannerisms. I do not finish your sentences for you. In spite of all my attempts to understand you, I do not assume I know what you mean.*
>
> *I do not convey disapproval, impatience, or condescension. If I am confused, I show a desire for clarification, not dislike for your obtuseness. I do not act vindicated when you misspeak or correct yourself.*
>
> *I do not sit impassively, withholding participation.*

> *Instead, I project affection, approval, interest, and enthusiasm. I am your partner in communication. I am eager for your imminent success, fascinated by your struggles, forgiving of your mistakes, always expecting the best. I am your delighted listener (Lippman, 1998).*

This excerpt expresses the decency with which people should treat each other. It doesn't mean we must accept everything we hear, but ethically, we should refrain from trivializing each other's concerns. We have all had the painful experience of being ignored or misunderstood. This is how we know that one of the greatest gifts one human can give to another is listening.

On its website, the International Listening Association asks the following questions which can become an excellent checklist for effective listening.

Are You Listening? A Checklist for Listeners

1. Are you giving the speaker 100% of your attention?
2. Are you listening to understand, rather than listening to respond?
3. Have you opened your mind to receive what is being said?
4. Have you rejected the temptation to prepare your response while the other person is speaking?
5. Are you open to changing your mind?
6. Are you aware of what is not being said as well as what is being said?
7. Are you taking account of the degree of emotion attached to the words?
8. Are you aware of differences or similarities (culture, age, gender) between you and the speaker which may influence how you listen?
9. Are you giving signals to the speaker that you are listening?
10. Are you valuing the speaker and the experience they have gathered in their life so far?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned how listening and hearing differ, why listening is important, the stages of listening, differences in listening types and styles, difficulties in listening, and ways you can improve your listening competence through critical listening.

Key Takeaways

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

Exercises

1. Think of a time when you were too tired or distracted to give your full attention to the ideas in a speech. What did you do? What should you have done?
2. Give an example of a mistake in reasoning that involved the speaker mistaking an assumption for a fact.
3. Examine the checklist provided by the International Listening Association. On your own, organize the steps from what you see as being (1) least important to (10 most important to effective listening. In a group, compare and discuss your lists.

Additional Listening Resources

Read about active listening on this MindTools page. http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/ActiveListening.htm

Consider these academic survival tips provided by Chicago State University. www.csu.edu/engineeringstudies/acadsurvivaltips.htm

A collection of articles and other resources to assist in improving listening and other communication skills. http://conflict911.com/resources/Communication/Listening

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Interpersonal Communication

In this chapter, we discuss the meaning of interpersonal communication and explore communication climates, friendships, romantic relationships, family, and conflict management.

6.1: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication
6.2: Communication Climate
6.3: Friendships
6.4: Romantic Relationships
6.5: Family
6.6: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace
6.7: Conflict Management

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6.1: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Define and give examples of interpersonal communication.
2. Define self-disclosure.
3. Identify the four areas of the Johari window.
4. Explain how the Johari window can be used to improve self-awareness and interpersonal communication.

Think about your relationships in the last few years. You may have just transitioned from high school to a community college or university. Perhaps you and your friends from high school went to different colleges and are now living far apart from each other. If you have recently been separated by distance from friends or family, you have noticed that it is more difficult to stay connected and share all of the little things that go on in your day. As you continue to grow and change in college, it is likely that you will create relationships along the way. Being away from your family, you will probably notice changes to your relationships with them. All of these dynamics, and many more, fall under the scope of interpersonal communication.



Figure **6.1.1**: "Homecoming and Reunions 2017" by The University of the South is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

What is Interpersonal Communication?

Interpersonal communication is *an exchange between two or more individuals who are part of a close relationship in which they get to know one another as individuals.* We usually think of interpersonal communication as occurring between two people. However, interpersonal communication also takes place in small groups such as a family unit. By virtue of this definition, chatting with a classmate you just met, nodding to a coworker in the hallway, or participating in a committee or group project would *not* be considered interpersonal communication. On the other hand, having lunch and talking with a close friend or sharing the day's events at the family dinner table would meet the definition of interpersonal communication. We will use this definition of interpersonal communication to explore the three primary types of relationships in our lives—friendships, romantic, and family. Because conflict is a natural part of interpersonal communication, we will also discuss multiple ways of understanding and managing conflict. But before we go into detail about specific interpersonal relationships, let's examine two important aspects of interpersonal communication: self-disclosure and climate.

Self-Disclosure

Because interpersonal communication is the primary means by which we get to know others as unique individuals, it is important to understand the role of self-disclosure. **Self-disclosure** is the *process of revealing information about yourself to others that is not readily known by them.* In face-to-face interactions, telling someone "I have brown hair" would not be self-disclosure because that person can perceive that about you without being told. However, revealing, "I am an avid runner" or "I like to make TikTok videos" would be examples of self-disclosure because these are pieces of personal information others do not know unless you tell them. To establish strong friendships or lasting romantic relationships, it is necessary to self-disclose. Even in an academic or career setting, appropriate self-disclosure can help establish an open work environment and build trust and a sense of collaboration. The key here is self-disclose appropriately.

There are degrees of self-disclosure, ranging from relatively safe (revealing your hobbies or musical preferences), to more personal topics (fears, dreams for the future, or fantasies). Typically, as relationships deepen and trust is established, self-disclosure increases in both breadth and depth. We tend to disclose facts about ourselves first (I am a Biology major), then move towards opinions (I feel the war is wrong), and finally disclose feelings (I'm sad that you said that). Even in an academic or career setting, self-disclosure is a good way to establish an open communication environment, although self-disclosure in that setting would not be as intimate as it would be in a personal relationship. At work, be cautious about revealing things that might be damaging to your credibility or career.

An important aspect of self-disclosure is the **rule of reciprocity**. This rule states that self-disclosure between two people works best in a back and forth fashion. When you tell someone something personal, you probably expect them to do the same. When one person reveals more than another, there can be an imbalance in the relationship because the one who self discloses more may feel vulnerable as a result of sharing more personal information. This may a clue to you to back off on self-disclosing until the other person reciprocates.

Johari Window

The Johari Window is a communication model designed to help improve interpersonal communication skills. The name **Johari Window** comes from combining the first names of the window's creators, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. It is used in communication classes as well as some businesses *to help people think about differences in how they see themselves and how others see them.* The window is divided into four quadrants or "panes": the open area or pane, the blind spot, the hidden area or facade, and the unknown. The size of each of the four areas or window panes varies depending on whom you are communicating with and the context of the communication.



Figure **6.1.2**: Johari Window. Source: Luft, Joseph. (*Of Human Interaction*, 1969).

The **open area** of the Johari Window contains information that is known to us and to others. This area is sometimes called the "I know and you know" pane. When we first meet another person, the open area is small, consisting only of those things others see, such as our hair color, or things we freely share, such as our occupation. Early on, we share only "safe" topics, but as we become more comfortable with another person, we increase our *self-disclosure*, adding more information; thus the open area expands.

The **blind area or blind spot** includes those things that are apparent to others, yet we are unaware of in ourselves. This is the "I *don't* know but you know" area. The habit of playing with your hair when nervous may be a habit that others have observed but you are unaware of, or perhaps the habit of growing rude and testy when you are under stress is something that others have come to expect yet you are oblivious to. Think about your own blind area. Do you wonder what characteristics or behaviors loved ones or colleagues might see in you that you don't? If you do, the best way to find out is to ask for *feedback* from a trusted friend or colleague. If you can remain open-minded and not become defensive, this type of feedback can be very helpful in increasing your self-awareness and interpersonal skills. Once you become aware of information previously in your blind spot, it moves from the blind area to the open area.

The third area, the **hidden area**, contains information that you know but you keep hidden from others. This is the "I know, but you don't know" area. Something you may have done in the past but are ashamed of, previous mistakes or failures, embarrassing moments, or private family history are topics we typically hold close and reveal only in the context of safe, long-term relationships. Sometimes we may choose to keep some things hidden in an attempt to protect the other person. If and when we do reveal this previously hidden information, it moves into the open area. Thus, the hidden area grows smaller and the open area expands.

Finally, the **unknown** area contains information that neither you nor others know about you. This is the "I don't know and you don't know" area. We cannot know how we will react when a parent dies or just what we will do after graduation until the experience occurs. Or perhaps we have an unknown talent or interest that we are as yet unaware of. Taking on challenges and trying new things can help us discover traits or gifts that we didn't know we have.

Knowing how much to share with someone you are close to can be difficult at times. Certainly, you don't want to reveal too much too soon. On the other hand, if the open area remains small, it is difficult for the relationship and trust to grow. Knowing about ourselves, especially our blind and unknown areas enables us to have a healthy, well-rounded self-concept.

Creating Your Own Johari Window

The Johari Window can help you identify your strengths as well as your weaknesses and blind spots. If you would like to create your own Johari Window, you can do so using instructions from The World of Work Project, a company based in Edinburgh, Scotland, dedicated to creating training that will "increase team cohesion and help individuals have more fulfilling and engaging careers." (WOW 2019) To create your own Johari Window, you will need to:

1. **Choose your friend or collaborator:** Identify a person or people whom you trust and whom you think know you.
2. **Select your words:** Review the list of 56 words given below and circle 5-10 words that you think best describe you.
3. **Get your feedback from your collaborator:** Ask your chosen collaborators to complete the same exercise, choosing the 5-10 words they think best describe you.
4. **Place your words in the appropriate pane of the Johari Window:** Place words both you and others selected in "Open" pane. Place words that only you selected in the "Hidden" pane.
5. **Plot your feedback:** Place words your friend or collaborator selected but that you didn't in the "Blind" pane. Place the remaining words in the "unknown" pane.
6. **Review your Window:** Review the words in the four pains of the window. How aligned is your view of who you are with how others see you? How open are you as a person?

Words to Choose From

able	accepting	adaptable	bold	brave
calm	caring	cheerful	clever	complex
confident	dependable	dignified	energetic	extroverted
friendly	giving	happy	helpful	idealistic
independent	ingenious	intelligent	introverted	kind
knowledgeable	logical	loving	mature	modest
nervous	observant	organized	patient	powerful
proud	quiet	reflective	relaxed	religious
responsive	searching	self-assertive	self-conscious	sensible
sentimental	shy	silly	spontaneous	sympathetic
tense	trustworthy	warm	wise	witty

One of the most important parts of creating your own Johari Window is considering the results. How can you use what you learned to improve your interpersonal relationships? Could you share more about yourself to create more trusting relationships? Are there "blind spots" you discovered about yourself that you and address?

Self-Disclosure and Social Media

The willingness of many users to self-disclose personal information ranging from moods to religious affiliation, relationship status, and personal contact information have led to an increase in privacy concerns. Facebook and Twitter offer convenient opportunities to stay in touch with friends, family, and coworkers, but are people using them responsibly? Some argue that there are fundamental differences between today's digital natives, whose private and public selves are intertwined through these technologies, and older generations (Kornblum, 2007). Even though some colleges are offering seminars on managing privacy online, we still hear stories of self-disclosure such as the football player from the University of Texas who has kicked off the team for posting racist comments about the president of the student who was kicked out of his private, Christian college after a picture of him dressed in drag surfaced on Facebook. (Nealy, 2009). The issue of privacy management on Facebook is affecting parent-child relationships, too, and as the website "Oh Crap. My Parents Joined Facebook." shows, the results can sometimes be embarrassing for the college student and the parent as they balance the dialectic between openness and closedness once the child has moved away.

1. How do you manage your privacy and self-disclosures online?
2. Do you think it's ethical for school officials or potential employers to make admission or hiring decisions based on what they can learn about you online? Why or why not?
3. Are you or would you be friends with a parent on social media? Why or why not? If you already are friends with a parent, did you change your posting habits or privacy settings once they joined? Why or why not?

Key Takeaways

- **Self-disclosure** is the *process of revealing information about yourself to others that are not readily known by them*—you have to disclose it. Self-disclosure is important to interpersonal relationships.
- An excellent way of understanding self-disclosure is by looking at the open, hidden, blind, and unknown areas of the **Johari Window**.

Learning Activities

1. Have you ever said too much on a first date? At a job interview? To a professor? Have you ever posted something on Facebook only to return later to remove it? If you answered yes to any of the questions, what have you learned in this chapter that may have led you to do something differently?
2. Have you experienced negative results due to self-disclosure (as sender or receiver)? If so, what could have been altered in the decisions of what, where, when, or how to disclose that may have improved the situation?
3. Under what circumstances is it OK to share information that someone has disclosed to you? Under what circumstances is to not OK to share the information?

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6.2: Communication Climate

Learning Objectives

- Define communication climate.
- Explain the differences between confirming and disconfirming communication climates.
- Demonstrate how to use recognition, acknowledgment, and endorsement to create a confirming communication climate.

Do you feel organized, or confined, in a clean workspace? Are you more productive when the sun is shining than when it's gray and cloudy outside? Just as factors like weather and physical space impact us, communication climate influences our interpersonal interactions. **Communication climate** is the *"overall feeling or emotional mood between people"* (Wood 245). If you dread going to visit your family during the holidays because of tension between you and your sister, or you look forward to dinner with a particular set of friends because they make you laugh, you are responding to the communication climate—the overall mood that is created because of the people involved and the type of communication they bring to the interaction. Let's look at two different types of communication climates: Confirming and Disconfirming climates.

Confirming and Disconfirming Climates

We experience **Confirming Climates** when we receive *messages that demonstrate our value and worth from those with whom we have a relationship*. Conversely, we experience **Disconfirming Climates** when we receive *messages that suggest we are devalued and unimportant*. Obviously, most of us like to be in confirming climates because they foster emotional safety as well as personal and relational growth. However, it is likely that your relationships fall somewhere between the two extremes. Let's look at how we and others create either a confirming or disconfirming climate by using--or failing to use-- three types of messages.



Figure 6.2.1: "Free hugs" by hien_it is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Recognition Messages

Recognition Messages are *messages that either confirm or deny another person's existence*. For example, if a friend enters your home and your smile, hug him, and say, "I'm so glad to see you" you are confirming his existence. If you say "good morning" to a colleague and she ignores you by walking out of the room without saying anything, she is creating a disconfirming climate by not recognizing you as a unique individual. To foster a confirming climate, it is important to recognize others



Figure **6.2.2**: "A Laugh With Richard Allen" by MTSOfan is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Acknowledgment Messages

Acknowledgment Messages go beyond recognizing another's existence by *confirming what they say or how they feel*. Nodding your head while listening or laughing appropriately at a funny story are nonverbal acknowledgment messages. When a friend tells you she had a really bad day at work and you respond with, "Yeah, that does sound hard, do you want to go somewhere quiet and talk?", you are acknowledging and responding to her feelings. In contrast, if you were to respond to your friend's frustrations with a comment like, "That's nothing. Listen to what happened to me today," you would be ignoring her experience and presenting your own experiences as more important than hers.



Figure **6.2.3**: Image by Tumisu from Pixabay is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Endorsement Messages

Endorsement Messages go one step further by *recognizing a person's feelings as valid*. Suppose a friend comes to you upset after a fight with his girlfriend. If you respond with, "Yeah, I can see why you would be upset" you are endorsing his right to feel upset. However, if you said, "Get over it. At least you have a girlfriend" you would be sending messages that deny his right to feel frustrated at that moment. While it is difficult to see people we care about in emotional pain, people are responsible for their own emotions. When we let people own their emotions and do not tell them how to feel, we are creating supportive climates that provide a safe environment for them to work through their problems

Key Takeaways

A communication is the overall feeling or mood between people.

Two types of climates are confirming and disconfirming climates.

Three types of messages that can create a confirming climate are recognition messages, acknowledgment messages, and endorsement messages.

Learning Activity

1. Have you ever avoided a particular interpersonal communication situation because it was uncomfortable or you felt out of place? Could any of this have been related to disconfirming behaviors? Explain.
2. Do you attempt to establish a confirming communication environment in your interactions with others? Explain.

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6.3: Friendships

Learning Objectives

1. Understand stages in the development of friendships.
2. Explain the challenges that gender, culture, and sexual attraction may pose for friendships.
3. Discuss how friendships have changed as a result of social media.

Friendships are *voluntary interpersonal relationships between two people who are usually equal and who mutually influence one another*. Most people feel the need to feel connected with others. One way we meet our need for connection is through our friendships. Friendship means different things to different people depending on age, gender, and cultural background. Common among all friendships is that they are interpersonal relationships of choice. Throughout your life, you will engage in an ongoing process of developing friendships. Some of your friends may become so close that they are like members of your family. Other friendships may be more short-term but still important while they last.

Stages in Developing Friendships

The Mayo Clinic says that adults with strong support provided by good friends have a reduced risk of depression and that older adults with friends are likely to live longer than those without social connections. Friends can increase your sense of belonging and boost your self-confidence. They can help you cope with traumas, such as divorce or serious illness, and enrich your quality of life. (*Mayo Clinic.org).* However, sometimes it can be difficult to make new friends. Rawlins suggests that we develop our friendships through a series of six steps. While we may not follow these six steps in the exact order in all of our relationships, these steps help us understand how we develop friendships.



Figure **6.3.1**: Friendship Development. Source: S. Paynton is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Role-Limited Interaction

The first step in building friendships occurs through **Role-Limited Interaction**. In this step, we *interact with others based on our social roles*. For example, when you meet a new person in the class, your interaction centers around your role as a "student." Communication is characterized by a focus on superficial, rather than personal topics. In this step, we engage in limited self-disclosure and rely on scripts and stereotypes. When two first-time freshmen met in an introductory course, they struck up a conversation and interacted according to the roles they played in the context of their initial communication. They began a conversation because they sit near each other in class and discussed how much they liked or disliked aspects of the course.

Friendly Relations

The second step in developing friendships is called **Friendly Relations**. This stage is characterized by *communication that moves beyond initial roles as the participants begin to interact with one another to see if there are common interests, as well as an interest to continue getting to know one another*. As the students spend more time together and have casual conversations, they may realize a wealth of shared interests. They realize that both were traveling from far distances to go to school and understood each other's struggle with missing their families. Each of them also loves athletics, especially playing basketball. The development of this friendship occurred as they identified with each other as more than classmates. They saw each other as women of the same age, with similar goals, ambitions, and interests. Moreover, as one of them studied Communication and the other Psychology, they appreciated the differences as well as similarities in their collegiate pursuits.

Moving Toward Friendship

The third step in developing friendships is called **Moving Toward Friendship**. In this stage, participants *make moves to foster a more personalized friendship*. They may begin meeting outside of the setting in which the relationship started, and begin increasing the levels of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure enables new friends to form bonds of trust. When the students entered this stage it was right before one joined the basketball club on their college campus. As she started practices and meetings, she realized this would be something fun for her and her classmate to do together so she invited her classmate along.

Nascent Friendship

The fourth step in developing friendships is called **Nascent Friendship**. In this stage, individuals *commit to spending more time together*. They also may start using the term "friend" to refer to each other as opposed to "a person in my history class" or "this guy I work with." The interactions extend beyond the initial roles as participants work out their own private communication rules and norms. For example, they may start calling or texting on a regular basis or reserving certain times and activities for each other such as going on evening runs together. As time went on, the students started texting each other more frequently just to tell each other a funny story that happened during the day, to make plans for going out to eat, or to plan for meeting at the gym to work out.

Stabilized Friendship

The fifth step in developing friendships is **Stabilized Friendship**. In this stage, friends *take each other for granted as friends, but not in a negative way*. Because the friendship is solid, they assume each other will be in their lives. There is an assumption of continuity. The communication in this stage is also characterized by a sense of trust as levels of self-disclosure increase and each person feels more comfortable revealing parts of him or herself to the other. This stage can continue indefinitely throughout a lifetime. When the women became friends, they were freshmen in college. After finishing school some years later, they moved to separate regions for graduate school. While they were sad to move away from one another, they knew the friendship would continue. To this day they continue to be best friends.

Waning Friendship

The final step in friendship development is **Waning Friendship**. As you know, friendships do not always have a happy ending. *Many friendships come to an end*. Friendships may not simply come to an abrupt end. Many times there are stages that show a decline of a friendship, but in Rawlin's model, the ending of a friendship is summed up by this step. Perhaps the relationship is too difficult to sustain over large geographic distances. Or, sometimes people change and grow in different directions and have little in common with old friends. Sometimes friendship rules are violated to a degree beyond repair. We spoke earlier of trust as a component of friendships. One common rule of trust is that if we tell friends a secret, they are expected to keep it a secret. If that rule is broken, and a friend continually breaks your trust by telling your secrets to others, you are likely to stop thinking of them as your friend.

Challenges for Friendships

While these steps are a general pathway toward friendship, friendships are not always smooth. As with any relationship, challenges exist in friendships that can strain their development. Three of the more common challenges to friendships are gender, cultural diversity, and sexual attraction. Important to remember is that each of these constructs comes with its own conflicts of power and privilege because of the cultural norms and the values we give to certain characteristics. These are challenges to relationships since studies show that people tend to associate with others that are similar to themselves (Echols & Graham). Take a look at the pair on the side of the page, they identify as different genders, ethnicities, cultures, and are even attracted to different sexes. Their friendship not only offers an opportunity to learn about differences through each other but also offers challenges because of these differences. As we emphasize throughout the book, factors such as our gender identities and cultural backgrounds always play a role in our interactions with others.



Figure **6.3.2**: Friends (Picnoi.com Open Images)

Gender

Research suggests that both women and men value trust and intimacy in their friendships and value their time spent with friends (Mathews, Derlega & Morrow; Bell & Coleman; Monsour & Rawlins). However, there are some differences in the interactions that

take place within women's and men's friendships (Burleson, Jones & Holmstrom; Coates; Harriman). Quite common among female friends, is to get together simply to talk and catch up with one another. When calling her close friend, Antoinette might say, "Why don't you come over to my place so we can talk?" The need to connect through verbal communication is explicitly stated and forms the basis for the relationship. In contrast, among male friends, a more common approach to interaction is an invitation to engage in an activity as a means of facilitating the conversation. For example, John might say to his friend, "Hey, Mike, let's play video games this weekend." The explicit request is to engage in an activity, but John and Mike understand that as they engage in the activity, they will talk, joke around, and reinforce their friendship ties. While we have often looked at gender as male and female, culture is changing in that gender is now often viewed as a spectrum rather than the male/female binary. Research is now being done to be more inclusive of gender definitions that extend beyond the male/female binary. This research may be cutting edge in its field, but as society becomes more accepting of difference, new ideas of relationship rules will emerge.

Culture

Cultural values shape how we understand our friendships. Most Western societies emphasize individualism (as opposed to collectivism); thus friendships are seen as voluntary in that we get to choose whom we want in our friendship circle. If we do not like someone we do not have to be friends with him or her in personal life. This is in contrast to the workplace, or school, where we may be forced to get along with colleagues or classmates even though we may not like them. In many collectivist cultures, such as Japan and China, friendships carry certain obligations that are understood by all parties (Carrier; Kim & Markman). These may include gift-giving, employment, and economic opportunities Although these sorts of connections, particularly in business and politics, may be frowned upon in the United States because they contradict the cultural value of individualism, they are natural, normal, and logical results of friendships in collectivist cultures.

Sexual Attraction

The classic film, *When Harry Met Sally*, highlights how sexual attraction can complicate friendships. In the movie, Harry quotes the line, "Men and women can't be friends because the sex always gets in the way." Levels of sexual attraction or sexual tension may challenge friendships between heterosexual men and women, gay men, and lesbian women. This may arise from an internal desire of one of the friends to explore a sexual relationship, or if someone in the relationship indicates that he/she wants to be "more than friends." These situations might place strain on the friendship and require the individuals to address the situation if they want the friendship to continue. One approach has been the recent definition of friendships called, "Friends with Benefits." This term implies an understanding that two people will identify their relationship as a friendship, but will be open to engaging in sexual activity without committing to the other characteristics common in romantic relationships.

Key Takeaways

Friendships are voluntary relationships between people who are usually equal and mutually influence one another. They are interpersonal relationships of choice.

Most friendships move through 6 discrete phases. Some friendships last a lifetime, but those who enter the waning phase come to an end.

Three common challenges of friendship are gender, culture, and sexual attraction on the part of one friend but not the other.

Friendships and Social Media

- Take a moment to reflect on how many friends you have in your everyday life. Is that number equivalent or more than the number you have on social media accounts like Facebook? Chances are, those numbers are very different. To those of us who have access to social media, it is changing the ways we develop and maintain friendships
- Social networking addiction occurs when people become so dependent on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and related platforms that all of their communication seems to take place within these virtual places. Many researchers conclude that addiction to social media is much stronger than an addiction to cigarettes or alcohol. Can social networking addiction enhance or interfere with friendships?
- Six Ways Social Media Changed the Way We Communicate discusses how our ability and need to share and consume information quickly can lead to changes in our relationships and ourselves. The article also provides related links. (Open Stax) What conclusions can you draw about social media and friendships?

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6.4: Romantic Relationships

Learning Objectives

1. Define romantic relationships.
2. Explain cultural differences that may determine the selection of a romantic partner.
3. List and explain three influences that may determine whom we select as romantic partners.
4. To comprehend common stages in romantic relationships.
5. To understand three relational dialectics present in interpersonal relationships.



Figure **6.4.1**: "Couple Kissing - Pride 2009" by pedram navid is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Romantic Relationships

Like other relationships in our lives, romantic relationships play an important role in fulfilling our needs for intimacy and social connection. In many Western cultures, romantic relationships are voluntary. We are free to decide whom to date and form life-long romantic relationships. In some Eastern cultures, these decisions may be made by parents, or elders in the community, based on what is good for the family or social group. Even in Western societies, not everyone holds the same amount of freedom and power to determine their relational partners. Parents or society may discourage interracial, interfaith, or interclass relationships. While it is now legal for same-sex couples to marry, many same-sex couples still suffer political and social restrictions when making choices about marrying and having children. Much of the research on how romantic relationships develop is based on relationships in the West. In this context, romantic relationships can be viewed as *voluntary relationships between individuals who intend to be a significant part of one another's ongoing lives.*

Arranged Marriages

Although romantic love is considered a precursor to marriage in Western societies, this is not the case in other cultures. Mutual attraction and love are the most important factors in mate selection according to research conducted in the United States. In some other countries, like China, India, and Iran, mate selection is primarily decided by family members and may be based on the evaluation of a potential partner’s health, financial assets, social status, or family connections. In some cases, families make financial arrangements to ensure the marriage takes place. Research on marital satisfaction of people in autonomous (self-chosen) marriages and arranged marriages has been mixed, but a study by Myers, Madathil, and Tingle found that there was no significant difference in marital satisfaction between individuals in marriages of choice in the United States and those in arranged marriages in India (Myers, Madathil, & Tingle, 2005). While many Americans undoubtedly question whether a person can be happy in an arranged marriage, in more collectivistic (group-oriented) societies, accommodating family wishes may be more important than individual preferences. Rather than love leading up to a marriage, love is expected to grow as partners learn more about each other and adjust to their new lives together once married.



Figure 6.4.2: "Scene 2: Malai Matral (Ma-lie Ma-tral)" by kittygutz is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Think about your own romantic relationships for a moment. To whom are you attracted? Chances are they are people with whom you share common interests and encounter in your everyday routines such as going to school, work, or participation in hobbies or sports. In other words, **self-identity, similarity,** and **proximity** are three powerful influences when it comes to whom we select as romantic partners. We often select others that we deem appropriate for us as they fit our self-identity; heterosexuals pair up with other heterosexuals, lesbian women with other lesbian women, and so forth. Social class, religious preference, and ethnic or racial identity also influence as people are more likely to pair up with others of similar backgrounds. We are certainly not suggesting that we only have romantic relationships with carbon copies of ourselves. Over the last few decades, there have been some dramatic shifts when it comes to numbers and perceptions of interracial marriage. It is more and more common to see a wide variety of people that make up married couples. Logically speaking, it is difficult (although not impossible with the prevalence of social media and online dating services) to meet people outside of our immediate geographic area. In other words, if we do not have the opportunity to meet and interact with someone at least a little, how do we know if they are a person with whom we would like to explore a relationship? We cannot meet or maintain a long-term relationship, without sharing some sense of proximity.

Stages of Romantic Relationships

Just as there are stages in friendship, romantic relationships go through stages as well.

1. In the initial stage of a romantic relationship, **no interaction** occurs when two people have not interacted.
2. We move into **invitational communication** when we begin to send signals that we are interested in more interaction.
3. Third, we engage in **explorational communication** where we increase our self-disclosure and time together to see if we are truly compatible.
4. Fourth is a period of **intensifying communication** ("relationship high" where we cannot bear to be away from one another. At this stage, we tend to idealize one another or downplay faults.
5. Fifth is **revising communication** when the relationship high wears off and we begin to see one another more realistically. It is at this point that couples must again make decisions about where to go with the relationship. Do they stay together and work toward long-term goals, or do they break up?
6. **Commitment** is the sixth stage in the development of romantic relationships. This occurs when a couple makes the decision to make the relationship a permanent part of their lives. While marriage is an obvious sign of commitment, it is not the only signifier. Not all couples planning a future together legally marry.

Obviously, simply committing is not enough to maintain a relationship through tough times that occur as couples grow and change. Like a ship set on a destination, a couple must learn to steer through rough waves as well as calm waters. A couple can accomplish this by learning to communicate through the good and the bad. **Navigating** is when a couple continues to *revise their communication and ways of interacting to reflect the changing needs of each person*. Done well, life's changes are more easily enjoyed when viewed as a natural part of the life cycle. The original patterns for managing dialectical tensions when a couple began dating, may not work when they are managing two careers, children, and a mortgage payment. Outside pressures such as children, professional duties, and financial responsibilities put added pressure on relationships that require attention and negotiation. If a couple neglects to practice effective communication with one another, coping with change becomes increasingly stressful and puts the relationship in jeopardy.

Not only do romantic couples progress through a series of stages of growth, but they also experience stages of deterioration. Deterioration does not necessarily mean that a couple's relationship will end. Instead, couples may move back and forth from deterioration stages to growth stages throughout the course of their relationship.

Relational Dialectics

Relationship dialectics is a communication theory that states that people in relationships have contradictory desires or needs. These contradictory desires or impulses can create tension within the relationships if they are not managed properly. Baxter identifies three common relational dialectics or tensions as Autonomy-Connection, Novelty-Predictability, and Openness-Closedness.

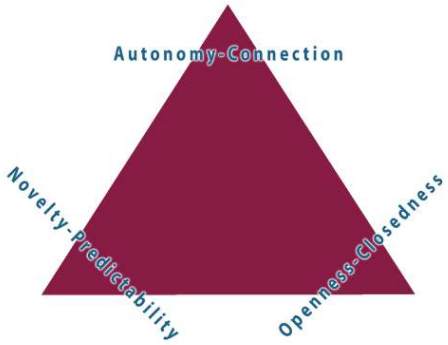


Figure **6.4.3**: The Three Relational Dialectics. Source: H. Rayl is licensed under CC-BY 4.0.

Autonomy-Connection

Autonomy-Connection refers to our *need to have a close connection with others as well as our need to have our own space and identity*. We may miss our romantic partner when he or she is away but simultaneously enjoy and cherish that alone time. When you first enter a romantic relationship, you probably want to be around the other person as much as possible. As the relationship grows, you likely begin to desire fulfilling your need for autonomy, or alone time. In every relationship, each person must balance how much time to spend with the other, versus how much time to spend alone.

Novelty-Predictability

Novelty-Predictability is the idea that *we desire predictability as well as spontaneity in our relationships*. In every relationship, we take comfort in a certain level of routine as a way of knowing what we can count on the other person in the relationship. Such predictability provides a sense of comfort and security. However, it requires balance with novelty to avoid boredom. An example of balance might be friends who get together every Saturday for brunch but make a commitment to always try new restaurants each week.

Openness-Closedness

Openness-Closedness refers to *the desire to be open and honest with others while at the same time not wanting to reveal everything about yourself to someone else*. One's desire for privacy does not mean they are shutting out others. It is a normal human need. We tend to disclose the most personal information to those with whom we have the closest relationships.

In general, there is no one right way to understand and manage dialectical tensions since every relationship is unique. However, to always satisfy one need and ignore the other may be a sign of trouble in the relationship (Baxter). It is important to remember that relational dialectics are a natural part of our relationships and that we have a lot of choice, freedom, and creativity in how we work them out with our relational partners. It is also important to remember that dialectical tensions are negotiated differently in each relationship. The ways we self-disclose and manage dialectical tensions contribute greatly to the overall communication climate of the relationship.

Online Dating

It is becoming more common for people to initiate romantic relationships through the Internet, and online dating sites are big business, bringing in $470 million a year (Madden & Lenhart, 2006). Whether it's through sites like Match.com or OkCupid.com or through chat rooms or social networking, people are taking advantage of some of the conveniences of online dating.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of online dating?
2. What advice would you give a friend who is considering using online dating to help him or her be a more competent communicator?



Figure **6.4.4**: "Blogger Double Date" by Mike Licht, NotionsCapital.com is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Key Takeaways

- In the U.S. we view romantic relationships as *voluntary relationships between individuals who have intentions that each person will be a significant part of their ongoing lives.* In some cultures, marriages are arranged. Romantic relationships go through typical stages. Most relationships are subject to relational dialectics. The survival of the relationship may rest on the individuals' ability to balance these tensions.
- We balance tensions in our relationships by balancing relational dynamics, such as **Autonomy-Connection**, **Novelty Predictabilit**y, and **Openness-Closedness**.

Ideas for Speech Topics

- ***Five Love Languages.*** Dr. Gary Chapman wrote *The Five Love Languages*, basing it on notes he took over many years while counseling couples. His notes indicated that there are five love languages that people use and respond to and that recognizing and trying to "speak" the love language of your partner or family member helps him or her feel valued and supported. You can read more about love languages and take the 5 Love Languages quiz at https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/
- Marriage Traditions in Various Times and Cultures. Read more at www.buddybuddy.com/mar-trad.html

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6.5: Family

Learning Objectives

1. To explain the characteristics of a family.
2. To describe and explain how our early concept of family influences us in the future.
3. To examine whether and how our view of the family still shapes our expectations and behaviors.

What is a Family?

The third primary type of interpersonal relationship we engage in is that of family. Unlike friendships and romantic relationships, which are usually voluntary relationships, we have no choice in our family of birth. What is family? Is family created by legal ties, or the bond of sharing common blood? Or, can a family be considered people who share a commitment to one another? In an effort to recognize the diversity of families we define **family** as *two or more people related by marriage, blood, adoption, or choice, who live together for an extended period of time.* Families are characterized by relationships among family members. Family relations are typically long-term.

Characteristics of a Family

Pearson suggests that in families, members tend to play predictable roles, form a relational transactional group, share a living space for prolonged periods of time, and create interpersonal images of family that evolve over time. (Pearson, 1992) Let's take a few moments to unpack these characteristics:

Each Family Member Plays a Predictable Role

Most family members take on predictable individual roles (parent, child, older sibling) in our family relationships. Similarly, family members tend to take on predictable communication patterns within the family. For example, your younger brother may act as the family peacemaker, while your older sister always initiates fights with her siblings.

Families Are Characterized by Relationships Among Members

Not only is a family made up of individual members, but it is also largely defined by the relationships among the members. A family that consists of two opposite-sex parents, an older sister, her husband and three kids, a younger brother, his new wife, and two kids from a first marriage is largely defined by the relationships among the family members. All of these people have a role in the family and interact with others in fairly consistent ways according to their roles.

Families Usually Occupy a Common Living Space Over an Extended Period of Time

One consistent theme when defining family is recognizing that family members typically live under the same roof for an extended period of time. We certainly include extended family within our definition, but for the most part, our notions of the family include those people with whom we share, or have shared, common space over a period of time.

We Learn Cultural and Personal Values From Our Family

From our families, we learn important cultural and personal values concerning intimacy, spirituality, communication, and respect. Parents and other family members model behaviors that shape how we interact with others. From our family, we form an image of what "family" means and may try to keep that image or ideal throughout our lifetime. As an adult, you may define family as your immediate family, consisting of your parents and a sibling. However, your romantic partner may see family as consisting of parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Each of you performs different communication behaviors to maintain your image of family. This can even filter down to the way you view holidays and expectations for family get-togethers.

Key Takeaways

- Family is defined as two or more people related by marriage, blood, adoption, or choice, who live together for an extended period of time. Unlike friends and romantic partners which are voluntary, most of us have no say in the family we are born or adopted into.

- Families have common characteristics in that each member tends to play a predictable role; families are characterized by relationships among members; families share a living space for prolonged periods of time; and families are the primary means through which we are educated about cultural and personal values.

Discussion Topics

1. If you have siblings, think about and explain the communication roles taken on by each of you.
2. Think about your own family. In what ways, if any, do you seek to maintain the view of family you had as a child? In what ways do you want your future family to be different? Has your view of the family ever created conflict with your romantic partner, or can you see it doing so in the future? For instance, does your partner have a different expectation for holidays or other events?

Topics for Further Research

- Differing cultural viewpoints on the role and status of elder family members
- Research the effects of social media on family relationships
- Research Multiracial Families and some of the challenges or stressors they might face.

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6.6: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace

Learning Objectives

After watching the video: Developing Interpersonal Skills, your should be able to

1. Identify 7 important interpersonal skills needed in the workpace or classroom.

2. Assess your own interpersonal strengths and weaknesses.

Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace

Watch the video at https://youtu.be/2n3iAuGyyrI

As you may well know, interpersonal skills are as essential in the workplace as they are in personal life. This video introduces you to 7 important interpersonal skills needed for the workplace or classroom. As you listen to the video, make notes. I suggest that you use the Close-Captioning (CC) tool. The following questions are to help you in your note-taking.

1. According to the narrator, what is meant by **interpersonal** skills?

This video lists 7 important interpersonal skills for the workplace or classroom. The following questions ask you to discuss each. There may be more than one questions about each of the 7 skills.

2. VERBAL skills- a Define verbal skills. b. What is the difference between a person with "good" verbal skills and a person with "poor" verbal skills?

3. Nonverbal skills. a. Define NONVERBAL skills. b. In this video, the woman has good nonverbal skills whereas the man is shown as having poor skills. What makes the nonverbal skills shown by the woman superior to those shown by the man?

4. Listening skills. a. Define Listening skills and give examples.

5. Negotiation skills. a. Explain what is meant by negotiation skills.

6. Problem-solving skills. a. What are problem-solving skills? Give examples.

7. Good decision-making. a. Explain what "good" decision making means.

8. Assertiveness. a. Explain what assertiveness means.

9. Now that you have learned about interpersonal skills, I'd like you to think about and analyze your own skills. Of the 7 interpersonal skills you just learned about, where do your strengths lie? In other words, which of these skills do you already have?

10. As far as the 7 interpersonal skills you just learned about, where do your weaknesses like? In other words, which interpersonal skills do you need to work on?

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O'Reilly, Denise. University of Kwazulu-Natal. *Developing Interpersonal Skills.* https://youtu.be/2n3iAuGyyrI. Retrieved 28 July, 2021.

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6.7: Conflict Management

Learning Objectives

1. Define interpersonal conflict.
2. Compare and contrast the five styles of interpersonal conflict management.
3. List strategies for effectively managing conflict through collaboration.

To whom do you have the most conflict right now? If you still live at home with a parent or parents, you may have daily conflicts with your family as you try to balance your autonomy, or desire for independence, with the practicalities of living under your family's roof. If you've recently moved into an apartment or house, you may be negotiating roommate conflicts as you adjust to living with someone you may not know very well. You probably also have experiences with conflict in romantic relationships, in the workplace, and maybe even at school. So think back and ask yourself, "How well do I handle conflict?" As with all areas of communication, we can improve if we have the background knowledge and the motivation to reflect on and enhance our communication skills.

Examining Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict *occurs in interactions where there are real or perceived incompatible goals or opposing viewpoints*. Interpersonal conflict may be expressed verbally or nonverbally along a continuum ranging from mild nonverbal silent treatment to a very loud shouting match. Interpersonal conflict is, however, distinct from interpersonal violence, which escalates beyond communication to include abuse. Domestic violence is a serious issue that goes beyond the conflict we will discuss.

While conflict may be uncomfortable and challenging, it doesn't have to be negative. In fact, it is inevitable. Since conflict is present in our personal and professional lives, the ability to manage conflict and negotiate desirable outcomes can help us be more successful at both. Whether you and your partner are trying to decide what brand of flat-screen television to buy or discussing the upcoming political election with your mother, the potential for conflict is present. In professional settings, the ability to engage in conflict management, sometimes called conflict resolution, is a necessary and valued skill.

Using strategies for managing conflict situations can make life more pleasant than letting a situation stagnate or escalate. The negative effects of poorly handled conflict could range from an awkward last few weeks of the semester with a college roommate to being fired from your job. There is no absolute right or wrong way to handle a conflict. Remember that being a competent communicator doesn't mean that you follow a set of absolute rules. Rather, a competent communicator assesses multiple contexts and applies or adapts communication tools and skills to fit the situation.

Strategies for Managing Conflict

When we ask others what they want to do when they experience conflict, most of the time they say "resolve it." While this is understandable, also important to understand is that conflict is ongoing in all relationships, and our approach to conflict sometimes should be to "manage it" instead of always trying to "resolve it."

One way to understand options for managing conflict is by knowing five major strategies people may use for managing conflict. As you read about each of these, you will see that some are likely to be more successful than others.



Figure 6.7.1: Five Styles of Interpersonal Conflict Management. Source: Adapted from M. Afzalur Rahim, "A Measure of Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict," Academy of Management Journal 26, no. 2 (1983): 368–76.

Competing

When people select the **competing** or the win-lose approach, they exhibit *high concern for the self and low concern for the other person*. The goal here is to win the conflict. This approach is often characterized by loud, forceful, and interrupting communication. Again, this is analogous to sports. Too often, we avoid conflict because we believe the only other alternative is to try to dominate the other person. In relationships where we care about others or in conflicts at work, it's no wonder this strategy can seem unappealing. Competing sometimes leads to aggression, although not always. Aggressive communication may involve insults, profanity, and yelling, or threats of punishment if you do not get your way.

Avoiding

When people **avoid** a conflict they may suppress feelings of frustration or walk away from a situation. This style of conflict management often indicates a *low concern for self and a low concern for the other*, and no direct communication about the conflict takes place. This is not always the case, however. In fact, there may be times when this is the best strategy. Take, for example, a heated argument between D'Shaun and Pat. Pat is about to make a hurtful remark out of frustration. Instead, she decides that she needs to avoid this argument right now until she and D'Shaun can come back and discuss things in a calmer fashion. Or we may decide to avoid conflict for other reasons. If you view the conflict as having little importance to you, it may be better to ignore it. If the person you're having conflict with will only be working in your office for a week, you may perceive a conflict to be temporary and choose to avoid it. In general, avoiding doesn't work. For one thing, *you can not communicate*. Even when we try to avoid conflict, we may intentionally or unintentionally give our feelings away through our verbal and nonverbal communication, such as rolling our eyes or sighing. Consistent conflict avoidance over the long term generally has negative consequences for a relationship because neither person is willing to participate in the conflict management process.

Accommodating

The **accommodating** conflict management style indicates a *moderate degree of concern for self and others.* Sometimes, this style is viewed as passive or submissive, in that someone complies with or obliges another without providing personal input. However, it could be that the person involved in the conflict values the relationship more than the issue. The context for and motivation behind accommodating play an important role in whether or not it is an appropriate strategy. For example, if there is little chance that your own goals can be attained, or if the relationship might be damaged if you insist on your own way, accommodating could be appropriate. On the other hand, if you constantly accommodate with little reciprocation by your partner, this style can be personally damaging.

Compromising

The **compromising style** is evident when *both parties are willing to give up something in order to gain something else*. It shows a moderate concern for self and the other. When environmental activist, Julia Butterfly Hill agreed to end her two-year-long tree-sit in Luna as a protest against the logging practices of Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO), and pay them $50,000 in exchange for

their promise to protect Luna and not cut within a 20-foot buffer zone, she and PALCO reached a compromise. If one of the parties feels the compromise is unequal they may be less likely to stick to it long term. When conflict is unavoidable, many times people will opt for a compromise. One of the problems with compromise is that neither party fully gets their needs met. If you want Mexican food and your friend wants pizza, you might agree to compromise and go someplace that serves Mexican pizza. While this may seem like a good idea, you may have really been craving a burrito and your friend may have really been craving a pepperoni pizza. In this case, while the compromise brought together two food genres, neither person got their desire met. Compromising may be a good strategy when there are time limitations or when prolonging a conflict may lead to relationship deterioration. Compromise may also be good when both parties have equal power or when other resolution strategies have not worked (Macintosh & Stevens, 2008).

Collaborating

Finally, **collaborating** demonstrates a *high level of concern for both self and others*. Using this strategy, individuals agree to share information, feelings, and creativity to try to reach a mutually acceptable solution that meets both of their needs. In our food example above, one strategy would be for both people to get the food they want, then take it on a picnic in the park. This way, both people are getting their needs met fully, and in a way that extends beyond original notions of win-lose approaches for managing the conflict. The downside to this strategy is that it is very time-consuming and requires high levels of trust.

Tips for Managing Interpersonal Conflict

- Do not view the conflict as a contest you are trying to win.
- Distinguish the person or people from the problem. (Don’t make it personal and don't engage in blaming and name-calling.)
- Determine what underlying needs may be driving the other person’s demands (sometimes needs can still be met in a different way).
- Identify areas of common ground or shared interests that you can work from to develop solutions.
- Ask questions to allow them to clarify and to help you understand their perspective.
- Listen carefully and provide verbal and nonverbal feedback.
- Remain flexible and realize there may be solutions yet to be discovered.

Key Takeaways

Interpersonal conflict is an inevitable part of relationships that, although not always negative, can take an emotional toll on relational partners unless they develop skills and strategies for managing it. Although there is no absolute right or wrong way to handle a conflict, there are five predominant styles of conflict management, which are competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating.

Chapter Summary

Interpersonal communication is communication between two or more individuals engaged in a personal relationship. Quite often, interpersonal communication occurs in pairs, but a small family unit could also engage in interpersonal communication. In order for a close relationship to develop, participants must engage in self-disclosure.

As we navigate our interpersonal relationships, we create communication climates, which are the overall feelings and moods people have for one another and the relationship. When we engage in disconfirming messages, we produce a negative relational climate, while confirming messages can help build a positive relational climate by recognizing the uniqueness and importance of another person.

The three primary types of interpersonal relationships we engage in are friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships. Each of these relationships develops through a series of stages. Friendships and romantic relationships differ from family relationships in that they are relationships of choice. We manage our relationships by negotiating dialectical tensions, which are opposing needs in interpersonal relationships.

Finally, all relationships experience conflict. Conflict is often perceived as an indicator that there is a problem in a relationship. However, conflict is a natural and ongoing part of all relationships. The goal for conflict is not to eliminate it, but to manage it.

There are five primary approaches to managing conflict which include competing, accommodating, compromising, avoiding, and collaborating.

Key Terms

- accommodating
- arranged marriages
- avoiding (as a means of managing conflict)
- collaborating
- competing
- compromising
- conflict
- confirming climate
- disconfirming climate
- family
- friendship
- interpersonal communication
- interpersonal conflict
- Johari Window: open, hidden, blind, and unknown panes
- navigating
- proximity
- relationship dialectics
- romantic relationships
- waning stage of friendship

Exercises

1. Select an important person in your life and pay attention to your communication climate. How do you and this other person demonstrate recognition, acknowledgment, and endorsement?
2. Reflect on one of your important friendships and trace its development through Rawlins' six stages. Discuss whether or how was affected by important transitions in your life, sexual attraction, and diversity?
3. Reflect on a current or past romantic relationship. How did you communicate attraction or needs for connection and separateness?
4. Does the definition of family in this textbook fit your own definition? Why? Why not?
5. Interview one or both of your parents about how their communication has changed as they have moved along the family life cycle. How did their relational culture change? How did they manage relational dialectics?
6. How was conflict managed in your family while growing up? Was it viewed as positive or negative? How did those early messages and lessons about conflict shape your current attitudes?
7. Of the five conflict management strategies, is there one that you use more often than others? Why or why not? Do you think people are predisposed to one style over the others based on their personality or other characteristics? If so, what personality traits do you think would lead a person to each style?

Topics for Further Research

- Conflict and power in interpersonal communication
- De-escalating conflict in the workplace
- Interpersonal Conflict Communication in Japanese Cultural Contexts

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Career Communication

During the five-day workweek, most of us spend as much or more time with the people at work than the people we live with, so it is unsurprising that our workplace communication is very important to our overall quality of life.

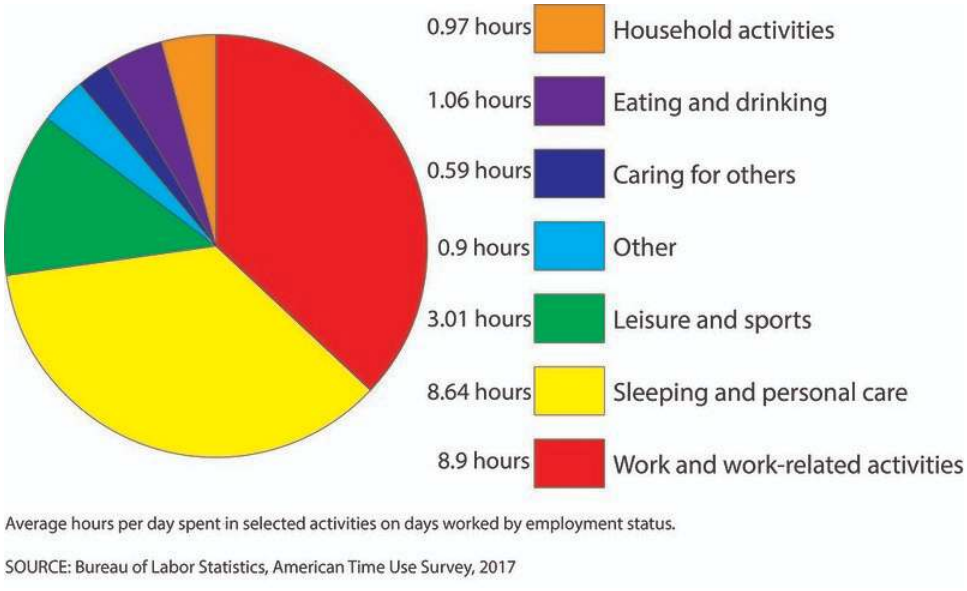


Figure **7.1**: Daily Life Breakdown

In this chapter, we're going to explore some areas directly related to workplace communication, including competencies employers desire, and how to prepare for and manage your career. Much of the material in this chapter is provided by the Career Services Department at Southwest Tennessee Community College and its director, Brenda Williams.

7.1: Soft Skills and Career Readiness
7.2: Professionalism
7.3: Career Exploration
7.4: Résumés and Cover Letters
7.5: Interviewing
7.6: Summary and Learning Activities

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7.1: Soft Skills and Career Readiness

Learning Outcomes

1. Define soft skills.
2. Explain the meaning of "career readiness."
3. Define "career competencies."
4. Identify 8 essential career competencies.
5. Begin your own digital portfolio to showcase your education and experiences.

Year after year on national surveys, employers rank **soft skills** as even more essential than **hard skills** for career success.

What are Soft Skills?

The best way to understand soft skills is to compare them to hard skills. **Hard skills** are technical or practical skills such as accounting, computer repair, and other practices or techniques you learn in courses in your college major, in a practicum, or on the job. **Soft skills** are personal and interpersonal attributes that are important no matter what job or position you are hired for. Soft skills are considered "**transferrable skills"** because they are relevant for any position and can be transferred from one job to another. Employers look for soft skills because these skills are difficult and time-consuming to teach yet are important to success. Figure 7.1.1 compares soft and hard skills.

	SOFT SKILLS	HARD SKILLS
What are they?	personal attributes and interpersonal abilities	practical abilities and skills usually learned through practice and education
What are some examples?	communication, professionalism, teamwork, problem-solving, respect for others, leadership	computer repair, accounting, Excel, Python, AutoCAD, social media marketing, graphics manufacturing, CPR, rescue equipment
Why are they important?	helps you **get the job**	helps you **get an interview**

Figure 7.1.1: Comparison of Soft Skills and Hard Skills. Career Services. Southwest Tennessee Community College. *Digital Career Guide*. 2021.

Soft Skills Examples for Students

Students or recent graduates often find themselves looking for a job without work experience. You can still find plenty of soft skills from your educational background that your can discuss in a job interview or career fair. Some of these include teamwork, critical thinking, organization, research, public speaking, self-motivation, dependability, empathy, enthusiasm, diplomacy, planning, reliability, leadership, self-awareness, resourcefulness, patience, persuasion, interpersonal skills. Think about ways you can discuss your command of these soft skills by giving examples of times you have learned and demonstrated these skills in specific courses; in your volunteer work; or in your involvement in clubs and organizations.

Soft Skills in the Job Search Process and Interview

Employers may value different soft skills according to the specific position you are applying for. How do you know which soft skills are valued by the employer? The answer to this lies 1) in what you have learned in your research about the company and in 2) the job description. When you read the job description, you will likely see statements such as, "Must be able to work independently as well as as part of a team" or "must show diplomacy and sensitivity in dealing with others." These are the soft skills you must be able to address in your interview, on the cover letter, and, to a lesser extent, on the resume. To prepare for the job interview, be able to address specific soft skills and how you have developed them. Another way you can demonstrate your soft skills are through the job interview itself. To demonstrate your soft skills during the interview

- refer to your research and what you have learned about the company

- demonstrate your critical thinking and active listening skills by replying specifically to questions asked in the interview
- demonstrate your planning by showing you have prepared for questions during the interview; don't allow questions to take you by surprise

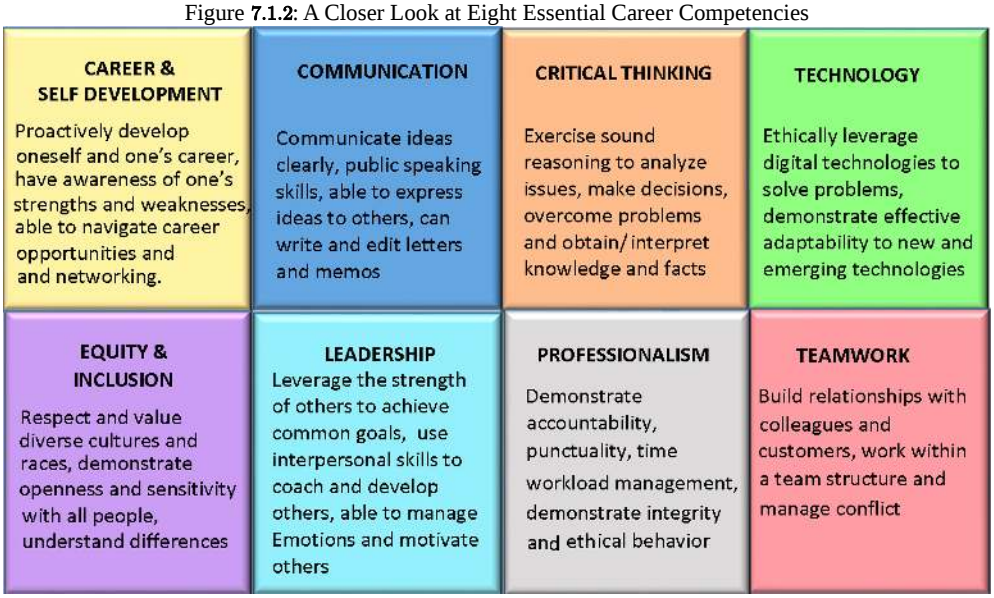
Career Competencies

Career competencies can be defined *as* a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes that lead to excellent employee performance and ultimately to the success of the business or organization (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2017). Employers want to hire students and graduates who are **career-ready**, meaning graduates who can demonstrate they possess these essential competencies. Most of these Career Readiness Competencies are the soft skills you learned about previously.

Eight Essential Career Competencies

As first discussed in Chapter 1, the National Association of Colleges and Employers identified **eight essential career competencies**. These essential competencies are career and self-development; communication; critical thinking; technology; equity and inclusion; leadership; professionalism; and teamwork. Each is explained in the figure shown below.

Figure **7.1.2**: A Closer Look at Eight Essential Career Competencies



Source: "10 Steps to Career Development Success," Adapted from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Competencies by Southwest Tennessee Community College's Career Services Department.

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How "Career Ready" is the Typical College Graduate?

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, "When it comes to rating the 'career readiness' of college graduates . . . employers tend to rate the proficiency of recent college graduates lower than do the students themselves. This can be problematic because it suggests that employers see skills gaps in key areas where college students don't believe gaps exist. . . Employers and graduating seniors differed greatly when it came to rating proficiency in competencies such as professionalism/work ethic, oral/written communications, and leadership as students considered themselves much more proficient than did employers." (NACE) The results are shown in Figure **7.1.3**.

Figure 7.1.3: Employer vs. Student Perception of Proficiency in Career Readiness Competencies, by Percentage of Respondents

COMPETENCY	% OF EMPLOYERS THAT RATED RECENT GRADS PROFICIENT*	% OF STUDENTS WHO CONSIDERED THEMSELVES PROFICIENT**
Professionalism/Work Ethic	42.5%	89.4%
Oral/Written Communications	41.6%	79.4%
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	55.8%	79.9%
Teamwork/Collaboration	77.0%	85.1%
Leadership	33.0%	70.5%
Digital Technology	65.8%	59.9%
Career Management	17.3%	40.9%
Global/Intercultural Fluency	20.7%	34.9%

Job Outlook 2018 (N=201 employing organizations) and *The Class of 2017 Student Survey Report* (N=4,213 graduating seniors), National Association of Colleges and Employers. (https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/are-college-graduates-career-ready/)

Developing Career Readiness Competencies

As you have likely already noticed, many of these competencies are components of your Fundamentals of Communication course. In addition to Oral and Written Communication, you will be or have already been introduced to Global and Intercultural Fluency (Equity and Inclusion), Teamwork/Collaboration, Leadership, and Critical Thinking/Problem-Solving. In this chapter, you will learn about another important career competency: professionalism. In addition, you will take steps toward Career Management.

As you develop your career competencies, a great place to keep track of your accomplishments is in an e-Portfolio or digital portfolio.

What is an E-Portfolio?

A digital portfolio is **a computer-based collection of student performance over time**. Digital portfolios can include many different types of content, including photographs, texts, illustrations, graphic design projects, artwork, papers you've written, and speeches you've given. You should build your e-Portfolio over time, adding new content each semester and after graduation to record your new experiences, projects, and activities.

Uses of an e-Portfolio

An e-Portfolio can be used to apply for scholarships and internships and to gain admissions to a four-year university or master's degree programs. Another important use of a digital portfolio can be in your search for employment. Submitting a link to your digital portfolio along with your resume and cover letter provides an online source of information that helps set you apart from other candidates and may improve your chances of getting an interview. "If you want to show an employer proof of your skills and abilities, then a digital portfolio is an excellent way to display your work and show hiring managers what you are capable of doing. Having a visual representation of your qualifications also helps employers decide if you are the right fit for their company and position." (Indeed.com) Aside from its academic and professional uses, an e-Portfolio can be personally satisfying because you can share your experiences with friends and family and look back over your activities in the future.

Starting Your E-Portfolio

Although many platforms exist for developing digital portfolios, Google is a good option since most students already have an account. To start an e-Portfolio on Google, visit https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/e-portfolio.pdf for instructions, then complete the steps. Set up your e-Portfolio title page and create titles for additional content pages. Suggested additional e-

Portfolio page categories: 1. About me. 2. Career assessment information (from Career Coach) 3. Resume (from Optimal Resume) 4. Class projects (recorded speeches, photos of artwork or other projects) 5. Activities (such as club membership, etc.). For more information or questions about e-Portfolios, contact Career Services at careerservices@southwest.tn.edu.

Career Services at Southwest Tennessee Community College

This unit of the course is presented in collaboration with Career Services Director Brenda Williams and the Career Services Department at Southwest Tennessee Community College. Much of the content of this chapter is taken from the digital guide created by Career Services, ***Career Development at Southwest.*** You can access the guide in its entirety at https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf.



Key Takeaways

- Soft skills are personal and interpersonal attributes that are important no matter what the job.
- Surveys by the National Association of Colleges and Employers identified eight essential career competencies.
- NACE surveys found that college graduates rated themselves higher than did employers in most of the eight essential competencies.
- In this course, we focus on helping students develop all eight competencies.
- An ePortfolio is a computer-based record of a student's activities over time. It can be used to apply for jobs and scholarships, or simply as a repository of activities and accomplishments.

Exercises for Personal Reflection

1. Discuss the results of the survey that compared employers' perception of graduates' readiness with the graduates' own perceptions. Did the results surprise you? Why or why not?
2. Consider your own proficiency in the competencies shown above. In what categories would you rate yourself as “very” (4) or “extremely” (5) proficient? In what categories would you fall below a 4?

References

Career Services. Southwest Tennessee Community College. *Career Development at Southwest.* 2021. https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf

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7.2: Professionalism

Learning Outcomes

1. Define "professionalism."
2. Define the term “ethics” and recall several modern ethical lapses in organizations.
3. Understand the importance of respecting one’s coworkers.
4. Explain the concept of personal responsibility in the workplace.
5. Demonstrate the ERROR method.

Professionalism is one of the most important of the Eight Career Readiness Competencies. Yet a 2019 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that while almost 95% of employers surveyed considered Professionalism to be an essential competency, only 44.2%--fewer than half—found college graduates proficient in this area. (NACE 2019). Clearly, there is room for improvement; yet improvement can begin only after a clear understanding of what professionalism is. In examining professionalism, we will explore a definition of professionalism and three important components: ethics, respect for others, and taking personal responsibility.

Professionalism

According to the United States Department of Labor,[1] professionalism “does not mean wearing a suit or carrying a briefcase; rather, it means conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence. It means communicating effectively and appropriately and always finding a way to be productive.” The U.S. Department of Labor’s book *Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success* goes on to note:

> Professionalism isn’t one thing; it’s a combination of qualities. A professional employee arrives on time for work and manages time effectively. Professional workers take responsibility for their own behavior and work effectively with others. High-quality work standards, honesty, and integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace is also an essential part of professionalism.[2]

Ethics

Ethics is one of the important components of professionalism. The word “ethics” refers to whether something is good, right, or just.

We first discussed ethics in Chapter 1 as being one of the responsibilities of a communicator. In the business world, ethics are equally important. Business ethics involves things like not stealing from a company; not lying to one’s boss, coworkers, customers, or clients; not taking bribes, payoffs, or kickbacks; not taking credit for someone else’s work; not abusing and belittling someone in the workplace; or even not allowing others to behave unethically. For example, if you know your organization has a zero-tolerance policy for workplace discrimination and you know that one supervisor is purposefully not hiring pregnant women because “they’ll just be leaving on maternity leave soon anyway,” then you have an ethical obligation to report him or her. We might also add that discriminating against someone who is pregnant or can get pregnant is also a violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity law, so you can see that often the line between ethics and rules (or laws) can be blurred.

Every year there are lapses in ethical judgment by organizations and organizational members. Let's look at ethical lapses in 2017 and 2018.

1. We saw aviation police officers drag a bloodied pulmonologist off a plane when he wouldn’t give up his seat on United Airlines.
2. We saw the beginnings of the #MeToo movement in October 2017 after Alyssa Milano used the hashtag in response to actor Ashley Judd accusing media mogul Harvey Weinstein of serious sexual misconduct in an article in *The New York Times*. Since that critical moment, many victims of sexual violence have raised their voices to take on some in our society who had gotten away with these behaviors for decades.

3. Facebook (among others) was found to have accepted advertisements indirectly paid for by the Kremlin that influenced the 2016 election. The paid advertisements constituted a type of cyber warfare.
4. Equifax had a data breach that affected 145 million people (mostly U.S. citizens as well as some British and Canadian customers) and didn't publicly disclose this for two months.
5. The head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Scott Pruitt, committed many ethical lapses during his tenure with the agency prompting his resignation. Some of the ethical lapses included ordering raises for two aides even when the White House rejected them, spending $3.5 million (twice times as much as his predecessor) on his own taxpayer-funded security, using that security to pick up his favorite moisturizing lotion and dry-cleaning, renting a room for $50 a night from a lobbyist who had dealings with the EPA, installing a $43,000 private phone booth in his office that allegedly was used once, spending $124,000 on first-class flights, purchasing two season-ticket seats at a University of Kentucky basketball game from a billionaire coal executive, attempting to use his position to get his wife a Chick-fil-A franchise, and others.

Unfortunately, these ethical lapses are still frequent in corporate America, and they often come with huge lawsuit settlements and prison time.

Respect for Others

Our second category related to professionalism is respecting others. It seems that many people in the modern workplace need a refresher in respect. From workplace bullying to sexual harassment, many people simply do not always treat people with dignity and respect in the workplace. So, what do we mean by treating someone with respect? Here's a list we created of respectful behaviors for the workplace and academic interactions:

- Be courteous, polite, and kind to everyone.
- Use confirming communication behaviors that were discussed in the chapter on Interpersonal Communication.
- Do not criticize little or inconsequential things.
- Do not engage in patronizing or demeaning behaviors.
- Do not play with your cell phone, answer phone calls, etc., when others are speaking to you.
- Don't engage in physically hostile body language. Make sure your facial expressions are appropriate and not aggressive.
- Don't roll your eyes when others are talking.
- Don't use an aggressive tone of voice when talking with coworkers, instructors, or classmates.
- Encourage others to express opinions and ideas.
- Encourage others to demonstrate respect for one another.
- Listen to others with an open mind.
- Listen without cutting them others off or speaking over them.
- Make sure you treat all of your coworkers fairly and equally.
- Never engage in verbally aggressive behavior: insults, name-calling, spreading rumors, disparaging, and putting people or their ideas down.
- Compliment others more often than you criticize them. Point out when they're doing things well, not just when they're doing "wrong" things.
- If you are leading a meeting or team, provide an equal opportunity for all to provide insight and input during meetings.
- Treat people the same regardless of age, gender, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc.
- When expressing judgment or criticism, focus on specific ideas or behavior, and not the person.
- As we discussed in the chapter on Verbal Communication, replace biased language with inclusive terms.

Personal Responsibility

Taking personal responsibility is the third component of professionalism. Let's face it; we all make mistakes. Making mistakes is a part of life. **Personal responsibility** refers to an individual's willingness to be accountable for his or her actions, including mistakes. Personal responsibility is simply realizing that we are responsible for our own conduct and not blaming others for our current circumstances. Now, this is not to say that there are never external factors that impede our success. Of course, there are. This is not to say that certain people have advantages in life because of a privileged background; of course, some people have. However, personal responsibility involves differentiating between those things we can control and those things that are outside of

our control. For example, I may not be able to control a coworker who decides to yell at me, but I can control how I choose to respond to that coworker. Here are some ways that you can take personal responsibility in your own life (or in the workplace):

- Acknowledge that you are responsible for your choices.
- Acknowledge that you are responsible for how you feel.
- Acknowledge that you are responsible for your behaviors.
- Accept that your choices are yours alone, so you can't blame someone else for them.
- Decide to invest in your self-improvement.
- Decide to take control of your attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors.
- Decide on specific professional goals and make an effort and commitment to accomplish those goals.

Although you may have the ability to take responsibility for your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, not everyone in the workplace will do the same. Most of us will come in contact with coworkers, classmates, or even relatives who do not take personal responsibility. Dealing with people who have constant excuses can be frustrating and demoralizing.

Excuse-making occurs any time people attempt to make themselves look better by shifting the blame for their behavior to sources outside of their control.[8] For example, an employee may explain her tardiness to work by talking about how horrible the traffic was on the way to work instead of admitting that she slept in late and left the house late. People make excuses because they fear that revealing the truth would make them look bad or out of control.

Excuse-making happens in every facet of life, but excuse-making in the workplace can be highly problematic. For example, research has shown that when front-line service providers engage in excuse-making instead of accepting responsibility, they are more likely to lose return customers as a result.[9] In one study, when salespeople attempted to excuse their lack of ethical judgment by pointing to their customers' lack of ethics, supervisors tended to punish salespeople who engaged in excuse-making more severely than salespeople who had not made excuses.[10] Even friends or family members can become a little annoyed (or downright disgusted) by someone who always has an excuse for his behavior.

How can you take the blame for something that is your responsibility in the most professional way possible? Amy Nordrum recommends using the **ERROR** method when handling a situation where your behavior was problematic. This method consists of 4 steps: Empathy, Responsibility, Reason, Offer Reassurance.[11] Here is an example Nordrum uses to illustrate the ERROR method:

> I regret that you [burden placed on the person] because of me (**E**mpathy). I should have thought things out better (**R**esponsibility), but I got caught up in [reason for behavior] (**R**eason). Next time I'll [preventative action] (**O**ffer **R**eassurance).

As you can see, the critical parts of this response involve validating the other person, taking responsibility, and providing an explanation for how you'll behave in the future to avoid similar problems.

Key Takeaways

We have discussed the meaning of professionalism and three important components of professionalism: ethics, respect for others, and professionalism.

Exercises

1. What lapses in ethical judgment would you add to the list of unethical examples provided in this unit?
2. Look at the list of respectful behaviors for workplace interactions. Is anything missing from the list? How would you react if others violated these respectful behaviors towards you as a coworker? Have you ever been disrespectful in your communication towards coworkers? Why?
3. Why do you think it's essential to take personal responsibility and avoid excusing making in the workplace? Have you ever found yourself making excuses? Why?
4. Practice using the ERROR method with a classmate.

Reference

U.S. Department of Labor. Office of Disability Employment *Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success.* "Professionalism.' Retrieved 12/15/2020. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf

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7.3: Career Exploration

Learning Objectives

1. Explore career options that best suit your personality traits.
2. Complete the Career Coach Assessment and learn how to use the results to find employment opportunities.

A job: yes, it's something you would like to have, especially if you want to pay your bills. A job lets you enjoy a minimal level of financial security. A job requires you to show up and do what is required of you; in exchange, you get paid. A career involves holding jobs, but it is more a means of achieving personal fulfillment. In a career, your jobs follow a sequence that leads to increasing mastery, professional development, and personal and financial satisfaction. A career requires planning, knowledge, and skills. If it is to be a fulfilling career, it requires that you bring into play your full set of analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills to make informed decisions that will affect your life in both the short term and the long term. In this unit, you will learn how to explore different career options that best suit your personality and interests.

What Do You Want to Do When You "Grow Up"?

The Department of Labor defines 840 occupations in its Standard Occupation Classification system—and new occupations are being created at an ever-faster rate. Just ten years ago, would anyone have imagined the job of a social media marketing specialist? How about the concept of a competitive chef? As new careers develop and old careers morph into almost unrecognizable versions of their original, it's fine if you aren't able to pinpoint exactly what occupation or career will be your life passion. However, it is important to define as best you can within what field you will want to develop your career because that will help dictate your major and your course selections.

The process of career exploration can be a lot of fun, as it allows you to discover a world of possibilities. Even those students who have a pretty clear idea of what they want to do should go through this process because they will discover new options as backups and occasionally a new direction even more attractive than their original choice.

You are a unique individual with a distinct combination of likes, dislikes, personality traits, and skills. But you are not so different that you can't be identified with certain personality types, and those types may help you narrow your career choices. Most career assessments are based on the career theory developed by Dr. John Holland. Dr. Holland believed that people are most likely to choose satisfying work if they do something that fits their personality type. He identified the six types below which include: **R**ealistic, **I**nvestigative, **A**rtistic, **S**ocial, **E**nterprising, and **C**onventional. As you read through these categories, decide which category or categories best describe you.

1. **Realistic.** These people describe themselves as honest, loyal, and practical. They are doers more than thinkers. They have strong mechanical, motor, and athletic abilities; like the outdoors; and prefer working with machines, tools, plants, and animals.
2. **Investigative.** These people love problem-solving and analytical skills. They are intellectually stimulated and often mathematically or scientifically inclined; like to observe, learn, and evaluate; prefer working alone, and are reserved.
3. **Artistic.** These people are the "free spirits." They are creative, emotional, intuitive, and idealistic; have a flair for communicating ideas; dislike structure and prefer working independently, and like to sing, write, act, paint, and think creatively. They are similar to the investigative type but are interested in the artistic and aesthetic aspects of things more than the scientific ones.
4. **Social.** These are "people" people. They are friendly and outgoing; love to help others, make a difference, or both; have strong verbal and personal skills and teaching abilities, and are less likely to engage in intellectual or physical activity.
5. **Enterprising.** These people are confident, assertive risk-takers. They are sociable; enjoy speaking and leadership; like to persuade rather than a guide; like to use their influence; have strong interpersonal skills, and are status-conscious.
6. **Conventional.** These people are dependable, detail-oriented, disciplined, precise, persistent, and practical; value order; and are good at clerical and numerical tasks. They work well with people and data, so they are good organizers, schedulers, and project managers.

Taking the Career Coach Self-Assessment

Getting to know who you are—who you *really* are—is the first step in identifying a potential career. For this exercise, we will be using the STCC Career Services Guide: Steps to Career Development Success (https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf) Full instructions are in the Career Services digital guide. Here is a summary:

1. Visit: https://southwest-tn.emsicc.com
2. Select the “sign up” link to create an account and save your results. IMPORTANT: Use your STCC email account so you can access your results in the future. This will also be helpful for accessing job openings and internships.
3. Select “Take the Assessment.” Be sure you answer all questions. Avoid answering "unsure" too many times as this will make your assessment less reliable.
4. After you complete the assessment, download the FULL RESULTS (right side of the page under Assessment Options.) You should see your top personality traits, 5 top job categories, and 10 career matches. On subsequent pages, you will read more details about your work personality traits.
5. Study your Career Coach Assessment results. You should learn your top three types or "Holland Code." Are the results what you expected?
6. Your Career Coach results also identify career groups or clusters best suited to you. Do these sound like you?
7. On your Career Coach profile page, scroll down and select “View Career Matches” to see your top matches and learn about daily duties, required education, regional wages, outlook, prospective employers, live job listings, and more. Select one position that is of interest to you and locate the required education, daily duties, salary, job outlook, and potential employers.

TIP: To log back into your account, go to https://southwest-tn.emsicc.com and enter your username and password.

Reflecting on Your Career Assessment Results

Step 1. Save a copy of your FULL Results or a screenshot of the first page of your Assessment Results and study them.

Step 2. Copy and paste the following questions into an empty document, then answer them. Submit your questions and answers in the same Assignment Dropbox you use for your Assessment Results.

1. Do you agree with the work personality traits identified by the assessment, or did they surprise you?
2. After looking over your top 5 job categories and 10 career matches, select a **specific position identified on Career Coach** that interests you.
   - What is the position you selected?
   - What is the required education for this position?
   - What are the daily duties?
   - What is the salary?
   - What is the job outlook?
   - Who are potential employers in this region?
3. What have you learned as a result of this exercise that may be beneficial to you now or in the future?

Optional: If you would like to talk to Career Services about your assessment results or if you are having difficulty taking the assessment, we encourage you to contact Career Services. Instructions for setting up an appointment with Career Services are found under Step Two of the 10 Steps for Career Development Success. (https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf)

Schedule an Appointment with Career Services (3 Options):

1. Use the Navigate application at: https://swtn.navigate.eab.com. Once logged in, select “Career Services” as the care unit and follow the prompts to choose your appointment time.
2. Email Career Services at: careerservices@southwest.tn.edu
3. Call Career Services at 901-333-4180

Appointment Formats:

Career Services can meet with you by phone, email, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or on campus.

References

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7.4: Résumés and Cover Letters

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the purpose of a résumé.
2. Create a résumé using STCC Optimal Resume™.
3. Know how to prepare a good cover letter.
4. Explain ways of gaining work experience before you graduate.

Résumé

Every student needs a résumé, whether you are searching for an internship, a part-time job while you are in college, or a full-time job after graduation. A résumé is a one (preferred) or two-page document summarizing your relevant skills and qualifications that you share with an employer when applying for a job. The purpose of a résumé is to get you invited for an interview. Unfortunately, too often a résumé is a reason to exclude a candidate. Poor grammar, misspelled words, lengthy listings of irrelevant experience, and messy formatting motivate hiring managers to move quickly to the next candidate. There is no such thing as a perfect format for a résumé, though hiring managers and recruiters generally agree on the following principles:

- A short résumé is generally better than a long one. One page should usually be enough—two pages if you have a lot of experience. Use an easy-to-read font like Arial, Tahoma, or Times New Roman in size 11 or 12.
- Focus on your accomplishments, not just the positions you held. Your résumé should point out your strengths. Use dynamic verbs, as described on *Indeed.com* (https://www.indeed.com/career-advice...sume-stand-out).
- Most recruiters and hiring managers look for résumés online and review submitted résumés with software that looks for keywords. To help your resume get noticed by Human Resources and electronic *applicant tracking systems* (ATS), **tailor it to each position** you apply for. You can do this by printing the job description and **highlighting** key requirements and skills, also known as **"keywords."** Be sure to include the "keywords" and any other *relevant* information on your resume. (STCC Career Services)
- Keep information easy to scan and to find.

Deciding what to include in your résumé is where most of the work comes into play because it is in the careful wording of the body of your résumé that you can really sell yourself for a position. Ideally, you should revise your résumé for each position you are applying for, particularly to include any accomplishments that you would not include in your "general résumé" but that are relevant to that particular job. Do not be discouraged if you have very little practical job experience to include on your resume. That is why you are in college: to gain that experience.

Following are two examples of resumes provided by the STCC Career Services Department. Later, you will learn to create your own resume using an online tool called Optimal Resume™.

SAMPLE RESUME: student applying for an internship

Shalonda Williams
297 Crossway Street, Apt. #18, Cordova, TN 38136
901-433-42219
swilliams@gmail.com
Linkedin.com/in/shalondawilliams

PROFILE
Detail-oriented Computer Information Technology major looking for an internship that utilizes my hardware and software skills and education.

QUALIFICATIONS
- PC Hardware/Software Troubleshooting & Repair
- Dependable, Quick Learner, Critical Thinker
- Basic Network Security, Unix/Linux OS, HTML & CSS Skills

EDUCATION
Southwest Tennessee Community College, Memphis, TN
Pursuing A.A.S. Computer Information Technology
Networking concentration; GPA: 3.5

Related coursework completed:

Computer Applications	A+ Hardware & Software
CCNA I & II	Network Security
Unix/Linus Operating Systems	Beginning HTML & CSS

WORK EXPERIENCE
Target, Bartlett, TN
Lead Stocker (March 2018 to present)
Provided leadership to team of 5 associates in restocking merchandise for the electronics department. Assists with inventory tracking and theft prevention.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE
Provide Technical Support to patrons at the Main Library

REFERENCES
Provided upon request.

SAMPLE RESUME: new graduate looking for a full-time job

ANDRE JACKSON
2241 Blue Sky Lane • Memphis, TN 38000 • 901-123-4567
ajackson@yahoo.com
Linkedin.com/in/andrejackson

PROFILE
Compassionate, resourceful Physical Therapy Assistant graduate seeking a position that utilizes my education and clinical experience.

SKILLS SUMMARY
- Experience Using a Variety of Physical Therapy Techniques
- Strong Patient Care, Communication, and Teamwork Skills
- Ability to Safely Lift, Transfer, and Position Patients

WORK EXPERIENCE
Baptist Healthcare Rehabilitation Associates, Memphis, TN
PTA Intern (10/2019 – present)
Assist in patient treatment through prescribed exercise regimens and strength training programs. Document patient progress and make observations on range of mobility. Communicate with physicians, nurses, related therapy providers, and case managers to provide total patient care.

Hanson Physical Therapy Services, Memphis, TN
PTA Intern (8/2018-12/2018)
Prepared patients and treatment rooms for physical therapist. Demonstrated correct usage of equipment and exercise routines as part of patient instruction.

EDUCATION
Southwest Tennessee Community College, Memphis, TN
A.A.S. Physical Therapist Assistant, May 2020
Cumulative GPA: 3.6

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
Completed 30 credit hours toward B.S. degree in Biology

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE
St. Jude Marathon, First Aid Volunteer

REFERENCES
References and portfolio provided upon the reviewer's request.

Cover Letters

A cover letter is sometimes requested by employers along with your resume and job application. In your cover letter include the position you are interested in, how you learned about it and your skills/qualifications/experience highlights that are relevant to the position. If you are transitioning into a new career, a cover letter is a great place to explain this. The purpose of a cover letter is to entice the recipient to read your résumé. The following sample cover letter is provided by STCC's Career Services Department.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

TIPS:
Before you send your resume and/or cover letter to an employer, have Career Services proofread it for you!

Career Services can meet with you via phone, email, Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

MARKUS RANCH
224 Hwy 9 South, Byhalia, MS 38611 • 123.456.7890 or 901.333.1234 • mbranch3415@yahoo.com

November 12, 2021

Mr. Juan Jimenez,
Human Resource Director
Clifton College
5983 Tall Oaks Blvd.
Memphis, TN 38134

Dear Mr. Jimenez,

It is with great interest that I reply to your advertisement with Southwest Career Services for a Transcript Analyst. I believe that both my experience and skills are a perfect match for the position as highlighted below and on the enclosed resume:

- 3 Years' Experience Assisting the Registrar as a Student Worker
- A.A.S. Degree in Administrative Professional Technology
- Strong Microsoft Word, Banner, and Office Organization Skills
- Dedicated, Detail-Oriented, Problem Solver Who Enjoys Helping Others

I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my previous experience, strong organization and communication skills could benefit your organization.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Markus Ranch

Attachment

How to Gain Work Experience Before You Graduate

While you are thinking about your resume, it is a good idea to consider how you can begin developing future job skills. One way is to become involved in student clubs, organizations, and special interest groups at STCC. Information about organizations can be found in the Career Services brochure.

Internships and on-campus jobs allow students to gain major-related work experience in a variety of majors and can be paid or unpaid. For more information, look at your degree requirements and contact Career Services or the Department Chairperson. You

can also visit Internship Benefits, Requirements & Application (tn.edu). Career Services continually receives new full and part-time job listings from employers that can be found on the Career Services website at: Jobs and Career Fairs (tn.edu)

Volunteer Experience is also an excellent way to develop career skills. Volunteering through the Southwest Center for Service-Learning & Civic Engagement allows students to use their skills and training to help meet local community needs. Learn more at: http://www.southwest.tn.edu/service/. Career Services continually receives new full and part-time job listings from employers that can be found on the Career Services website at: Jobs and Career Fairs (tn.edu)

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of a résumé is to secure an interview.
- A good résumé is action-based and focused on accomplishments.
- The purpose of a cover letter is to entice the recipient to read your résumé.
- You can use Optimal Resume to create your custom resume.
- You can build work experience before you graduate.

Exercises:

1. If you are a student who has no work experience, what kinds of accomplishments can you use to illustrate your skills? Discuss this with a partner or group.
2. Create your own resume! To write your resume, use Optimal Resume™, a free online resume-builder that will allow you to see samples and create your custom resume.
    - Instructions:
        - Visit https://southwest-tn.optimalresume.com/
        - Select “NEW USER”
        - Enter **your southwest email address** to request a system password
        - Browse resume samples by industry and get started creating your own custom resume.

If you are having difficulty with creating a resume, contact Career Services for help. (careerservices@southwest.tn.edu)

References

Career Services. *Career Development at Southwest*. https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf. 2021.

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7.5: Interviewing

Learning Objectives

1. Learn about the benefits of Career Fairs.
2. Describe four different types of interviews
3. Know how to prepare for an interview by anticipating commonly-asked interview questions.
4. Know what to do during and after an interview.
5. Prepare and record a 60-second elevator speech.

The saying that “you only have one chance to make a good first impression” is especially true during an interview. The goal is to present a professional image while communicating to potential employers the skills, education, and experiences you’ve worked so hard to gain. In a job search, nothing is more exciting or more intimidating than an interview. Reaching the interview stage means that you are in serious consideration for the position, and the pressure feels cranked up. In this section, you will learn how to prepare yourself to “ace” this process. To learn more about how to market yourself, schedule a practice interview with Career Services at STCC.

Career Fairs

Career fairs are an excellent way to network with potential employers and discover internships and jobs related to your major. They are also a great place to build your employment-related communication skills while you meet with recruiters without the pressure of a formal interview. All students are encouraged to attend a Career Fair, even if they aren’t currently looking for a job. STCC students can visit the Career Services website to learn about upcoming career fairs and to see a list of participating employers before the event. Events may be held on campus, online, or both. When you attend a career fair, bring several copies of your updated resume, dress in business attire, and prepare to give employers your full and undivided attention by silencing your phone and removing your earbuds.

Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a 30-60 second "commercial" or message about who you are, what you're looking for, and how you can benefit an employer. An elevator speech is an excellent way to introduce yourself to employers at a job fair, or to answer one of the most commonly-asked interview questions, "Tell me about yourself." You can learn more about elevator speeches and see an example at https://youtu.be/hGkIVxwxrCk.

Interview Formats

In the process of exploring occupations and landing a job, you will likely participate in a variety of interviews. Four types of interviews are phone and one-way interviews, which are typically for screening purposes; virtual or online interviews; and in-person interviews.

Phone Interviews

Prior to scheduling an interview with job candidates, many companies hold a phone or “screening” interview. The objective of this interview is to find reasons to remove, not include, people in a candidate pool. Do not consider it lightly just because someone other than the hiring manager is conducting it. Prepare for your call by reading 5 Phone Interview Tips to Master from Monster.com.

One-Way Interviews

Instead of using phone interviews, employers are increasingly using one-way interviews. "A one-way video interview is a brief video recording that you send to employers to help with their screening process. Within this video, you typically answer a few preselected interview questions or follow a prompt. Unlike a typical interview, you are only talking to your camera. You do not get instant feedback like you would with a real-time interview with an employer. While this format can be challenging, you can also benefit from the fact that you can re-record your video." *(Indeed.com)* If you are successful in your one-way interview, you will

likely be asked to participate in a virtual or traditional, in-person interview. To read more about one-way interviews at https://www.job-hunt.org/handling-on...eo-interviews/

Virtual or Online Interviews

With an increasing number of employers conducting virtual or online video interviews, it's important to be prepared for this format. Some of the more common virtual platforms that are being used are Zoom, Skype, Go-To-My-Meeting, and Microsoft Teams. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with both the technical aspects of the platform and some considerations unique to online interviewing as mentioned here: Video Interview Tips for Job Seekers.

In-Person Interviews

During an in-person interview, you will meet with a hiring manager or small hiring committee at their workplace. This type of interview allows employers to get a better sense of your professionalism and interpersonal communication (verbal and non-verbal) skills. Through a series of questions, the interviewer's goal is to find out if you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to handle the job for which you have applied. The hiring manager is also looking to get a sense of what it would be like working with you and how you would fit into the organization. Expect to be asked a behavioral interview question such as, "Tell me about a time when…" or "Give me an example…" as many interviewers believe that how you handled past situations is a predictor of how you will behave in the future. This interview is the one a hiring decision is based on.

Preparing for Interviews

Employers often state that candidates do not know enough about the company when they interview and therefore come across as unprepared or uninterested in the position they are interviewing for. Don't let this be you. A little preparation can go a long way toward reducing interview day stress and ensuring that you come across it in a professional manner. For practical and helpful tips from Indeed, watch Top Interview Tips. In addition, here are other guidelines to help you prepare:

Learn about the organization. In almost every interview situation, you'll be asked, "What can you do for this company?" To adequately answer this question, you must research the company or organization. Know the company's mission, values, products and services, targeted customers, new executives, and major directional changes.

Use your network. Do you know anyone who works for or has worked for this company or organization? Make contact with individuals who have worked for the company through Handshake or acquaintances. Email, call, or have lunch with him or her before your interview to learn more. Your competition likely won't have done their homework as well as you have. Your prospective employer will notice.

Review the job description. Be prepared to explain how your background qualifies you for the job. Did you find the job posting online? Be sure to have printed a copy, and bring it with you to the interview. Some companies take weeks to start calling people in for interviews, and by then the job description may have been removed from the site where you saw it.

Review your résumé. Think of examples that describe or illustrate your accomplishments. You will be asked about items on your résumé, and you need to be able to support them and go into more detail.

Use your interview study guide. Employment interviews, especially screening interviews, do not stray far from a standard list of questions. Find a quiet one to two hours to review the interview study guide provided here, prepare your answers, and actually practice them. Your answers should be short but complete.

Interview Study Guide

The following questions are typical in many employment interviews. If you prepare answers for them ahead of time, you will not be caught off guard during an interview.

- **Tell me about yourself.** Remember that one-minute elevator introduction? Here is a great place to use it. Practice saying it aloud until your delivery is smooth and fluent.
- **What do you know about our company?** Remember to research the company thoroughly so that you can answer this question successfully.

- **What can you offer us? Why should we hire you?** Make a list of your qualifications for the job. Include years of experience, education, special training, technical skills, inside knowledge of a product or market, and so on. Are you a customer of this product or service? Make a list of your "soft skills" skills like communication, leadership, organization, attention to detail, and work ethic. Review the list objectively. Which items are most valuable to the employer? Use this information to write a brief “sales pitch” that describes your qualifications for the job. Structure the information in a logical fashion and then practice saying it aloud until your delivery is smooth, natural, and confident.
- **What are your strengths?** Provide context and scope when answering this question. By elaborating on your strengths, it’s easier for the employer to see where and how you excel. Think about your noteworthy and unusual achievements or experiences. What did you do to accomplish them? What kind of preparation did they require? Why are they unique? Think about performance reviews you have received in a job. Have you won awards or received positive feedback from others in the organization or from a happy customer? What were the reasons for the positive attention? If you are a student or recent graduate with limited professional experience, think about your papers, reports, projects, or group assignments. Think about the assignment and what you did to complete it. The same strengths that helped you academically will also help you succeed professionally.
- **What are your weaknesses?** Remember that employers are human and appreciate honesty. It’s OK to acknowledge your weaknesses and explain steps you’ve taken to address them.
- **Where do you see yourself three to five years from now?** Think about your personal goals and answer as genuinely as possible. This is a good opportunity to ask the interviewer about the opportunities available to a person who succeeds in this job.
- **What attracted you to our company?** Draw from your research and personal knowledge of the company to answer this question. Keep in mind that this interview is about what you can do for them, so answering that you’re attracted to the free snacks in the break room won’t score any points.
- **Tell me about a time you were under pressure to meet a deadline and what you did.** Did you face pressure at school or work because something was due? Describe the problem, the actions you took, and the outcome. This type of question is called a behavioral question and has become increasingly common in recent years. One of the best techniques for answering a behavior question is using the **STAR** technique, which ontsits of 4 steps: **Situation:** Describe the context within which you performed a job or faced a challenge at work. For example, perhaps you were working on a group project, or you had a conflict with a coworker. This situation can be drawn from a work experience, a volunteer position, or any other relevant event. Be as specific as possible. **Task:** Next, describe your responsibility in that situation. Perhaps you had to help your group complete a project within a tight deadline, resolve a conflict with a coworker, or hit a sales target. **Action:** You then describe how you completed the task or endeavored to meet the challenge. Focus on what you did, rather than what your team, boss, or coworker did. (Tip: Instead of saying, "We did xyx," say "*I* did xyz.") **Result:** Finally, explain the outcomes or results generated by the action taken. It may be helpful to emphasize what you accomplished, or what you learned.
- **What will former employers say about you?** Be honest. Think about the positive things they will say about you.
- **What salary are you expecting?** This is a land-mine question and one you’ll almost certainly face. Typically a company has budgeted a certain salary range for a position and will do its best to stay within it. A general rule for salary discussions is that he or she who says the first number loses. Ask what the salary range is and where the interviewer sees you fitting into that range. You owe it to yourself to find out before the interview what the salary range is for a comparable position in the geographical region. You can learn this through your network or an online salary search.
- **Why do you want to leave your present job?** Or why did you leave your previous job? Do NOT bad-mouth a previous employer. This is akin to gossip, which is ever good.
- **What questions do you have for me?** Before the interview, think of questions you would like answered about the company, the job, or the industry. Having good questions will tell the interviewer a lot about your listening skills and your degree of preparation. If you can, tie your questions back to something the interviewer said earlier. Do not ask questions that the interviewer has already answered. Remember, an interview is not just the company checking you out, it’s also you

checking out the company. *Business Insider* provides examples of questions you might consider asking at the end of an interview: https://www.businessinsider.com/questions-to-ask-at-end-of-job-interview-2016-4

Trick Questions in Interviews

These happen to the best of interviewees. The only wrong answer to an impossible question is "I don't know." Hiring managers are looking for employees who think through tough challenges. They want to know if you keep your cool under pressure if you can think on your feet, whether you start rambling or maintain your credibility, and how you respond to the unfamiliar. So show them: think aloud. Talk about what you know about the problem; work out the process in front of them. You are being judged not only on your ability to solve problems but also on your intelligence and potential. There is no potential in "I don't know."

Prepare yourself physically. Like a final exam, an interview can cause anxiety, and too much anxiety can result in a poor interview. Make sure you eat well and get a good night's sleep before the interview. Hunger, use of energy drinks, and lack of sleep all contribute to interview anxiety.

Dress to impress. Research indicates many job applicants have unsuccessful interviews because they didn't dress professionally. If you're not sure, ask the person who schedules you for an interview what the dress code is. A suit or jacket, dress slacks, dress shirt, and a tie are usually fine for men. A suit or blouse and a skirt or slacks are fine for women. The rule of thumb is to dress one notch above that group's normal attire. If in doubt, a suit is never inappropriate for men or women. Remember, you're going to a job interview, not a casual event. See more recommendations at How to Dress at a Job Fair - Men and How to dress at a Job Fair - Women.

Punctuality counts. Confirm the date and time of the interview a day or two before. Make sure you know how to get there and how long it takes. Arrive at least ten to fifteen minutes before your interview. You may be asked to complete an application or other form when you arrive. If not, it's a good time to do some relaxation exercises.

Tips for Success During the Interview

Now is the time to demonstrate your listening, thinking, and communication skills. Avoid unexpected distractions, and turn off your cell phone before you even enter the building. Know whom you will be interviewing with and what his or her role is in the company; if possible, get something in writing from the interview coordinator so you can get the names spelled correctly (for follow-up purposes). Once you are face-to-face with the interviewer, do the following:

- Turn your cell phone off and put it away. Remove earbuds and give the interviewer your full attention.
- Relax, take a deep breath, and smile. You should be genuinely pleased to be there, as you were selected from a pool of many other candidates.
- Be yourself. That's whom you want them to hire, not someone you're trying to act like.
- Keep your tone conversational but not too informal. Avoid slang and expletives. Avoid vocal fillers such as uh, uhm, and so on.
- Make eye contact but don't stare. If you are participating in a virtual or one-way interview, look at the camera, not the screen.
- When answering questions, keep your answers focused on your skills and knowledge.
- Avoid one-word answers, but be succinct and direct; don't ramble.
- Be truthful. Any statements discovered to be untrue are grounds for not hiring you.
- If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.
- Listen carefully.
- If you don't have the exact fact an interviewer is asking for, offer to find out and get back to them.
- Be prepared to ask questions.
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer and tell him or her you enjoyed your conversation. If the interviewer hasn't already told you, it is appropriate to ask about the next steps.

After the Interview

Be sure to send a thank-you note to each person you interviewed with. It is also courteous to send a short note of thanks to the person who coordinated your schedule with the company, even if he or she didn't interview you. This person is often asked for his or her impressions of you. Keep your notes short but personal; refer to a comment or question from the interview that you found

significant. An e-mail is usually acceptable, especially if the employer required you to submit an electronic application or résumé. Be sure to send it within twenty-four hours.

Key Takeaways

- Successful interviewing depends on careful preparation.
- Most interview questions can be anticipated and prepared for.
- An interview is as important for you to evaluate the company and its working environment as it is for the company to evaluate your skills and "fit."

Exercises

1. Practice, even with mock interviews, will make you more comfortable in an interview situation.If time permits, conduct a mock employment interview with a classmate for for a job you select from an Internet posting. Switch roles so that you are both the interviewer and interviewee. Write about what you learned about yourself and your approach to interviews.
2. Prepare and record a 60-second elevator pitch that you can use to answer the interview question, Tell me about yourself, or that you can use to introduce yourself at career fairs. Find guidelines and an example at https://youtu.be/hGkIVxwxrCk.

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Career Services Guide. Southwest Tennessee Community College. 2021.

Indeed Editorial Team. One Way Video Interview Guide: Steps to a Successful Interview. *Indeed.com* https://www.indeed.com/career-advice...ideo-interview. 2 Feb. 2021.

SuccessHawk, "Interview Questions to Anticipate," www.successhawk.com/Interview...-to-Anticipate (accessed July 13, 2010).

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7.6: Summary and Learning Activities

Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the importance of soft skills in the workplace as well as eight career competencies employers expect from employees. You were informed about expectations of professionalism and ethics in the workplace and were given instruction in career management skills such as career exploration, resumes and cover letters, elevator speeches, and job interviews.

Key Terms

- career fair
- 8 Career Readiness Competencies
- cover letter
- elevator speech
- ethics
- hard skills
- professionalism
- resume
- soft skills

Chapter Exercises

1. Start an e-Portfolio on Google.
    - An electronic or e-Portfolio is a great way for students to keep track of academic achievements, club involvement, leadership experience, and volunteer activities while they are enrolled in college. Your e-Portfolio should be built over time. Add new content each semester to record your new experiences, projects, and activities. Some of the information you include in your e-Portfolio can also be used to build your resume when you get ready to graduate. To start building your e-Portfolio using Google, visit http://www.southwest.tn.edu/careerservices/docs/e-portfolio.pdf for step-by-step instructions. (Career Services)
    - Suggested e-Portfolio Categories: 1. About me (your elevator speech) 2. Career assessment information (from Career Coach) 3. Resume 4. Class projects (recorded speeches, photos of artwork or other projects) 5. Activities (such as club membership, etc.)
    - For more information on the e-Portfolio, contact **Career Services** at Southwest. **Phone**: 901-333-4180 (Macon campus) 901-333-5511 (Union campus) Email: **careerservices@southwest.tn.edu** Website: www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/ Follow us on Twitter @SouthwestCareer
    - If you have not already done so, create and record an elevator speech to use in your search for internships or jobs. Include your elevator speech in your e-Portfolio.
2. If you have not already done so, create a resume using Optimal Resume. After having Career Services review it, include it in your e-Portfolio.
3. Search for and attend virtual career fairs at STCC to help develop your employment communication skills. For more information, visit www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/.
4. Complete the Workplace Ethics Activity below.

Workplace Ethics Activity:

Making Informed Ethical Decisions

Teacher Instructions

Divide students into groups of three or four. Assign each group of students one of the following scenarios to read and discuss. Then, instruct students to follow the steps below for making ethical decisions. Each group should select a feasible alternative

and be prepared to discuss their reasoning for selecting that alternative with the class. Other groups should challenge the decision and give appropriate feedback.

Scenarios

For all scenarios, assume you are employed by Best Computer Systems, a large computer manufacturing company with approximately 1000 employees. The company is in a large metropolitan area.

CASE 1: Lorna is an administrative assistant in the Human Resources Department. Her good friend, Bill, is applying for a job with the company and she has agreed to serve as a reference for him. Bill approaches her for advice on preparing for the interview. Lorna has the actual interview questions asked of all applicants and considers making him a copy of the list so he can adequately prepare.

CASE 2: Emily works in Quality Control. Once a year, her supervisor gives away the refurbished computers to the local elementary school. No specific records are kept of this type of transaction and Emily really needs a computer for her son who is in college. Her supervisor asks her to deliver 12 computer systems to the school.

CASE 3: Marvin is the secretary in the Facilities Management Department. He has just received a new computer and wants to try it out. Though his supervisor has a strict policy about computer use for business purposes only, he wants to learn the e-mail software more thoroughly than his training can provide. One good way to do this, he figures, is to write e-mail messages to his friends and relatives until he gets the knack of it. He is caught up on all his work and only has 30 minutes left to work today. His supervisor left early.

CASE 4: Richard and Conway are talking in the hallway about the employee benefits program. Conway, who has had some recent financial trouble, explains to Richard how the benefits program has a loophole that will allow him to receive some financial assistance that he really needs to help pay health care costs for his mother. Cathy, a fellow worker, overhears the conversation. Later, Cathy is approached by her supervisor who says he heard a rumor that some people were taking advantage of the company benefits program.

CASE 5: Jennie was recently hired to work as a receptionist for the front lobby. As a receptionist, she is responsible for making copies for the associates. Her son, Bruce, comes in and needs some copies for a school project. He brought his own paper and needs 300 copies for his class. If he doesn't bring the copies with him, he will fail the project. The company copier does not require a security key, nor do they keep track of copies made by departments.

Steps for Making Ethical Decisions

1. Identify the ethical issue or problem.
2. List the facts that have the most bearing on the decision.
3. Identify anyone who might be affected by your decision and how.
4. Explain what each affected person would want you to do about the issue.
5. List three alternative actions and identify the best- and worst-case scenario for each alternative, anyone who would be harmed by this choice (and how), any values that would be compromised by selecting this alternative, and any automatic reasons why this alternative should not be selected (legal issues, rules, etc.).
6. Determine a course of action.

Skinner, Tonya. Workplace Ethics Group Activity. Submitted to Merlot by Cathy Swift. Updated February 7, 2021. Retrieved on June 15, 2021. http://lessonplans.btskinner.com/ethics1.html

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Leadership and Working in Teams

This module assumes that a thorough understanding of people requires a thorough understanding of groups. Each of us is an autonomous individual seeking our own objectives, yet we are also members of groups—groups that constrain us, guide us, and sustain us. Just as each of us influences the group and the people in the group, so, too, do groups change each one of us. Joining groups satisfies our need to belong, gain information and understanding through social comparison, define our sense of self and social identity, and achieve goals that might elude us if we worked alone. Groups are also practically significant, for much of the world's work is done by groups rather than by individuals. In this chapter, we will discuss small groups, small group development, small group dynamics, leadership, and decision-making in groups.

8.1: Understanding Small Groups

8.2: Small Group Development

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication

8.5: Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups

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8.1: Understanding Small Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Define small group communication.
2. Discuss the characteristics of small groups.
3. Explain the functions of small groups.
4. Compare and contrast different types of small groups.
5. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of small groups.

Most of the communication skills discussed in this book are directed toward ***dyadic communication***, meaning that they are applied in two-person interactions. While many of these skills can be transferred to and used in small group contexts, the more complex nature of group interaction necessitates some adaptation and some additional skills. Small group communication refers to interactions among three or more people who are connected through a common purpose, mutual influence, and a shared identity. In this section, we will learn about the characteristics, functions, and types of small groups.

Size of Small Groups

There is no set number of members for the ideal small group. A small group requires a minimum of three people (because two people would be a pair or ***dyad***), but the upper range of group size is contingent on the purpose of the group. When groups grow beyond fifteen to twenty members, it becomes difficult to consider them a small group based on the previous definition. An analysis of the number of unique connections between members of small groups shows that they are deceptively complex. For example, within a six-person group, there are fifteen separate potential dyadic connections, and a twelve-person group would have sixty-six potential dyadic connections (Hargie, 2011). As you can see, when we double the number of group members, we more than double the number of connections, which shows that network connection points in small groups grow exponentially as membership increases. So, while there is no set upper limit on the number of group members, it makes sense that the number of group members should be limited to those necessary to accomplish the goal or serve the purpose of the group. Small groups that add too many members increase the potential for group members to feel overwhelmed or disconnected.

Structure of Small Groups

Internal and external influences affect a group's structure. In terms of internal influences, member characteristics play a role in initial group formation. For instance, a person who is well informed about the group's task and/or highly motivated as a group member may emerge as a leader and set into motion internal decision-making processes, such as recruiting new members or assigning group roles, that affect the structure of a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Different members will also gravitate toward different roles within the group and advocate for certain procedures and courses of action. External factors such as group size, task, and resources also affect group structure. Some groups will have more control over these external factors through decision-making than others. For example, a commission that is put together by a legislative body to look into ethical violations in athletic organizations will likely have less control over its external factors than a self-created weekly book club.



Figure **8.1.1**: A self-formed study group likely has a more flexible structure than a city council committee. William Rotza – Group – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Size and structure also affect communication within a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). In terms of size, the more people in a group, the more issues with scheduling and coordination of communication. Remember that time is an important resource in most group interactions and a resource that is usually strained. The structure can increase or decrease the flow of communication. Reachability refers to how one member is or isn't connected to other group members. For example, the "Circle" group structure in Figure **8.1.2** shows that each group member is connected to two other members. This can make coordination easy when only one or two people need to be brought in for a decision. In this case, Erik and Callie are very reachable by Winston, who could easily coordinate with them. However, if Winston needed to coordinate with Bill or Stephanie, he would have to wait on Erik or Callie to reach that person, which could create delays. The circle can be a good structure for groups who are passing along a task and in which each member is expected to progressively build on the others' work. A group of scholars co-authoring a research paper may work in such a manner, with each person adding to the paper and then passing it on to the next person in the circle. In this case, they can ask the previous person questions and write with the next person's area of expertise in mind. The "Wheel" group structure in Figure **8.1.2** shows an alternative organization pattern. In this structure, Tara is very reachable by all members of the group. This can be a useful structure when Tara is the person with the most expertise in the task or the leader who needs to review and approve work at each step before it is passed along to other group members. But Phillip and Shadow, for example, wouldn't likely work together without Tara being involved.

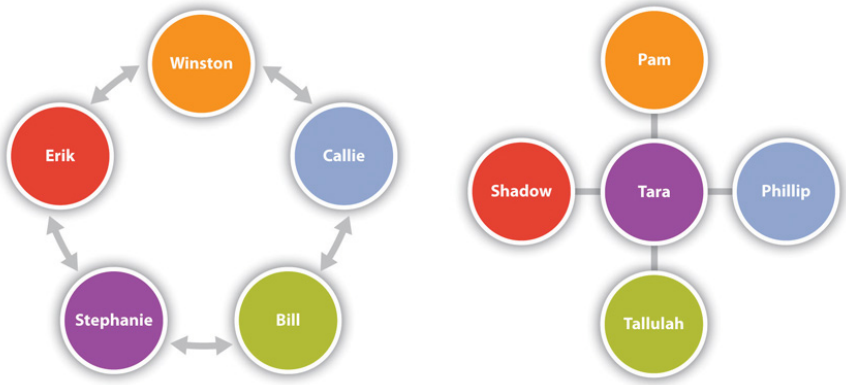


Figure **8.1.2**: Small Group Structures

Looking at the group structures, we can make some assumptions about the communication that takes place in them. The wheel is an example of a centralized structure, while the circle is decentralized. Research has shown that centralized groups are better than decentralized groups in terms of speed and efficiency (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). But decentralized groups are more effective at solving complex problems. In centralized groups like the wheel, the person with the most connections, like Tara, is also more likely to be the leader of the group or at least have more status among group members, largely because that person has a broad perspective of what's going on in the group. The most central person can also act as a gatekeeper. Since this person has access to the most information, which is usually a sign of leadership or status, he or she could consciously decide to limit the flow of information. But in complex tasks, that person could become overwhelmed by the burden of processing and sharing information with all the other group members. The circle structure is more likely to emerge in groups where collaboration is the goal and a specific task and course of action aren't required under time constraints. While the person who initiated the group or has the most expertise regarding the task may emerge as a leader in a decentralized group, equal access to information lessens such a rigid structure and the potential for a gatekeeping presence in the more centralized groups.

Interdependence

Small groups exhibit **interdependence**, meaning they share a common purpose and a common fate. If the actions of one or two group members lead to a group deviating from or not achieving their purpose, then all members of the group are affected. Conversely, if the actions of only a few of the group members lead to success, then all members of the group benefit. This is a major contributor to many college students' dislike of group assignments because they feel a loss of control and independence that they have when they complete an assignment alone. This concern is valid in that their grades might suffer because of the negative actions of someone else or their hard work may go to benefit the group member who just skated by. Group meeting attendance is a clear example of the interdependent nature of group interaction. Many of us have arrived at a group meeting only to find half of the

members present. In some cases, the group members who show up have to leave and reschedule because they can't accomplish their tasks without the other members present. Group members who attend meetings but withdraw or don't participate can also derail group progress. Although it can be frustrating to have your job, grade, or reputation partially dependent on the actions of others, the interdependent nature of groups can also lead to higher-quality performance and output, especially when group members are accountable for their actions.

Shared Identity

The shared identity of a group manifests in several ways. Groups may have official charters or mission and vision statements that lay out the identity of a group. For example, the Girl Scout mission states that "Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place" (Girl Scouts, 2012). The mission of this large organization influences the identities of the thousands of small groups called troops. Group identity is often formed around a shared goal and/or previous accomplishments, which adds dynamism to the group as it looks toward the future and back on the past to inform its present. Shared identity can also be exhibited through group names, slogans, songs, handshakes, clothing, or other symbols. At a family reunion, for example, matching t-shirts specially made for the occasion, dishes made from recipes passed down from generation to generation and shared stories of family members that have passed away help establish a shared identity and social reality.

A key element of the formation of shared identity within a group is the establishment of the in-group as opposed to the out-group. The degree to which members share in the in-group identity varies from person to person and group to group. Even within a family, some members may not attend a reunion or get as excited about the matching t-shirts as others. Shared identity also emerges as groups become cohesive, meaning they identify with and like the group's task and other group members. The presence of cohesion and a shared identity leads to a building of trust, which can also positively influence productivity and members' satisfaction.



Figure **8.1.3**: Cohesion and a shared identity lead to a building of trust. Lostintheredwoods – Spiral of Hands – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Types of Small Groups

There are many types of small groups, but the most common distinction made between types of small groups is that of ***task-oriented*** and ***relational-oriented*** groups (Hargie, 2011). Task-oriented groups are formed to solve a problem, promote a cause, or generate ideas or information (McKay, Davis, & Fanning, 1995). In such groups, like a committee or study group, interactions and decisions are primarily evaluated based on the quality of the final product or output. The three main types of tasks are production, discussion, and problem-solving tasks (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Groups faced with production tasks are asked to produce something tangible from their group interactions such as a report, design for a playground, musical performance, or fundraiser event. Groups faced with discussion tasks are asked to talk through something without trying to come up with a right or wrong answer. Examples of this type of group include a support group for people with HIV/AIDS, a book club, or a group for new fathers. Groups faced with problem-solving tasks have to devise a course of action to meet a specific need. These groups also usually include a production and discussion component, but the end goal isn't necessarily a tangible product or a shared social reality through discussion. Instead, the end goal is a well-thought-out idea. Task-oriented groups require honed problem-solving skills to accomplish goals, and the structure of these groups is more rigid than that of relational-oriented groups.

Relational-oriented groups are formed to promote interpersonal connections and are more focused on quality interactions that contribute to the well-being of group members. Decision-making is directed at strengthening or repairing relationships rather than completing discrete tasks or debating specific ideas or courses of action. All groups include task and relational elements, so it's best

to think of these orientations as two ends of a continuum rather than as mutually exclusive. For example, although a family unit works together daily to accomplish tasks like getting the kids ready for school and friendship groups may plan a surprise party for one of the members, their primary and most meaningful interactions are still relational. Since other chapters in this book focus specifically on interpersonal relationships, this chapter focuses more on task-oriented groups and the dynamics that operate within these groups.

These task-oriented group members are especially loyal and dedicated to the task and their other group members (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). In professional and civic contexts, the word *team* has become popularized as a means of drawing on the positive connotations of the term—connotations such as "high-spirited," "cooperative," and "hardworking." Scholars who have spent years studying highly effective teams have identified several common factors related to their success. Successful teams have (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005)

- **clear and inspiring shared goals,**
- **a results-driven structure,**
- **competent team members,**
- **a collaborative climate,**
- **high standards for performance,**
- **external support and recognition, and**
- **ethical and accountable leadership.**

Increasingly, small groups and teams are engaging in more virtual interaction. Virtual groups take advantage of new technologies and meet exclusively or primarily online to achieve their purpose or goal. Some virtual groups may complete their task without ever being physically face-to-face. Virtual groups bring with them distinct advantages and disadvantages that you can read more about in the "Getting Plugged In" feature next.

"Getting Plugged In": Virtual Groups

Virtual groups are now common in academic, professional, and personal contexts, as classes meet entirely online, work teams interface using webinars or video-conferencing programs, and people connect around shared interests in a variety of online settings. Virtual groups are popular in professional contexts because they can bring together people who are geographically dispersed (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). Virtual groups also increase the possibility for the inclusion of diverse members. The ability to transcend distance means that people with diverse backgrounds and diverse perspectives are more easily accessed than in many offline groups.

One disadvantage of virtual groups stems from the difficulties that technological mediation presents for the relational and social dimensions of group interactions (Walther & Bunz, 2005). As we will learn later in this chapter, an important part of coming together as a group is the socialization of group members into the desired norms of the group. Since norms are implicit, much of this information is learned through observation or conveyed informally from one group member to another. In fact, in traditional groups, group members passively acquire 50 percent or more of their knowledge about group norms and procedures, meaning they observe rather than directly ask (Comer, 1991). Virtual groups experience more difficulty with this part of socialization than co-present traditional groups do since any form of electronic mediation takes away some of the richness present in face-to-face interaction.

To help overcome these challenges, members of virtual groups should be prepared to put more time and effort into building the relational dimensions of their group. Members of virtual groups need to make the social cues that guide new members' socialization more explicit than they would in an offline group (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). Group members should also contribute often, even if just supporting someone else's contribution because increased participation has been shown to increase liking among members of virtual groups (Walther & Bunz, 2005). Virtual group members should also make an effort to put relational content that might otherwise be conveyed through nonverbal or contextual means into the verbal part of a message, as members who include little social content in their messages or only communicate about the group's task are more negatively evaluated. Virtual groups who do not overcome these challenges will likely struggle to meet deadlines, interact less frequently, and experience more absenteeism. What follows are some guidelines to help optimize virtual groups (Walter & Bunz, 2005):

- **Get started interacting as a group as early as possible, since it takes longer to build social cohesion.**

- **Interact frequently to stay on task and avoid having work build up.**
- **Start working toward completing the task while initial communication about setup, organization, and procedures are taking place.**
- **Respond overtly to other people's messages and contributions.**
- **Be explicit about your reactions and thoughts since typical nonverbal expressions may not be received as easily in virtual groups as they would be in co-located groups.**
- **Set deadlines and stick to them.**

1. Make a list of some virtual groups to which you currently belong or have belonged in the past. What are some differences between your experiences in virtual groups versus traditional co-located groups?
2. What are some group tasks or purposes that you think lend themselves to being accomplished in a virtual setting? What are some group tasks or purposes that you think would be best handled in a traditional co-located setting? Explain your answers for each.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Small Groups

As with anything, small groups have their advantages and disadvantages. Advantages of small groups include shared decision-making, shared resources, synergy, and exposure to diversity. It is within small groups that most of the decisions that guide our country, introduce local laws, and influence our family interactions are made. In a democratic society, participation in decision-making is a key part of citizenship. Groups also help in making decisions involving judgment calls that have ethical implications or the potential to negatively affect people. Individuals making such high-stakes decisions in a vacuum could have negative consequences given the lack of feedback, input, questioning, and proposals for alternatives that would come from group interaction. Group members also help expand our social networks, which provide access to more resources. A local community-theater group may be able to put on a production with a limited budget by drawing on these connections to get set-building supplies, props, costumes, actors, and publicity in ways that an individual could not. The increased knowledge, diverse perspectives, and access to resources that groups possess relate to another advantage of small groups—**synergy**.

Synergy refers *to the potential for gains in performance or heightened quality of interactions when complementary members or member characteristics are added to existing ones* (Larson Jr., 2010). Because of synergy, the final group product can be better than what any individual could have produced alone. When I worked in housing and residence life, I helped coordinate a "World Cup Soccer Tournament" for the international students that lived in my residence hall. As a group, we created teams representing different countries around the world, made brackets for people to track progress and predict winners, got sponsors, gathered prizes, and ended up with a very successful event that would not have been possible without the synergy created by our collective group membership. The members of this group were also exposed to international diversity that enriched our experiences, which is also an advantage of group communication.

Participating in groups can also increase our exposure to diversity and broaden our perspectives. Although groups vary in the diversity of their members, we can strategically choose groups that expand our diversity, or we can unintentionally end up in a diverse group. When we participate in small groups, we expand our social networks, which increases the possibility to interact with people who have different cultural identities than ourselves. Since group members work together toward a common goal, shared identification with the task or group can give people with diverse backgrounds a sense of commonality that they might not have otherwise. Even when group members share cultural identities, the diversity of experience and opinion within a group can lead to broadened perspectives as alternative ideas are presented and opinions are challenged and defended. One of my favorite parts of facilitating the class discussion is when students with different identities and/or perspectives teach one another things in ways that I could not on my own. This example brings together the potential of synergy and diversity. People who are more introverted or just avoid group communication and voluntarily distance themselves from groups—or are rejected from groups—risk losing opportunities to learn more about others and themselves.



Figure **8.1.4**: A social loafer is a dreaded group member who doesn't do his or her share of the work, expecting that others in the group won't notice or will pick up the slack. Henry Burrows – Sleeping On The Job – CC BY-SA 2.0.

There are also disadvantages to small group interaction. In some cases, one person can be just as or more effective than a group of people. Think about a situation in which a highly specialized skill or knowledge is needed to get something done. In this situation, one very knowledgeable person is probably a better fit for the task than a group of less knowledgeable people. Group interaction also tends to slow down the decision-making process. Individuals connected through a hierarchy or chain of command often work better in situations where decisions must be made under time constraints. When group interaction does occur under time constraints, having one "point person" or leader who coordinates action and gives final approval or disapproval on ideas or suggestions for actions is best.

Group communication also presents interpersonal challenges. A common problem is coordinating and planning group meetings due to busy and conflicting schedules. Some people also have difficulty with the other-centeredness and self-sacrifice that some groups require. The interdependence of group members that we discussed earlier can also create some disadvantages. Group members may take advantage of the anonymity of a group and engage in social loafing, meaning they contribute less to the group than other members or than they would if working alone (Karau & Williams, 1993). **Social loafers** *expect that no one will notice their behaviors or that others will pick up their slack.* It is this potential for social loafing that makes many students and professionals dread group work, especially those who tend to cover for other group members to prevent the social loafer from diminishing the group's productivity or output.

"Getting Competent": Improving Your Group Experiences

Like many of you, I also had some negative group experiences in college that made me think similarly to a student who posted the following on a teaching blog: "Group work is code for 'work as a group for a grade less than what you can get if you work alone" (Weimer, 2008). But then I took a course called "Small Group and Team Communication" with an amazing teacher who later became one of my most influential mentors. She emphasized the fact that we all needed to increase our knowledge about group communication and group dynamics to better our group communication experiences—and she was right. So the first piece of advice to help you start improving your group experiences is to closely study the group communication chapters in this textbook and to apply what you learn to your group interactions. Neither students nor faculty is born knowing how to function as a group, yet students and faculty often think we're supposed to learn as we go, which increases the likelihood of a negative experience.

The second piece of advice is to meet often with your group (Myers & Goodboy, 2005). Of course, to do this you have to overcome some scheduling and coordination difficulties, but putting other things aside to work as a group helps set up a norm that group work is important and worthwhile. Regular meetings also allow members to interact with each other, which can increase social bonds, build a sense of interdependence that can help diminish social loafing, and establish other important rules and norms that will guide future group interaction. Instead of committing to frequent meetings, many student groups use their first meeting to equally divide up the group's tasks so they can then go off and work alone (not as a group). While some group work can definitely be done independently, dividing up the work and assigning someone to put it all together doesn't allow group members to take advantage of one of the most powerful advantages of group work—synergy.

Last, establish group expectations and follow through with them. I recommend that my students come up with a group name and create a contract of group guidelines during their first meeting (both of which I learned from my group communication teacher whom I referenced earlier). The group name helps begin to establish a shared identity, which then contributes to interdependence and improves performance. The contract of group guidelines helps make explicit the group norms that might

have otherwise been left implicit. Each group member contributes to the contract and then they all sign it. Groups often make guidelines about how meetings will be run, what to do about lateness and attendance, the type of climate they'd like for discussion, and other relevant expectations. If group members end up falling short of these expectations, the other group members can remind the straying member of the contract and the fact that he or she signed it. If the group encounters further issues, they can use the contract as a basis for evaluating the other group member or for communicating with the instructor.

1. Do you agree with the student's quote about group work that was included at the beginning? Why or why not?
2. The second recommendation is to meet more with your group. Acknowledging that schedules are difficult to coordinate and that that is not really going to change, what are some strategies that you could use to overcome that challenge to get time together as a group?
3. What are some guidelines that you think you'd like to include in your contract with a future group?

Key Takeaways

- Getting integrated: Small group communication refers to interactions among three or more people who are connected through a common purpose, mutual influence, and a shared identity. Small groups are important communication units in academic, professional, civic, and personal contexts.
- Several characteristics influence small groups, including size, structure, interdependence, and shared identity.
  - In terms of size, small groups must consist of at least three people, but there is no set upper limit on the number of group members. The ideal number of group members is the smallest number needed to competently complete the group's task or achieve the group's purpose.
  - Internal influences such as member characteristics and external factors such as the group's size, task, and access to resources affect a group's structure. A group's structure also affects how group members communicate, as some structures are more centralized and hierarchical and other structures are more decentralized and equal.
  - Groups are interdependent in that they have a shared purpose and a shared fate, meaning that each group member's actions affect every other group member.
  - Groups develop a shared identity based on their task or purpose, previous accomplishments, future goals, and an identity that sets their members apart from other groups.
- Small groups serve several functions as they meet instrumental, interpersonal, and identity needs.
  - Groups meet instrumental needs, as they allow us to pool resources and provide access to information to better help us survive and succeed.
  - Groups meet interpersonal needs, as they provide a sense of belonging (inclusion), an opportunity to participate in decision making and influence others (control), and emotional support.
  - Groups meet identity needs, as they offer us a chance to affiliate ourselves with others whom we perceive to be like us or whom we admire and would like to be associated with.
- There are various types of groups, including task-oriented, relational-oriented, primary, and secondary groups, as well as teams.
  - Task-oriented groups are formed to solve a problem, promote a cause, or generate ideas or information, while relational-oriented groups are formed to promote interpersonal connections. While there are elements of both in every group, the overall purpose of a group can usually be categorized as the primary task or relational oriented.
  - Primary groups are long-lasting groups that are formed based on interpersonal relationships and include family and friendship groups, and secondary groups are characterized by less frequent interaction and less emotional and relational communication than in primary groups. Our communication in primary groups is more frequently other-oriented than our communication in secondary groups, which is often self-oriented.
  - Teams are similar to task-oriented groups, but they are characterized by a high degree of loyalty and dedication to the group's task and other group members.
- Advantages of group communication include shared decision-making, shared resources, synergy, and exposure to diversity. Disadvantages of group communication include unnecessary group formation (when the task would be better performed by one person), difficulty coordinating schedules, and difficulty with accountability and social loafing.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: For each of the following examples of a small group context, indicate what you think would be the ideal size of the group and why. Also indicate who the ideal group members would be (in terms of their occupation/major, role, level of expertise, or other characteristics) and what structure would work best.
   - A study group for this class
   - A committee to decide on library renovation plans
   - An upper-level college class in your major
   - A group to advocate for more awareness of and support for abandoned animals
2. List some groups to which you have belonged that focused primarily on tasks and then list some that focused primarily on relationships. Compare and contrast your experiences in these groups.
3. Synergy is one of the main advantages of small group communication. Explain a time when a group you were in benefited from or failed to achieve synergy. What contributed to your success/failure?

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8.2: Small Group Development

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the process of group development.
2. Discuss the characteristics of each stage of group development.

Small groups have to start somewhere. Even established groups go through changes as members come and go, as tasks are started and completed, and as relationships change. In this section, we will learn about the stages of group development, which are **forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning** (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). As with most models of communication phenomena, although we order the stages and discuss them separately, they are not always experienced in a linear fashion. Additionally, some groups don't experience all five stages, may experience stages multiple times, or may experience more than one stage at a time.

Forming

During the **forming stage**, group members begin to reduce the uncertainty associated with new relationships and/or new tasks through initial interactions that lay the foundation for later group dynamics. Groups return to the forming stage as group members come and go over the life span of a group. Although there may not be as much uncertainty when one or two new people join a group as there is when a group first forms, groups spend some time in the forming stage every time group membership changes.

Given that interpersonal bonds are likely not yet formed and people are unfamiliar with the purpose of the group or task at hand, there are high levels of uncertainty. Early stages of role negotiation begin and members begin to determine goals for the group and establish rules and norms. Group cohesion also begins to form during this stage. **Group cohesion** refers to *the commitment of members to the purpose of the group and the degree of attraction among individuals within the group* (Hargie, 2011). The cohesion that begins in this stage sets the group on a trajectory influenced by group members' feelings about one another and their purpose or task. Groups with voluntary membership may exhibit high levels of optimism about what the group can accomplish. Although optimism can be motivating, unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment, making it important for group members to balance optimism with realism. Groups with assigned or mandatory membership may include members that carry some degree of resentment toward the group itself or the goals of the group. These members can start the group off on a negative trajectory that will lessen or make difficult group cohesiveness. Groups can still be successful if these members are balanced out by others who are more committed to and positive in regards to the purpose of the group.

Storming

During the **storming stage** of group development, conflict emerges as people begin to perform their various roles, have their ideas heard, and negotiate where they fit in the group's structure. The uncertainty present in the forming stage begins to give way as people begin to occupy specific roles and the purpose, rules, and norms of a group become clearer. Conflict develops when some group members aren't satisfied with the role that they or others are playing or the decisions regarding the purpose or procedures of the group. For example, if a leader begins to emerge or is assigned during the forming stage, some members may feel that the leader is imposing his or her will on other members of the group. As we will learn in our section on group leadership, leaders should expect some degree of resentment from others who wanted to be the leader, have interpersonal conflicts with the leader, or just have general issues with being led.

Although the word *storming* and the concept of conflict have negative connotations, conflict can be positive and productive. Just like storms can replenish water supplies and make crops grow, storming can lead to group growth. While conflict is inevitable and should be experienced by every group, a group that gets stuck at the storming stage will likely not have much success in completing its task or achieving its purpose. Influences from outside the group can also affect the conflict in the storming stage. Interpersonal conflicts that predate the formation of the group may distract the group from the more productive idea- or task-oriented conflict that can be healthy for the group and increase the quality of ideas, decision making, and output.



Figure: Although we often have negative connotations of storming and conflict, the group conflict that happens in this stage is necessary and productive. Benjamen Benson – Lightning Storm – CC BY 2.0.

Norming

During the **norming stage** of group development, the practices and expectations of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group. Group norms are behaviors that become routine but are not explicitly taught or stated. In short, group norms help set the tone for what group members ought to do and how they ought to behave (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Many implicit norms are derived from social norms that people follow in their everyday life. Norms within the group about politeness, lateness, and communication patterns are typically similar to those in other contexts. Sometimes a norm needs to be challenged because it is not working for the group, which could lead a group back to the storming stage. Other times, group members challenge norms for no good reason, which can lead to punishment for the group member or create conflict within the group.

Performing

During the **performing stage** of group development, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or achievement of a purpose. Although interactions in the performing stage are task-focused, the relational aspects of group interaction provide underlying support for the group members. Socialization outside of official group time can serve as a needed relief from the group's task. During task-related interactions, group members ideally begin to develop a synergy that results from the pooling of skills, ideas, experiences, and resources. Synergy is positive in that it can lead group members to exceed their expectations and perform better than they could individually. Glitches in the group's performance can lead the group back to previous stages of group development. Changes in membership, member roles, or norms can necessitate a revisiting of aspects of the forming, storming, or norming stages. One way to continue to build group cohesion during the performing stage is to set short-term attainable group goals. Accomplishing something, even if it's small, can boost group morale, which in turn boosts cohesion and productivity.

Adjourning

The **adjourning stage** of group development occurs when a group dissolves because it has completed its purpose or goal, membership is declining and support for the group no longer exists, or it is dissolved because of some other internal or external cause. Some groups may live on indefinitely and not experience the adjourning stage. Other groups may experience so much conflict in the storming stage that they skip norming and performing and dissolve before they can complete their task. For groups with high social cohesion, adjourning may be a difficult emotional experience. However, group members may continue interpersonal relationships that formed even after the group dissolves. In reality, many bonds, even those that were very close, end up fading after the group disbands. This doesn't mean the relationship wasn't genuine; interpersonal relationships often form because of proximity and shared task interaction. Once that force is gone, it becomes difficult to maintain friendships, and many fade away. For groups that had negative experiences, the adjourning stage may be welcomed.

To make the most out of the adjourning stage, it is important that there be some guided and purposeful reflection. Many groups celebrate their accomplishments with a party or ceremony. Even groups that had negative experiences or failed to achieve their purpose can still learn something through reflection in the adjourning stage that may be beneficial for future group interactions. Often, group members leave a group experience with new or more developed skills that can be usefully applied in future group or

individual contexts. Even groups that are relational rather than task-focused can increase members' interpersonal, listening, or empathetic skills or increase cultural knowledge and introduce new perspectives.

Key Takeaways

- Small groups have to start somewhere, but their course of development varies after forming based on many factors. Some groups go through each stage of development in a progressive and linear fashion, while other groups may get stuck in a stage, skip a stage, or experience a stage multiple times.
- The five stages of group development include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.
  1. During the forming stage, group members engage in socially polite exchanges to help reduce uncertainty and gain familiarity with new members. Even though their early interactions may seem unproductive, they lay the groundwork for cohesion and other group dynamics that will play out more prominently in later stages.
  2. During the storming stage, conflict emerges as group members begin to perform their various roles, have their ideas heard, and negotiate where they fit in the group's structure. Conflict is inevitable and important as a part of group development and can be productive if it is managed properly.
  3. During the norming stage, the practices and expectations (norms and rules) of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group.
  4. During the performing stage, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or the achievement of their purpose, ideally capitalizing on the synergy that comes from the diverse experiences group members bring to the decision-making process.
  5. During the adjourning stage, a group dissolves because its purpose has been met because membership has declined or the group has lost support, or due to some other internal or external cause. It is important that groups reflect on the life of the group to learn any relevant lessons and celebrate accomplishments.

Exercises

1. Recall a previous or current small group to which you belonged/belong. Trace the group's development using the five stages discussed in this section. Did you experience all the stages? In what order? Did you stay in some stages more than others?
2. During the norming stage of group development, interaction patterns and group expectations solidify. Recall a current or former group. What were some of the norms for the group? What were some rules? How did you become aware of each?
3. Many people don't think about the importance of the adjourning stage. What do you think is the best way to complete the adjourning stage for a group that was successful and cohesive? What about a group that was unsuccessful and not cohesive?

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8.3: Small Group Dynamics

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the relationship between group cohesion and group climate.
2. Describe the process of group member socialization.
3. Explain the relationship between conformity and groupthink.
4. Define various types of group conflict and identify strategies for managing each type.

Any time a group of people comes together, new dynamics are put into place that differs from the dynamics present in our typical dyadic interactions. The impressions we form about other people's likeability and the way we think about a group's purpose are affected by the climate within a group that is created by all members. Groups also develop norms, and new group members are socialized into a group's climate and norms just as we are socialized into larger social and cultural norms in our everyday life. The pressure to conform to norms becomes more powerful in group situations, and some groups take advantage of these forces with positive and negative results. Last, the potential for productive and destructive conflict increases as multiple individuals come together to accomplish a task or achieve a purpose. This section explores the dynamics mentioned previously in order to better prepare you for future group interactions.

Group Cohesion and Climate

Appropriate levels of group cohesion usually create a positive group climate, since group climate is affected by members' satisfaction with the group. Climate has also been described as group morale. Following are some qualities that contribute to a positive group climate and morale (Marston & Hecht, 1988):

- **Participation.** Group members feel better when they feel included in the discussion and a part of the functioning of the group.
- **Messages.** Confirming messages help build relational dimensions within a group, and clear, organized, and relevant messages help build task dimensions within a group.
- **Feedback.** Positive, constructive, and relevant feedback contribute to the group climate.
- **Equity.** Aside from individual participation, group members also like to feel as if participation is managed equally within the group and that appropriate turn-taking is used.
- **Clear and accepted roles.** Group members like to know how status and hierarchy operate within a group. Knowing the roles isn't enough to lead to satisfaction, though—members must also be comfortable with and accept those roles.
- **Motivation.** Member motivation is activated by perceived connection to and relevance of the group's goals or purpose.



Figure **8.3.1**: Cohesion and shared identity help create symbolic convergence as group members develop a group identity and shared social reality. Ram K – Watching the big game – CC BY-NC 2.0.

"Getting Real": Working in Teams

Although most college students hate working in groups, in the "real world" working in teams has become a regular part of professional expectations. Following Japan's lead, corporations in the United States began adopting a more team-based approach for project management decades ago (Jain et al., 2008). This model has become increasingly popular in various organizational settings since then as means to increase productivity and reduce bureaucracy. Teams in the workplace have horizontally expanded the traditional vertical hierarchy of organizations, as the aim of creating these teams was to produce smaller units within an organization that is small enough to be efficient and self-manageable but large enough to create the synergy that we discussed in the earlier part of the chapter.

Aside from efficiency, teams are also valued for the potential for innovation. The strategic pooling of people with diverse knowledge, experience, and skills can lead to synergistic collaborative thinking that produces new knowledge (du Chatenier et al., 2010). This potential for innovation makes teams ideal in high-stakes situations where money, contracts, or lives are at stake. Large corporations are now putting together what has been termed *inter-organizational high-performance research and development teams* consisting of highly trained technical and scientific experts from diverse backgrounds to work collectively and simultaneously on complex projects under very challenging conditions (Daniel & Davis, 2009). In markets where companies race to find the next generation of technological improvement, such research and development teams are critical for an organization's success. Research on such teams in real-world contexts has found that in order to be successful, high-performance teams should have a clear base such as a project mission, a leader who strategically assigns various tasks to members based on their specialized expertise, and shared leadership in which individual experts are trusted to make decisions relevant to their purview within the group. Although these high-performance teams are very task-oriented, research has also found that the social element cannot be ignored, even under extreme internal and external pressures. In fact, cohesion and interdependence help create a shared reality that in turn improves productivity, because team members feel a sense of shared ownership over their charge (Solansky, 2011).

Some challenges associated with working in teams include the potential for uncertainty or conflict due to the absence of traditional hierarchy, pressures that become overwhelming, lack of shared history since such teams are usually future-oriented, and high expectations without resources necessary to complete the task (du Chatenier et al., 2010). To overcome these challenges, team members can think positively but realistically about the team's end goal, exhibit trust in the expertise of other team members, be reliable and approachable to help build a good team spirit, take initiative with actions and ideas, ask critical questions, and provide critical but constructive feedback.

1. Given your career goals, what sorts of teamwork do you think you might engage in?
2. Would you welcome the opportunity to work on a high-performance team? Why or why not?
3. Members of teams are often under intense pressure to produce or perform at high levels. What is the line at which the pressure becomes too much? Ethically, how far should companies push teams and how far should team members go to complete a task?

Socializing Group Members

Group socialization refers to the process of teaching and learning the norms, rules, and expectations associated with group interaction and group member behaviors. Group norms, rules, and cohesion can only be created and maintained through socialization (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). It is also through socialization that shared identity and social reality develop among group members, but this development is dependent on several factors. For example, groups with higher levels of cohesion are more likely to have members that "buy into" rules and norms, which aids in socialization. The need for socialization also changes throughout a group's life span. If membership in a group is stable, long-term members should not need much socialization. However, when new members join a group, existing members must take time to engage in socialization. When a totally new group is formed, socialization will be an ongoing process as group members negotiate rules and procedures, develop norms, and create a shared history over time.

The information exchanged during socialization can be broken down into two general categories: technical and social knowledge (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). Technical knowledge focuses on skills and information needed to complete a task, and social knowledge focuses on behavioral norms that guide interaction. Each type of information is usually conveyed through a combination of formal

and informal means. Technical knowledge can be fairly easily passed along through orientations, training, manuals, and documents because this content is often fairly straightforward. Social knowledge is more ambiguous and is usually conveyed through informal means or passively learned by new members through observation. To return to our earlier terminology, technical knowledge relates more to group rules and social knowledge relates more to group norms.

Group rules and norms provide members with a sense of predictability that helps reduce uncertainty and increase a sense of security for one's place within the group. They also guide group members' involvement with the group, help create a shared social reality, and allow the group to function in particular ways without having actual people constantly educating, monitoring, and then correcting member behaviors (Hargie, 2011). Of course, the degree to which this is successful depends on the buy-in from group members.

Group Pressures

There must be some kind of motivating force present within groups in order for the rules and norms to help govern and guide a group. Without such pressure, group members would have no incentive to conform to group norms or buy into the group's identity and values. In this section, we will discuss how rules and norms gain their power through internal and external pressures and how these pressures can have positive and negative effects.



Figure **8.3.2**: Even though group members are different, failure to conform to the group's identity could create problems. Airwolfhound – Odd one out – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Conformity

In general, some people are more likely to accept norms and rules than others, which can influence the interaction and potential for conflict within a group. While some people may feel a need for social acceptance that leads them to accept a norm or rule with minimal conformity pressure, others may actively resist because they have a valid disagreement or because they have an aggressive or argumentative personality (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Such personality traits are examples of internal pressures that operate within the individual group member and act as a self-governing mechanism. When group members discipline themselves and monitor their own behavior, groups need not invest in as many external mechanisms to promote conformity. Deviating from the group's rules and norms that a member internalized during socialization can lead to self-imposed feelings of guilt or shame that can then initiate corrective behaviors and discourage the member from going against the group.

Conformity pressure can also stem from external forces when the whole group stands to receive a reward or punishment based on its performance, which ties back to the small group characteristic of interdependence. Although these pressures may seem negative, they also have positive results. Groups that exert an appropriate and ethical amount of conformity pressure typically have higher levels of group cohesion, which as we learned leads to increased satisfaction with group membership, better relationships, and better task performance. Groups with a strong but healthy level of conformity also project a strong group image to those outside the group, which can raise the group's profile or reputation (Hargie, 2011). Pressures toward conformity, of course, can go too far, as is evidenced in tragic stories of people driven to suicide because they felt they couldn't live up to the conformity pressure of their group and people injured or killed enduring hazing rituals that take expectations for group conformity to unethical and criminal extremes.

"Getting Critical": Hazing: Taking Conformity Pressures to the Extreme

Hazing can be defined as actions expected to be performed by aspiring or new members of a group that are irrelevant to the group's activities or mission and are humiliating, degrading, abusive, or dangerous (Richardson, Wang, & Hall, 2012). People who have participated in hazing or have been hazed often note that hazing activities are meant to build group identification and unity. Scholars note that hazing is rationalized because of high conformity pressures and that people who were hazed internalize the group's practices and are more likely to perpetuate hazing, creating a cycle of abuse (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005). Hazing is not new; it has been around in academic and athletic settings since ancient Greece, but it has gotten much attention lately on college campuses as the number of student deaths attributed to hazing behaviors has increased steadily over the past years. In general, it is believed that hazing incidents are underreported, because these activities are done in secret within tightly knit organizations such as fraternities, sororities, and athletic teams that have strong norms of conformity (Richardson, Wang, & Hall, 2012).

The urge to belong is powerful, but where is the line when it comes to the actions people take or what people are willing to endure in order to be accepted? Hazing is meant to have aspiring group members prove their worth or commitment to the group. Examples of hazing include, but aren't limited to, being "kidnapped, transported, and abandoned"; drinking excessively in games or contests; sleep deprivation; engaging in or simulating sexual acts; being physically abused; being required to remain silent; wearing unusual clothes or costumes; or acting in a subservient manner to more senior group members (Campo, Poulos, & Supple, 2005; Cimino, 2011). Research has found that people in leadership roles, who are more likely to have strong group identification, are also more likely to engage in hazing activities (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005). The same research also found that group members who have supportive friends outside of the organization are more likely to remove themselves from a hazing situation, which points to the fact that people who endure hazing may be doing so out of a strong drive to find acceptance and belonging they do not have elsewhere.

1. What is your definition of hazing? When does something cross the line from a rite of passage or tradition to hazing?
2. What are some internal and external pressures that might lead to hazing activities?
3. Do some research on hazing incidents on college campuses. What concepts from this chapter do you think could be used in anti-hazing education campaigns to prevent incidents like the ones you researched?

Groupthink

Groupthink is a negative group phenomenon characterized by a lack of critical evaluation of proposed ideas or courses of action that results from high levels of cohesion and/or high conformity pressures (Janis, 1972). We can better understand groupthink by examining its causes and effects. When group members fall victim to groupthink, the effect is an uncritical acceptance of decisions or suggestions for plans of action to accomplish a task or goal. Group meetings that appear to go smoothly with only positive interaction among happy, friendly people may seem ideal, but these actions may be symptomatic of groupthink (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). When people rush to agreement or fear arguments, groupthink has a tendency to emerge. Decisions made as a result of groupthink may range from a poorly thought out presentation method that bores the audience to a mechanical failure resulting in death.

Two primary causes of groupthink are high levels of cohesion and excessive conformity pressures. When groups exhibit high levels of social cohesion, members may be reluctant to criticize or question another group member's ideas or suggestions for fear that it would damage the relationship. When group members have a high level of task cohesion, they may feel invincible and not critically evaluate ideas. High levels of cohesion may actually lessen conformity pressures since group members who identify strongly with the group's members and mission may not feel a need to question the decisions or suggestions made by others. For those who aren't blinded by the high levels of cohesion, internal conformity pressures may still lead them to withhold criticism of an idea because the norm is to defer to decisions made by organization leaders or a majority of group members. External conformity pressures because of impending reward or punishment, time pressures, or an aggressive leader are also factors that can lead to groupthink.

To Avoid Groupthink, Groups Should (Hargie, 2011)

- Divvy up responsibilities between group members so decision-making power isn't in the hands of a few
- Track contributions of group members in such a way that each person's input and output is recorded so that it can be discussed
- Encourage and reward the expression of minority or dissenting opinions
- Allow members to submit ideas prior to a discussion so that opinions aren't swayed by members who propose ideas early in a discussion
- Question each major decision regarding its weaknesses and potential negative consequences relative to competing decisions (encourage members to play "devil's advocate")
- Have decisions reviewed by an outside party that wasn't involved in the decision-making process
- Have a "reflection period" after a decision is made and before it is implemented during which group members can express reservations or second thoughts about the decision

Group Conflict

Conflict can appear in indirect or direct forms within group interaction, just as it can in interpersonal interactions. Group members may openly question each other's ideas or express anger toward or dislike for another person. Group members may also indirectly engage in conflict communication through innuendo, joking, or passive-aggressive behavior. Although we often view conflict negatively, conflict can be beneficial for many reasons. When groups get into a rut, lose creativity, or become complacent, conflict can help get a group out of a bad or mediocre routine. Conversely, conflict can lead to lower group productivity due to strain on the task and social dimensions of a group. There are three main types of conflict within groups: procedural, substantive, and interpersonal (Fujishin, 2001). Each of these types of conflict can vary in intensity, which can affect how much the conflict impacts the group and its members.

Procedural Conflict

Procedural conflict emerges from disagreements or trouble with the mechanics of group operations. In this type of conflict, group members differ in their beliefs about *how* something should be done. Procedural conflict can be handled by a group leader, especially if the leader puts group procedures into place or has the individual power to change them. If there is no designated leader or the leader doesn't have the sole power to change procedures (or just wants input from group members), proposals can be taken from the group on ways to address a procedural conflict to initiate a procedural change. A vote to reach a consensus or majority can also help resolve procedural conflict.



Figure **8.3.3**: Procedural conflict can often be resolved with a group vote. Pixabay – CC0 Public Domain.

Substantive Conflict

Substantive conflict focuses on group members' differing beliefs, attitudes, values, or ideas related to the purpose or task of the group. Rather than focusing on questions of *how*, substantive conflicts focus on questions of *what*. Substantive conflicts may emerge as a group tries to determine its purpose or mission. As members figure out how to complete a task or debate which project to start on next, there will undoubtedly be differences of opinion on what something means, what is acceptable in terms of supporting evidence for a proposal, or what is acceptable for a goal or performance standard. Leaders and other group members shouldn't rush to close this type of conflict down. As we learned in our earlier discussion of groupthink, open discussion and debate regarding ideas and suggestions for group action can lead to higher-quality output and may prevent groupthink. Leaders who make

final decisions about substantive conflict for the sake of moving on run the risk of creating a win/lose competitive climate in which people feel like their ideas may be shot down, which could lead to less participation. To resolve this type of conflict, group members may want to do research to see what other groups have done in similar situations, as additional information often provides needed context for conflict regarding information and ideas. Once the information is gathered, weigh all proposals and try to discover common ground among perspectives. Civil and open discussions that debate the merits of an idea are more desirable than a climate in which people feel personally judged for their ideas.

Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict emerges from conflict between individual members of the group. Whereas procedural conflict deals with *how* and substantive conflict deals with *what*, interpersonal conflict deals with *who*. Such conflict can be completely irrelevant to the functioning or purpose of the group, perhaps focusing instead on personality differences. Interpersonal conflict can be the result of avoided or improperly handled procedural or substantive conflict that festers and becomes personal rather than task-focused. This type of conflict can also result from differences in beliefs, attitudes, and values (when such differences are taken personally rather than substantively); different personalities; or different communication styles. While procedural and substantive conflicts may be more easily expressed because they do not directly address a person, interpersonal conflict may slowly build as people avoid openly criticizing or confronting others. Passive-aggressive behavior is a sign that interpersonal conflict may be building under the surface, and other group members may want to intervene to avoid escalation and retaliation. Leaders can also meet with people involved in interpersonal conflict privately to help them engage in perception checking and act as mediators if needed. While people who initiate procedural or substantive conflict may be perceived by other group members as concerned about the group's welfare and seen as competent in their ability to notice areas on which the group could improve, people who initiate interpersonal conflict are often held in ill-regard by other group members (Ellis & Fisher, 1994).

Managing Conflict in Small Groups

Some common ways to manage conflict include clear decision-making procedures, third-party mediation, and leader facilitation (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). While an up-and-down vote can allow a group to finalize a decision and move on, members whose vote fell on the minority side may feel resentment toward other group members. This can create a win/lose climate that leads to further conflict. Having a leader who makes ultimate decisions can also help move a group toward completion of a task, but conflict may only be pushed to the side and left not fully addressed. Third-party mediation can help move a group past a conflict and may create fewer feelings of animosity since the person mediating and perhaps making a decision isn't a member of the group. In some cases, the leader can act as an internal third-party mediator to help other group members work productively through their conflict.

Tips for Managing Group Conflict (Ellis & Fisher, 1994)

1. Clarify the issue at hand by getting to the historical roots of the problem. Keep in mind that perception leads us to punctuate interactions differently, so it may be useful to know each person's perspective of when, how, and why the conflict began.
2. Create a positive discussion climate by encouraging and rewarding active listening.
3. Discuss needs rather than solutions. Determine each person's needs to be met and goals for the outcome of the conflict before offering or acting on potential solutions.
4. Set boundaries for discussion and engage in gatekeeping to prevent unproductive interactions like tangents and personal attacks.
5. Use "we" language to maintain existing group cohesion and identity, and use "I" language to help reduce defensiveness.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Conflict

Remember that a complete lack of conflict in a group is a bad sign, as it indicates either a lack of activity or a lack of commitment on the part of the members (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Conflict, when properly handled, can lead a group to have a better understanding of the issues they face. For example, substantive conflict brings voice to alternative perspectives that may not have been heard otherwise. Additionally, when people view conflict as healthy, necessary, and productive, they can enter into a conflict episode with an open mind and an aim to learn something. This is especially true when those who initiate substantive conflict are able to share and defend their views in a competent and civil manner. Group cohesion can also increase as a result of well-managed conflict. Occasional experiences of tension and unrest followed by resolutions make groups feel like they have accomplished something, which can lead them to not dread conflict and give them the confidence to more productively deal with it the next time.

Conflict that goes on for too long or is poorly handled can lead to decreased cohesiveness. Group members who try to avoid a conflict can still feel anger or frustration when the conflict drags on. Members who consistently take task-oriented conflict personally and escalate procedural or substantive conflict to interpersonal conflict are especially unpopular with other group members. Mishandled or chronic conflict can eventually lead to the destruction of a group or to a loss of members as people weigh the costs and rewards of membership (Ellis & Fisher, 1994).

Key Takeaways

- *Task cohesion* refers to the degree of commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group, and *social cohesion* refers to the degree of attraction and liking among group members. *Group climate* refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members. The degree of each type of cohesion affects the group's climate. Groups can be very close socially but not perform well if they do not have an appropriate level of task cohesion. Groups that are too focused on the task can experience interpersonal conflict or a lack of motivation if the social cohesion, which helps enhance the feeling of interdependence, is lacking.
- *Group socialization* refers to the process of teaching and learning the norms, rules, and expectations associated with group interaction and group member behaviors. Group members are socialized by receiving technical and social information. Cohesion plays a role in socialization, as groups that have high levels of task and social cohesion are more likely to buy into the norms of the group. Socialization continues after a member has joined, as members are officially or unofficially rewarded or punished for adhering to or deviating from the group's norms.
- Conformity pressures are an important force behind group socialization. Internal pressures such as an internal drive to be seen as part of the group or to avoid feeling ashamed or guilty for deviating from the group influence behavior and communication. Likewise, external pressures such as group policies and the potential for reward or punishment also play into group dynamics. The pressures toward conformity can manifest in *groupthink*, which is characterized by a lack of critical evaluation of proposed ideas, a high level of agreement, and fear of argument.
- Groups experience different kinds of conflict, including procedural, substantive, and interpersonal conflict.
  - Procedural conflict emerges from disagreements or trouble with the mechanics of group operations and deals with questions about "how" a group should do something. A leader may be able to resolve this conflict by changing or explaining a procedure or taking, from group members, proposals for or votes on procedural revisions.
  - Substantive conflict focuses on group members' differing beliefs, attitudes, values, or ideas related to the purpose or task of the group. Leaders and other group members should avoid closing off this type of conflict before people have had a chance to be heard, as a lack of substantive conflict can lead to groupthink. Instead, listen to all viewpoints, try to find common ground, and then weigh and evaluate the information as a group.
  - Interpersonal conflict emerges from personal conflict between individual members of a group. Manage interpersonal conflict by getting to the root cause of the conflict. In some cases, interpersonal conflict may be disguised as procedural or substantive conflict, or it may develop as a result of the poorly managed procedural or substantive conflict. Leaders, group members not directly involved in the conflict, or even outside third parties may also be able to effectively mediate interpersonal conflict.

Exercises

1. Group cohesion and climate are important dynamics within a small group. Identify and then compare and contrast a current or former small group that was cohesive and one that was not cohesive, including a discussion of how the presence or lack of cohesion affected the group's climate.
2. Groupthink is a negative group dynamic that relates to cohesion and conformity pressures. Several historic events with far-reaching and devastating implications have been analyzed through the lens of groupthink. Choose one of the following examples, and do some Internet research on your own. Then explain how groupthink played a role in the event.
   - The Watergate scandal and cover-up (1972–74)
   - The space shuttle Challenger explosion (1986)
   - The rationale for the invasion of Iraq—specifically the supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction (2001–2)

3. Getting integrated: How might you handle group conflict differently in an academic context versus a professional context? Why? Include a reference to a specific type of conflict discussed in this section and discuss which conflict management strategies discussed in the chapter might be best in each context.

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8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the various perspectives on how and why people become leaders.
2. Compare and contrast various leadership styles.

It's important to point out that although a group may have only one official leader, other group members play important leadership roles. Making this distinction also helps us differentiate between leaders and leadership (Hargie, 2011). The **leader** is a group role that is associated with *a high-status position and may be formally or informally recognized by group members*. **Leadership** is *a complex set of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its task*. A person in the role of leader may provide no or poor leadership. Likewise, a person who is not recognized as a "leader" in the title can provide excellent leadership. In the remainder of this section, we will discuss some approaches to the study of leadership, leadership styles, and leadership and group dynamics.

Why and How People Become Leaders

Before we move onto specific approaches to studying leadership, let's distinguish between designated and emergent leaders. In general, some people gravitate more toward leadership roles than others, and some leaders are designated while others are emergent (Hargie, 2011). **Designated leaders** are *officially recognized in their leadership role and may be appointed or elected by people inside or outside the group*. Designated leaders can be especially successful when they are sought out by others to fulfill and are then accepted in leadership roles. On the other hand, some people seek out leadership positions not because they possess leadership skills and have been successful leaders in the past but because they have the drive to hold and wield power. Many groups are initially leaderless and must either designate a leader or wait for one to emerge organically. **Emergent leaders** *gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are turned to by others as a resource when leadership is needed*. Emergent leaders may play an important role when a designated leader unexpectedly leaves. We will now turn our attention to three common perspectives on why some people are more likely to be designated leaders than others and how leaders emerge in the absence of or in addition to a designated leader.



Figure **8.4.1**: A group leader may be formally designated by someone inside or outside the group or may emerge naturally during early group meetings. New City Church – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Leaders Emerge Because of Their Traits

The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits, or personal characteristics (Pavitt, 1999). Some traits that leaders, in general, share are related to physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality (Cragan & Wright, 1991). In terms of physical appearance, designated leaders tend to be taller and more attractive than other group members. This could be because we consciously and/or subconsciously associate a larger size (in terms of height and build, but not body fat) with strength and strength with good leadership. As far as communication abilities, leaders speak more fluently, have a more confident tone, and communicate more often than other group members. Leaders are also moderately more intelligent than other group members, which is attractive because leaders need good problem-solving skills. Interestingly, group

members are not as likely to designate or recognize an emergent leader that they perceive to be exceedingly more intelligent than them. Last, leaders are usually more extroverted, assertive, and persistent than other group members. These personality traits help get these group members noticed by others, and expressivity is often seen as attractive and as a sign of communication competence.

Leaders Emerge Because of the Situation

Leaders emerge differently in different groups, but there are two stages common to each scenario (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). During this first stage, about half of the group's members are eliminated from the possibility of being the group's leader. Remember that this is an informal and implicit process—not like people being picked for a kickball team or intentionally vetted. The second stage of leader emergence is where a more or less pronounced struggle for leadership begins. Although the two leading candidates don't overtly fight with each other or say, "I should be leader, not you!" they both take strong stances in regards to the group's purpose and try to influence the structure, procedures, and trajectory for the group. The candidate who retreats will still enjoy a relatively high status in the group and be respected for vying for leadership. The second-place candidate may become a nuisance for the new emergent leader, questioning his or her decisions. Rather than excluding or punishing the second-place candidate, the new leader should give him or her responsibilities within the group to make use of the group member's respected status.



Figure 8.4.2: A group member with expertise in an area relevant to the group's task may emerge to lead the group. For example, a transplant surgeon may lead a team of other doctors and nurses during the surgery while a critical care nurse may take the lead during postsurgery recovery. UCD School of Medicine – Surgery Image 2 – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Leaders Emerge Based on Communication Skill and Competence

This final approach to the study of leadership is considered a functional approach because it focuses on how particular communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This last approach is the most useful for communication scholars and for people who want to improve their leadership skills because leadership behaviors (which are learnable and adaptable) rather than traits or situations (which are often beyond our control) are the primary focus of study. As we've already learned, any group member can exhibit leadership behaviors, not just a designated or emergent leader. Therefore leadership behaviors are important for all of us to understand even if we don't anticipate serving in leadership positions (Cragan & Wright, 1991).



Figure 8.4.3: A group leader with high communication competence can facilitate brainstorming and group discussion to enhance the creativity and quality of group members' ideas. Luca Mascaro – Brainstorming – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Leadership Styles

Given the large amount of research done on leadership, it is not surprising that there are several different ways to define or categorize leadership styles. In general, effective leaders do not fit solely into one style in any of the following classifications. Instead, they are able to adapt their leadership style to fit the relational and situational context (Wood, 1977). One common way to study leadership style is to make a distinction among autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). These leadership styles can be described as follows:

- **Autocratic leaders** *set policies and make decisions primarily on their own, taking advantage of the power present in their title or status to set the agenda for the group.*
- **Democratic leaders** *facilitate group discussion and like to take input from all members before making a decision.*
- **Laissez-faire leaders** *take a "hands-off" approach, preferring to give group members freedom to reach and implement their own decisions.*

While this is a frequently cited model of leadership styles, we will focus in more detail on a model that was developed a few years after this one. I choose to focus on this later model because it offers some more specifics in terms of the communicative elements of each leadership style. The four leadership styles used in this model are directive, participative, supportive, and achievement-oriented (House & Mitchell, 1974).

Directive Leaders

Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by *clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures*. Although this is most similar to the autocratic leadership style mentioned before, it is more nuanced and flexible. The originators of this model note that a leader can be directive without being seen as authoritarian. To do this, directive leaders must be good motivators who encourage productivity through positive reinforcement or reward rather than through the threat of punishment.



Figure 8.4.4: Directive leaders provide structure and clear expectations for their group. To be effective they must be skilled motivators. The Open University – Speaker – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

A directive leadership style is effective in groups that do not have a history and may require direction to get started on their task. It can also be the most appropriate method during crisis situations in which decisions must be made under time constraints or other extraordinary pressures. When groups have an established history and are composed of people with unique skills and expertise, a directive approach may be seen as "micromanaging." In these groups, a more participative style may be the best option.

Participative Leaders

Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by *soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions*. When group members feel included, their personal goals are more likely to align with the group and organization's goals, which can help productivity. In addition to consulting group members for help with decision-making, participative leaders also grant group members more freedom to work independently. This can lead group members to feel trusted and respected for their skills, which can increase their effort and output. The participative method of leadership is similar to the democratic style discussed earlier, and it is a style of leadership practiced in many organizations that have established workgroups that meet consistently over long periods of time. US companies began to adopt a more participative and less directive style of management in the 1980s after organizational scholars researched teamwork and efficiency in Japanese corporations. Japanese

managers included employees in decision-making, which blurred the line between the leader and other group members and enhanced productivity. These small groups were called "quality circles" because they focused on group interaction intended to improve quality and productivity (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

Supportive Leaders

Supportive leaders *show concern for their followers' needs and emotions*. They want to support group members' welfare through a positive and friendly group climate. These leaders are good at reducing the stress and frustration of the group, which helps create a positive climate and can help increase group members' positive feelings about the task and other group members. Supportive leaders do not provide unconditionally positive praise. They competently provide constructive criticism in order to challenge and enhance group members' contributions. A supportive leadership style is more likely in groups that are primarily relational rather than task-focused. For example, support groups and therapy groups benefit from a supportive leader. While maintaining positive relationships is an important part of any group's functioning, most task-oriented groups need to spend more time on tasks than social functions in order to efficiently work toward the completion of their task.

Achievement-Oriented Leaders

Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and *set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations*. These leaders often engage in systematic social comparison, keeping tabs on other similar high-performing groups to assess their expectations and the group's progress. This type of leadership is similar to what other scholars call transformational or visionary leadership and is often associated with leaders like former Apple CEO Steve Jobs, talk show host and television network CEO Oprah Winfrey, former president Bill Clinton, and business magnate turned philanthropist Warren Buffett. Achievement-oriented leaders are likely less common than the other styles, as this style requires a high level of skill and commitment on the part of the leader and the group. Although rare, these leaders can be found at all levels of groups ranging from local school boards to *Fortune* 500 companies. Certain group dynamics must be in place in order to accommodate this leadership style. Groups for which an achievement-oriented leadership style would be effective are typically intentionally created and are made up of members who are skilled and competent in regard to the group's task. In many cases, the leader is specifically chosen because of his or her reputation and expertise, and even though the group members may not have a history of working with the leader, the members and leader must have a high degree of mutual respect.

"Getting Plugged In": Steve Jobs as an Achievement-Oriented Leader

"Where can you find a leader with Jobs' willingness to fail, his sheer tenacity, persistence, and resiliency, his grandiose ego, his overwhelming belief in himself?" (Deutschman, 2012) This closing line of an article following the death of Steve Jobs clearly illustrates the larger-than-life personality and extraordinary drive of achievement-oriented leaders. Jobs, who founded Apple Computers, was widely recognized as a visionary with a brilliant mind during his early years at the helm of Apple (from 1976 to 1985), but he hadn't yet gained respect as a business leader. Jobs left the company and later returned in 1997. After his return, Apple reached its height under his leadership, which was now enhanced by the business knowledge and skills he gained during his time away from the company. The fact that Jobs was able to largely teach himself the ins and outs of business practices is a quality of achievement-oriented leaders, who are constantly self-reflective and evaluate their skills and performance, making adaptations as necessary.

Achievement-oriented leaders also often possess good instincts, allowing them to make decisions quickly while acknowledging the potential for failure but also showing a resiliency that allows them to bounce back from mistakes and come back stronger. Rather than bringing in panels of experts, presenting ideas to focus groups for feedback, or putting a new product through market research and testing, Jobs relied on his instincts, which led to some embarrassing failures and some remarkable successes that overshadowed the failures. Although Jobs made unilateral decisions, he relied heavily on the creative and technical expertise of others who worked for him and were able to make his creative, innovative, and some say genius ideas reality. As do other achievement-oriented leaders, Jobs held his group members to exceptionally high standards and fostered a culture that mirrored his own perfectionism. Constant comparisons to other technological innovators like Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft, pushed Jobs and those who worked for him to work tirelessly to produce the "next big thing." Achievement-oriented leaders like Jobs have been described as maniacal, intense, workaholics, perfectionists, risk-takers, narcissists, innovative, and

visionary. These descriptors carry positive and negative connotations but often yield amazing results when possessed by a leader, the likes of which only seldom come around.

1. Do you think Jobs could have been as successful had he employed one of the other leadership styles? Why or why not? How might the achievement-oriented leadership style be well suited for a technology company like Apple or the technology field in general?
2. In what circumstances would you like to work for an achievement-oriented leader, and why? In what circumstances would you prefer not to work with an achievement-oriented leader, and why?
3. Do some research on another achievement-oriented leader. Discuss how that leader's traits are similar to and/or different from those of Steve Jobs.

"Getting Real": Leadership as the Foundation of a Career

As we've already learned, leaders share traits, some more innate and naturally tapped into than others. Successful leaders also develop and refine leadership skills and behaviors that they are not "born with." Since much of leadership is skill and behavior-based, it is never too early to start developing yourself as a leader. Whether you are planning to start your first career path fresh out of college, you've returned to college in order to switch career paths, or you're in college to help you advance more quickly in your current career path, you should have already been working on your leadership skills for years; it's not something you want to start your first day on the new job. Since leaders must be able to draw from a wealth of personal experience in order to solve problems, relate to others, and motivate others to achieve a task, you should start to seek out leadership positions in school and/or community groups. Since you may not yet be sure of your exact career path, try to get a variety of positions over a few years that are generally transferrable to professional contexts. In these roles, work on building a reputation as an ethical leader and as a leader who takes responsibility rather than playing the "blame game." Leaders still have to be good team players and often have to take on roles and responsibilities that other group members do not want. Instead of complaining or expecting recognition for your "extra work," accept these responsibilities enthusiastically and be prepared for your hard work to go unnoticed. Much of what a good leader does occurs in the background and isn't publicly praised or acknowledged. Even when the group succeeds because of your hard work as the leader, you still have to be willing to share that praise with others who helped, because even though you may have worked the hardest, you didn't do it alone.

As you build up your experience and reputation as a leader, be prepared for your workload to grow and your interpersonal communication competence to become more important. Once you're on your career path, you can draw on this previous leadership experience and volunteer or step up when the need arises, which can help you get noticed. Of course, you have to be able to follow through on your commitment, which takes discipline and dedication. While you may be excited to prove your leadership chops in your new career path, I caution you about taking on too much too fast. It's easy for a young and/or new member of a work team to become overcommitted, as more experienced group members are excited to have a person to share some of their work responsibilities with. Hopefully, your previous leadership experience will give you confidence that your group members will notice. People are attracted to confidence and want to follow people who exhibit it. Aside from confidence, good leaders also develop dynamism, which is a set of communication behaviors that conveys enthusiasm and creates an energetic and positive climate. Once confidence and dynamism have attracted a good team of people, good leaders facilitate quality interaction among group members, build cohesion, and capitalize on the synergy of group communication in order to come up with forward-thinking solutions to problems. Good leaders also continue to build skills in order to become better leaders. Leaders are excellent observers of human behavior and are able to assess situations using contextual clues and nonverbal communication. They can then use this knowledge to adapt their communication to the situation. Leaders also have a high degree of emotional intelligence, which allows them to better sense, understand, and respond to others' emotions and to have more control over their own displays of emotions. Last, good leaders further their careers by being reflexive and regularly evaluating their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Since our perceptions are often skewed, it's also good to have colleagues and mentors/supervisors give you formal evaluations of your job performance, making explicit comments about leadership behaviors. As you can see, the work of a leader only grows more complex as one moves further along a career path. But with the skills gained through many years of increasingly challenging leadership roles, a leader can adapt to and manage this increasing complexity.

1. What leadership positions have you had so far? In what ways might they prepare you for more complex and career-specific leadership positions you may have later?
2. What communication competencies do you think are most important for a leader to have and why? How do you rate in terms of the competencies you ranked as most important?
3. Who do you know who would be able to give you constructive feedback on your leadership skills? What do you think this person would say? (You may want to consider actually asking the person for feedback).

Key Takeaways

- Leaders fulfill a group role that is associated with status and power within the group that may be formally or informally recognized by people inside and/or outside of the group. While there are usually only one or two official leaders within a group, all group members can perform leadership functions, which are a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its tasks.
- There are many perspectives on how and why people become leaders:
  - Designated leaders are officially recognized in their leadership roles and may be appointed or elected.
  - Emergent leaders gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are turned to by others as a resource when leadership is needed.
  - The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits or personal characteristics, such as physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality. While this approach is useful for understanding how people conceptualize ideal leaders, it doesn't offer communication scholars much insight into how leadership can be studied and developed as a skill.
  - Situational context also affects how leaders emerge. Different leadership styles and skills are needed based on the level of the structure surrounding a group and on how group interactions play out in initial meetings and whether or not a leadership struggle occurs.
  - Leaders also emerge based on communication skill and competence, as certain communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This approach is most useful to communication scholars because in it leadership is seen as a set of communication behaviors that are learnable and adaptable rather than traits or situational factors, which are often beyond our control.
- Leaders can adopt a directive, participative, supportive, or achievement-oriented style.
  - Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures.
  - Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions.
  - Supportive leaders show concern for their followers' needs and emotions.
  - Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations.

Exercises

1. In what situations would a designated leader be better than an emergent leader, and vice versa? Why?
2. Think of a leader that you currently work with or have worked with who made a strong (positive or negative) impression on you. Which leadership style did he or she use most frequently? Cite specific communication behaviors to back up your analysis.
3. Getting integrated: Teachers are often viewed as leaders in academic contexts along with bosses/managers in professional, politicians/elected officials in civic, and parents in personal contexts. For each of these leaders and contexts, identify some important leadership qualities that each should possess, and discuss some of the influences in each context that may affect the leader and his or her leadership style.

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8.5: Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the common components and characteristics of problems.
2. Explain the five steps of the group problem-solving process.
3. Discuss the various influences on decision-making.

Although the steps of problem-solving and decision-making that we will discuss next may seem obvious, we often don't think to or choose not to use them. Instead, we start working on a problem and later realize we are lost and have to backtrack. I'm sure we've all reached a point in a project or task and had the "OK, now what?" moment. I've recently taken up some carpentry projects as a functional hobby, and I have developed a great respect for the importance of advanced planning. It's frustrating to get to a crucial point in building or fixing something only to realize that you have to unscrew a support board that you already screwed in, have to drive back to the hardware store to get something that you didn't think to get earlier, or have to completely start over. In this section, we will discuss the group problem-solving process, methods of decision making, and influences on these processes.



Figure **8.5.1**: Group problem solving can be a confusing puzzle unless it is approached systematically. Muness Castle – Problem Solving – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Group Problem-Solving Process

There are several variations of similar problem-solving models based on US American scholar John Dewey's reflective thinking process (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). As you read through the steps in the process, think about how we can apply what we have learned regarding the general and specific elements of problems. Some of the following steps are straightforward, and they are things we would logically do when faced with a problem. However, taking a deliberate and systematic approach to problem-solving has been shown to benefit group functioning and performance. A deliberate approach is especially beneficial for groups that do not have an established history of working together and will only be able to meet occasionally. Although a group should attend to each step of the process, group leaders or other group members who facilitate problem-solving should be cautious not to dogmatically follow each element of the process or force a group along. Such a lack of flexibility could limit group member input and negatively affect the group's cohesion and climate.

Step 1: Define the Problem

Define the problem by considering the three elements shared by every problem: the **current undesirable situation**, the **goal** or more desirable situation, and **obstacles** in the way (Adams & Galanes, 2009). At this stage, group members share what they know about the current situation, without proposing solutions or evaluating the information. Here are some good questions to ask during this stage: What is the current difficulty? How did we come to know that the difficulty exists? Who/what is involved? Why is it meaningful/urgent/important? What have the effects been so far? What, if any, elements of the difficulty require clarification? At the end of this stage, the group should be able to compose a single sentence that summarizes the problem called a problem statement. Avoid wording in the problem statement or question that hints at potential solutions. A small group formed to investigate

ethical violations of city officials could use the following problem statement: “Our state does not currently have a mechanism for citizens to report suspected ethical violations by city officials.”

Step 2: Analyze the Problem

During this step, a group should analyze the problem and the group’s relationship to the problem. Whereas the first step involved exploring the “what” related to the problem, this step focuses on the “why.” At this stage, group members can discuss the potential causes of the difficulty. Group members may also want to begin setting out an agenda or timeline for the group’s problem-solving process, looking forward to the other steps. To fully analyze the problem, the group can discuss the five common problem variables discussed before. Here are two examples of questions that the group formed to address ethics violations might ask: Why doesn’t our city have an ethics reporting mechanism? Do cities of similar size have such a mechanism? Once the problem has been analyzed, the group can pose a problem question that will guide the group as it generates possible solutions. “How can citizens report suspected ethical violations of city officials and how will such reports be processed and addressed?” As you can see, the problem question is more complex than the problem statement, since the group has moved on to a more in-depth discussion of the problem during step 2.

Step 3: Generate Possible Solutions

During this step, group members generate possible solutions to the problem. Again, solutions should not be evaluated at this point, only proposed and clarified. The question should be what *could* we do to address this problem, not what *should* we do to address it. It is perfectly OK for a group member to question another person’s idea by asking something like “What do you mean?” or “Could you explain your reasoning more?” Discussions at this stage may reveal a need to return to previous steps to better define or more fully analyze a problem. Since many problems are multifaceted, it is necessary for group members to generate solutions for each part of the problem separately, making sure to have multiple solutions for each part. Stopping the solution-generating process prematurely can lead to groupthink. For the problem question previously posed, the group would need to generate solutions for all three parts of the problem included in the question. Possible solutions for the first part of the problem (How can citizens report ethical violations?) may include “online reporting system, e-mail, in-person, anonymously, on-the-record,” and so on. Possible solutions for the second part of the problem (How will reports be processed?) may include “daily by a newly appointed ethics officer, weekly by a nonpartisan nongovernment employee,” and so on. Possible solutions for the third part of the problem (How will reports be addressed?) may include “by a newly appointed ethics commission, by the accused’s supervisor, by the city manager,” and so on.

Step 4: Evaluate Solutions

During this step, solutions can be critically evaluated based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Once the potential solutions have been narrowed based on more obvious differences in relevance and/or merit, the group should analyze each solution based on its potential effects—especially negative effects. Groups that are required to report the rationale for their decision or whose decisions may be subject to public scrutiny would be wise to make a set list of criteria for evaluating each solution. Additionally, solutions can be evaluated based on how well they fit with the group’s charge and the abilities of the group. To do this, group members may ask, “Does this solution live up to the original purpose or mission of the group?” and “Can the solution actually be implemented with our current resources and connections?” and “How will this solution be supported, funded, enforced, and assessed?” Secondary tensions and substantive conflict, two concepts discussed earlier, emerge during this step of problem-solving, and group members will need to employ effective critical thinking and listening skills.

Decision-making is part of the larger process of problem-solving and it plays a prominent role in this step. While there are several fairly similar models for problem-solving, there are many varied decision-making techniques that groups can use. For example, to narrow the list of proposed solutions, group members may decide by majority vote, by weighing the pros and cons, or by discussing them until a consensus is reached. There are also more complex decision-making models like the “six hats method,” which we will discuss later. Once the final decision is reached, the group leader or facilitator should confirm that the group is in agreement. It may be beneficial to let the group break for a while or even to delay the final decision until a later meeting to allow people time to evaluate it outside of the group context.

Step 5: Implement and Assess the Solution

Implementing the solution requires some advanced planning, and it should not be rushed unless the group is operating under strict time restraints or delay may lead to some kind of harm. Although some solutions can be implemented immediately, others may take days, months, or years. As was noted earlier, it may be beneficial for groups to poll those who will be affected by the solution as to their opinion of it or even do a pilot test to observe the effectiveness of the solution and how people react to it. Before implementation, groups should also determine how and when they would assess the effectiveness of the solution by asking, "How will we know if the solution is working or not?" Since solution assessment will vary based on whether or not the group is disbanded, groups should also consider the following questions: If the group disbands after implementation, who will be responsible for assessing the solution? If the solution fails, will the same group reconvene or will a new group be formed?



Figure **8.5.2**: Once a solution has been reached and the group has the "green light" to implement it, it should proceed deliberately and cautiously, making sure to consider possible consequences and address them as needed. Jocko Benoit – Prodigal Light – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Certain elements of the solution may need to be delegated out to various people inside and outside the group. Group members may also be assigned to implement a particular part of the solution based on their role in the decision-making or because it connects to their area of expertise. Likewise, group members may be tasked with publicizing the solution or "selling" it to a particular group of stakeholders. Last, the group should consider its future. In some cases, the group will get to decide if it will stay together and continue working on other tasks or if it will disband. In other cases, outside forces determine the group's fate.

"Getting Competent": Problem Solving and Group Presentations

Giving a group presentation requires that individual group members and the group as a whole solve many problems and make many decisions. Although having more people involved in a presentation increases logistical difficulties and has the potential to create more conflict, a well-prepared and well-delivered group presentation can be more engaging and effective than a typical presentation. The main problems facing a group giving a presentation are (1) dividing responsibilities, (2) coordinating schedules and time management, and (3) working out the logistics of the presentation delivery.

In terms of dividing responsibilities, assigning individual work at the first meeting and then trying to fit it all together before the presentation (which is what many college students do when faced with a group project) is not the recommended method. Integrating content and visual aids created by several different people into a seamless final product takes time and effort, and the person "stuck" with this job at the end usually ends up developing some resentment toward his or her group members. While it's OK for group members to do work independently outside of group meetings, spend time working together to help set up some standards for content and formatting expectations that will help make later integration of work easier. Taking the time to complete one part of the presentation together can help set those standards for later individual work. Discuss the roles that various group members will play openly so there isn't role confusion. There could be one point person for keeping track of the group's progress and schedule, one point person for communication, one point person for content integration, one point person for visual aids, and so on. Each person shouldn't do all that work on his or her own but help focus the group's attention on his or her specific area during group meetings (Stanton, 2009).

Scheduling group meetings is one of the most challenging problems groups face, given people's busy lives. From the beginning, it should be clearly communicated that the group needs to spend considerable time in face-to-face meetings, and group members should know that they may have to make an occasional sacrifice to attend. Especially important is the commitment to scheduling time to rehearse the presentation. Consider creating a contract of group guidelines that include expectations for meeting attendance to increase group members' commitment.

Group presentations require members to navigate many logistics of their presentation. While it may be easier for a group to assign each member to create a five-minute segment and then transition from one person to the next, this is definitely not the most engaging method. Creating a master presentation and then assigning individual speakers creates a more fluid and dynamic presentation and allows everyone to become familiar with the content, which can help if a person doesn't show up to present and during the question-and-answer section. Once the content of the presentation is complete, figure out introductions, transitions, visual aids, and the use of time and space (Stanton, 2012). In terms of introductions, figure out if one person will introduce all the speakers at the beginning, if speakers will introduce themselves at the beginning, or if introductions will occur as the presentation progresses. In terms of transitions, make sure each person has included in his or her speaking notes when presentation duties switch from one person to the next. Visual aids have the potential to cause hiccups in a group presentation if they aren't fluidly integrated. Practicing with visual aids and having one person control them may help prevent this. Know how long your presentation is and know how you're going to use the space. Presenters should know how long the whole presentation should be and how long each of their segments should be so that everyone can share the responsibility of keeping time. Also, consider the size and layout of the presentation space. You don't want presenters huddled in a corner until it's their turn to speak or trapped behind furniture when their turn comes around.

1. Of the three main problems facing group presenters, which do you think is the most challenging and why?
2. Why do you think people tasked with a group presentation (especially students) prefer to divide the parts up and have members work on them independently before coming back together and integrating each part? What problems emerge from this method? In what ways might developing a master presentation and then assign parts to different speakers be better than the more divided method? What are the drawbacks to the master presentation method?

Specific Decision-Making Techniques

Some decision-making techniques involve determining a course of action based on the level of agreement among the group members. These methods include **majority**, **expert**, **authority**, and **consensus rule**. Figure **8.5.4** "Pros and Cons of Agreement-Based Decision-Making Techniques" reviews the pros and cons of each of these methods.



Figure **8.5.3**: Majority rule is a simple method of decision-making based on voting. In most cases, a majority is considered half plus one. Becky McCray – Voting – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Majority rule is a commonly used decision-making technique in which *a majority (one-half plus one) must agree before a decision is made*. A show-of-hands vote, a paper ballot, or an electronic voting system can determine the majority choice. Many decision-making bodies, including the US House of Representatives, Senate, and Supreme Court, use majority rule to make decisions, which shows that it is often associated with democratic decision-making since each person gets one vote and each vote counts equally. Of course, other individuals and mediated messages can influence a person's vote, but since the voting power is spread out over all group members, it is not easy for one person or party to take control of the decision-making process. In some

cases—for example, to override a presidential veto or to amend the constitution—a supermajority of two-thirds may be required to make a decision.

Minority rule is a decision-making technique in which *a designated authority or expert has the final say over a decision and may or may not consider the input of other group members*. When a designated expert makes a decision by minority rule, there may be buy-in from others in the group, especially if the members of the group didn't have relevant knowledge or expertise. When a designated authority makes decisions, buy-in will vary based on group members' level of respect for the authority. For example, decisions made by an elected authority may be more accepted by those who elected him or her than by those who didn't. As with majority rule, this technique can be time-saving. Unlike majority rule, one person or party can have control over the decision-making process. This type of decision-making is more similar to that used by monarchs and dictators. An obvious negative consequence of this method is that the needs or wants of one person can override the needs and wants of the majority. A minority deciding for the majority has led to negative consequences throughout history. The white Afrikaner minority that ruled South Africa for decades instituted apartheid, which was a system of racial segregation that disenfranchised and oppressed the majority population. The quality of the decision and its fairness really depends on the designated expert or authority.

Consensus rule is a decision-making technique in which *all members of the group must agree on the same decision*. On rare occasions, a decision may be ideal for all group members, which can lead to a unanimous agreement without further debate and discussion. Although this can be positive, be cautious that this isn't a sign of groupthink. More typically, the consensus is reached only after a lengthy discussion. On the plus side, consensus often leads to high-quality decisions due to the time and effort it takes to get everyone in agreement. Group members are also more likely to be committed to the decision because of their investment in reaching it. On the negative side, the ultimate decision is often one that all group members can live with but not one that's ideal for all members. Additionally, the process of arriving at a consensus also includes conflict, as people debate ideas and negotiate the interpersonal tensions that may result.

Figure 8.5.4: Pros and Cons of Agreement-Based Decision-Making Techniques

Decision-Making Technique	Pros	Cons
Majority rule	• Quick • Efficient in large groups • Each vote counts equally	• Close decisions (5–4) may reduce internal and external "buy-in" • Doesn't take advantage of group synergy to develop alternatives that more members can support • The minority may feel alienated
Minority rule by expert	• Quick • Decision quality is better than what less knowledgeable people could produce • Experts are typically objective and less easy to influence	• Expertise must be verified • Experts can be difficult to find/pay for • Group members may feel useless
Minority rule by authority	• Quick • Buy-in could be high if authority is respected	• Authority may not be seen as legitimate, leading to less buy-in • Group members may try to sway the authority or compete for his or her attention • Unethical authorities could make decisions that benefit them and harm group members
Consensus rule	• High-quality decisions due to time invested • Higher level of commitment because of participation in decision • Satisfaction with the decision because of shared agreement	• Time-consuming • Difficult to manage idea and personal conflict that can emerge as ideas are debated • The decision may be OK but not ideal

"Getting Critical": Six Hats Method of Decision Making

Edward de Bono developed the Six Hats method of thinking in the late 1980s, and it has since become a regular feature in decision-making training in business and professional contexts (de Bono, 1985). The method's popularity lies in its ability to help people get out of habitual ways of thinking and to allow group members to play different roles and see a problem or decision from multiple points of view. The basic idea is that each of the six hats represents a different way of thinking, and when we figuratively switch hats, we switch the way we think. The hats and their style of thinking are as follows:

- **White hat.** Objective—focuses on seeking information such as data and facts and then processes that information in a neutral way.
- **Red hat.** Emotional—uses intuition, gut reactions, and feelings to judge information and suggestions.
- **Black hat.** Negative—focus on potential risks, point out possibilities for failure, and evaluates information cautiously and defensively.
- **Yellow hat.** Positive—is optimistic about suggestions and future outcomes gives constructive and positive feedback, points out benefits and advantages.
- **Green hat.** Creative—try to generate new ideas and solutions, think "outside the box."
- **Blue hat.** Philosophical—uses metacommunication to organize and reflect on the thinking and communication taking place in the group, facilitates who wears what hat and when group members change hats.

Specific sequences or combinations of hats can be used to encourage strategic thinking. For example, the group leader may start off wearing the Blue Hat and suggest that the group start their decision-making process with some "White Hat thinking" in order to process through facts and other available information. During this stage, the group could also process through what

other groups have done when faced with a similar problem. Then the leader could begin an evaluation sequence starting with two minutes of “Yellow Hat thinking” to identify potential positive outcomes, then “Black Hat thinking” to allow group members to express reservations about ideas and point out potential problems, then “Red Hat thinking” to get people’s gut reactions to the previous discussion, then “Green Hat thinking” to identify other possible solutions that are more tailored to the group’s situation or completely new approaches. At the end of a sequence, the Blue Hat would want to summarize what was said and begin a new sequence. To successfully use this method, the person wearing the Blue Hat should be familiar with different sequences and plan some of the thinking patterns ahead of time based on the problem and the group members. Each round of thinking should be limited to a certain time frame (two to five minutes) to keep the discussion moving.

1. This decision-making method has been praised because it allows group members to “switch gears” in their thinking and allows for role-playing, which lets people express ideas more freely. How can this help enhance critical thinking? Which combination of hats do you think would be best for a critical thinking sequence?
2. What combinations of hats might be useful if the leader wanted to break the larger group up into pairs and why? For example, what kind of thinking would result from putting Yellow and Red together, Black and White together, or Red and White together, and so on?
3. Based on your preferred ways of thinking and your personality, which hat would be the best fit for you? Which would be the most challenging? Why?



Figure 8.5.5: Personality affects decision-making. For example, “emotional" group members make rash decisions. One Way Stock – Tough Decisions Ahead – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Influences on Decision Making

The personalities of group members, especially leaders and other active members, affect the climate of the group. Group member personalities can be categorized based on where they fall on a continuum anchored by the following descriptors: dominant/submissive, friendly/unfriendly, and instrumental/emotional (Cragan & Wright, 1999). The more group members there are in any extreme of these categories, the more likely it that the group climate will also shift to resemble those characteristics.

- **Dominant versus submissive.** Group members that are more dominant act more independently and directly, initiate conversations, take up more space, make more direct eye contact, seek leadership positions, and take control over decision-making processes. More submissive members are reserved, contribute to the group only when asked to, avoid eye contact, and leave their personal needs and thoughts unvoiced or give in to the suggestions of others.
- **Friendly versus unfriendly.** Group members on the friendly side of the continuum find a balance between talking and listening, don’t try to win at the expense of other group members, are flexible but not weak, and value democratic decision-making. Unfriendly group members are disagreeable, indifferent, withdrawn, and selfish, which leads them to either not invest in decision making or direct it in their own interest rather than in the interest of the group.
- **Instrumental versus emotional.** Instrumental group members are emotionally neutral, objective, analytical, task-oriented, and committed followers, which leads them to work hard and contribute to the group’s decision-making as long as it is orderly and follows agreed-on rules. Emotional group members are creative, playful, independent, unpredictable, and expressive, which leads them to make rash decisions, resist group norms or decision-making structures and switch often from relational to task focus.

Domestic Diversity and Group Communication

While it is becoming more likely that we will interact in small groups with international diversity, we are guaranteed to interact in groups that are diverse in terms of the cultural identities found within a single country or the subcultures found within a larger cultural group.

Gender stereotypes sometimes influence the roles that people play within a group. For example, the stereotype that women are more nurturing than men may lead group members (both male and female) to expect that women will play the role of supporters or harmonizers within the group. Since women have primarily performed secretarial work since the 1900s, it may also be expected that women will play the role of the recorder. In both of these cases, stereotypical notions of gender place women in roles that are typically not as valued in group communication. The opposite is true for men. In terms of leadership, despite notable exceptions, research shows that men fill an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of leadership positions. We are socialized to see certain behaviors by men as indicative of leadership abilities, even though they may not be. For example, men are often perceived to contribute more to a group because they tend to speak first when asked a question or to fill a silence and are perceived to talk more about task-related matters than relationally oriented matters. Both of these tendencies create a perception that men are more engaged with the task. Men are also socialized to be more competitive and self-congratulatory, meaning that their communication may be seen as dedicated and their behaviors seen as powerful, and that when their work isn't noticed they will be more likely to make it known to the group rather than take silent credit. Even though we know that the relational elements of a group are crucial for success, even in high-performance teams, that work is not as valued in our society as task-related work.

Despite the fact that some communication patterns and behaviors related to our typical (and stereotypical) gender socialization affects how we interact in and form perceptions of others in groups, the differences in group communication that used to be attributed to gender in early group communication research seem to be diminishing. This is likely due to the changing organizational cultures from which much group work emerges, which have now had more than sixty years to adjust to women in the workplace. It is also due to a more nuanced understanding of gender-based research, which doesn't take a stereotypical view from the beginning as many of the early male researchers did. Now, instead of biological sex being assumed as a factor that creates inherent communication differences, group communication scholars see that men and women both exhibit a range of behaviors that are more or less feminine or masculine. It is these gendered behaviors, and not a person's gender, that seem to have more of an influence on perceptions of group communication. Interestingly, group interactions are still masculinist in that male and female group members prefer a more masculine communication style for task leaders and that both males and females in this role are more likely to adapt to a more masculine communication style. Conversely, men who take on social-emotional leadership behaviors adopt a more feminine communication style. In short, it seems that although masculine communication traits are more often associated with high-status positions in groups, both men and women adapt to this expectation and are evaluated similarly (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999).

Other demographic categories are also influential in group communication and decision-making. In general, group members have an easier time communicating when they are more similar than different in terms of race and age. This ease of communication can make group work more efficient, but the homogeneity, meaning the members are more similar, may sacrifice some creativity. n general, groups that are culturally heterogeneous have better overall performance than more homogenous groups (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999). These groups benefit from the diversity of perspectives in terms of the quality of decision-making and creativity of output.

The benefits and challenges that come with the diversity of group members are important to consider. Since we will all work in diverse groups, we should be prepared to address potential challenges in order to reap the benefits. Diverse groups may be wise to coordinate social interactions outside of group time in order to find common ground that can help facilitate interaction and increase group cohesion. We should be sensitive but not let sensitivity create fear of "doing something wrong" which then prevents us from having meaningful interactions.

Key Takeaways

- Every problem has common components: an undesirable situation, the desired situation, and obstacles between the undesirable and desirable situations. Every problem also has a set of characteristics that vary among problems, including task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group member interest in the problem, group familiarity with the problem, and the need for solution acceptance.
- The group problem-solving process has five steps:
  1. Define the problem by creating a problem statement that summarizes it.
  2. Analyze the problem and create a problem question that can guide solution generation.
  3. Generate possible solutions. Possible solutions should be offered and listed without stopping to evaluate each one.

4. Evaluate the solutions based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Groups should also assess the potential effects of the narrowed list of solutions.
5. Implement and assess the solution. Aside from enacting the solution, groups should determine how they will know the solution is working or not.

- Common decision-making techniques include majority rule, minority rule, and consensus rule. Only a majority, usually one-half plus one, must agree before a decision is made with majority rule. With minority rule, designated authority or expert has final say over a decision, and the input of group members may or may not be invited or considered. With consensus rule, all members of the group must agree on the same decision.
- Several factors influence the decision-making process:
  - Situational factors include the degree of freedom a group has to make its own decisions, the level of uncertainty facing the group and its task, the size of the group, the group's access to information, and the origin and urgency of the problem.
  - Personality influences on decision making include a person's value orientation (economic, aesthetic, theoretical, political, or religious), and personality traits (dominant/submissive, friendly/unfriendly, and instrumental/emotional).
  - Cultural influences on decision making include the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the group makeup; cultural values and characteristics such as individualism/collectivism, power distance, and high-/low-context communication styles; and gender and age differences.

Exercises

1. In terms of situational influences on group problem solving, task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group interest in the problem, group familiarity with the problem, and need for solution acceptance are five key variables discussed in this chapter. For each of the two following scenarios, discuss how the situational context created by these variables might affect the group's communication climate and the way it goes about addressing its problem.
   - **Scenario 1.** Task difficulty is high, the number of possible solutions is high, group interest in the problem is high, group familiarity with the problem is low, and the need for solution acceptance is high.
   - **Scenario 2.** Task difficulty is low, the number of possible solutions is low, group interest in the problem is low, group familiarity with the problem is high, and the need for solution acceptance is low.
2. Getting integrated: Certain decision-making techniques may work better than others in academic, professional, personal, or civic contexts. For each of the following scenarios, identify the decision-making technique that you think would be best and explain why.
   - **Scenario 1: Academic.** A professor asks his or her class to decide whether the final exam should be an in-class or take-home exam.
   - **Scenario 2: Professional.** A group of coworkers must decide which person from their department to nominate for a company-wide award.
   - **Scenario 3: Personal.** A family needs to decide how to divide the belongings and estate of a deceased family member who did not leave a will.
   - **Scenario 4: Civic.** A local branch of a political party needs to decide what five key issues it wants to include in the national party's platform.
3. Group communication researchers have found that heterogeneous groups (composed of diverse members) have advantages over homogenous (more similar) groups. Discuss a group situation you have been in where diversity enhanced your and/or the group's experience.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Mass Communication and Social Media

Littlejohn and Foss define **mass communication** as *"the process whereby media organizations produce and transmit messages to large public and the process by which those messages are sought, used, understood, and influenced by the audience"* (333). McQuail states that mass communication is, *"only one of the processes of communication operating at the society-wide level, readily identified by its institutional characteristics"* (7). Simply put, mass communication is the public transfer of messages through media or technology-driven channels to a large number of recipients from an entity, usually involving some type of cost or fee (advertising) for the user. In this chapter, we will define mass communication and discuss mass media, social media, globalization, and the ethics required. Images throughout this chapter are licensed by Pexels.

9.1: Mass Communication - A definition

9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

9.5: Ethics of Mass Media

9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

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9.1: Mass Communication - A definition

We define communication as the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts. Mass Communication does that on a grander scale as it is the imparting or exchanging of information to a wide range of people. Even a brief history of media and mass communication can leave one breathless. The speed, reach, and power of the technology are humbling. Evolution can seem almost natural and inevitable, but it is important to stop and ask a basic question: Why? Why do media and mass communication seem to play such an important role in our lives and our culture? According to the website Chron.com we see that the four functions of mass communications are: surveillance, correlation, cultural transmission, and entertainment:

- Media provide *entertainment* acting as a springboard for our imaginations, a source of fantasy, and an outlet for escapism.
- Media provide *information* and *education*. Information can come in many forms, and often blurs the line with entertainment.
- Media provide **public forums** for the discussion of important issues.
- Media provide watchdog services to *monitor government, business, and other institutions*. Online journalists today try to uphold this role.

Thinking more deeply, we can recognize that certain media are better at certain roles. Media have characteristics that influence how we use them. While some forms of mass media are better suited to entertainment, others make more sense as a venue for spreading information. The 1960s media theorist Marshall McLuhan took these ideas one step further with the phrase **"the medium is the message."** McLuhan emphasized that each medium delivers information in a different way and that content is fundamentally shaped by that medium.

We do not have to cast value judgments but can affirm: People who get the majority of their news from a particular medium will have a particular view of the world shaped not just by the *content* of what they watch but also by its *medium*. Or, as computer scientist Alan Kay put it, "Each medium has a special way of representing ideas that emphasize particular ways of thinking and de-emphasize others."Alan Kay, "The Infobahn is Not the Answer," *Wired*, May 1994. The Internet has made this discussion even richer because it seems to hold all other media within it—print, radio, film, television, and more. If indeed the medium is the message, the Internet provides us with an extremely interesting message to consider.

Key Takeaways

- Media fulfill several roles in culture, including the following:
  - Entertaining and providing an outlet for the imagination
  - Educating and informing
  - Serving as a public forum for the discussion of important issues
  - Acting as a watchdog for government, business, and other institutions

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- **1.4: How Did We Get Here? The Evolution of Media** by Anonymous is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Original source: https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition.

9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media

learning objectives

- Discuss events that impacted the adaptation of mass media.
- Explain how different technological transitions have shaped media industries.
- Identify four roles the media perform in our society.

A Brief History of Mass Media/Communication

“Well, how did I get here?” a baffled David Byrne sings in the Talking Heads song, “Once in a Lifetime.” The contemporary media landscape is so rich, deep, and multifaceted that it’s easy to imagine American media consumers asking themselves the same question. People can turn on their television and find 24-hour news channels, sports channels, as well as music videos, nature documentaries, and reality shows about everything from hoarders to fashion models. That’s not to mention movies available on-demand from cable providers. We watch television, film and video available online for streaming or downloading from creators like Netflix and Hulu, curators like Tubi and Crunchyroll, or Network-specific like Disney+, CBS All Access, HBOmax, or NBC Peacock. The estimated total U.S. daily newspaper circulation (print and digital combined) in 2020 was 24.3 million for weekdays and 25.8 million for Sunday, each down 6% from the previous year. Visit Trends and Facts on Newspapers (journalism.org) (accessed July 1, 2021) for more information.

A University of California San Diego study by Doug Ramsey claimed that U.S. households consumed around 3.6 zettabytes of information in 2008, the digital equivalent of a 7-foot high stack of books covering the entire United States, including Alaska—a 350 percent increase since 1980. Americans are exposed to media in taxicabs and busses, in classrooms and doctors’ offices, on highways, and in airplanes.

Books and Newspapers

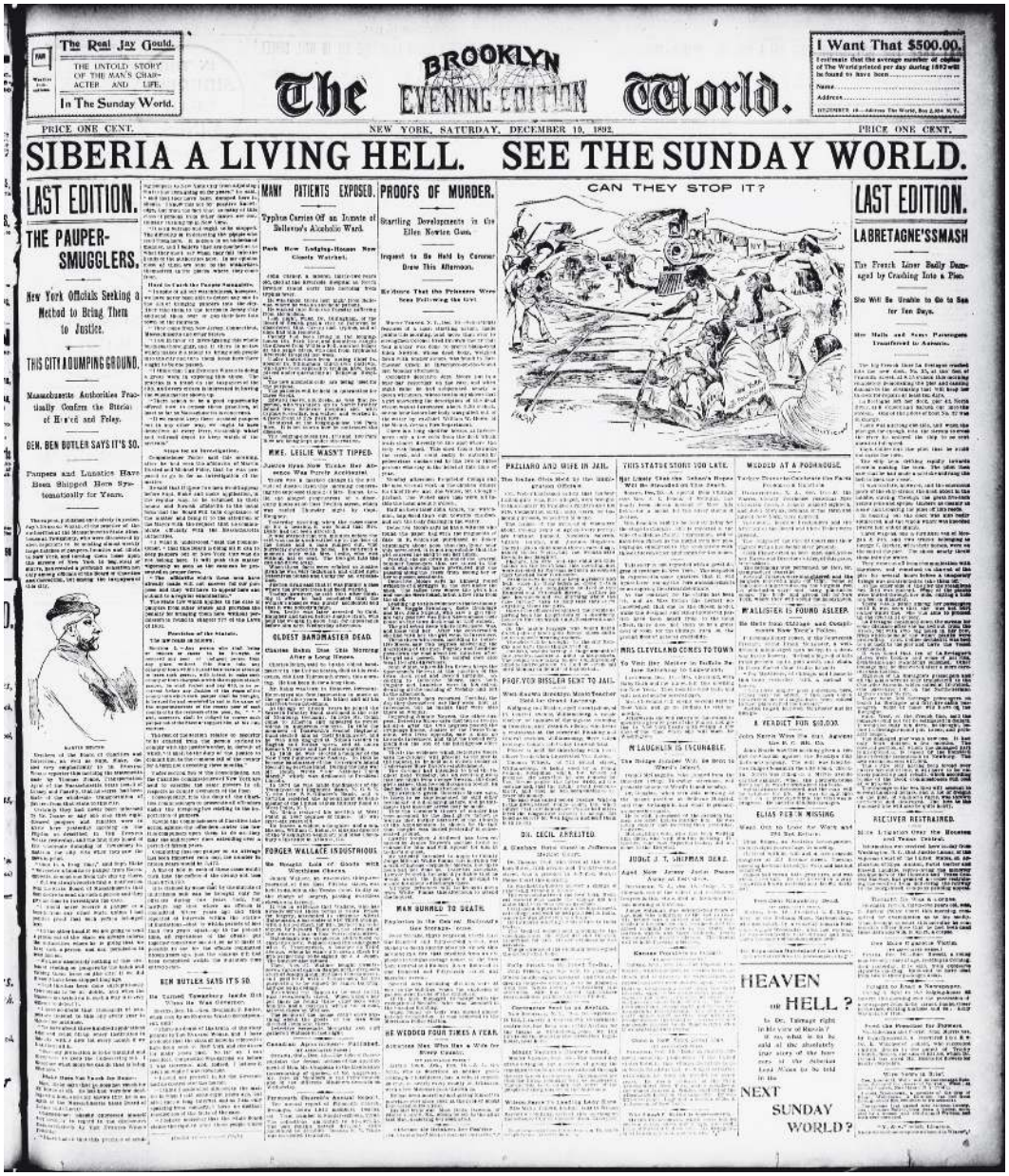
The printing press is a device that allows for the mass production of uniform printed matter, mainly text in the form of books, pamphlets and newspapers. It was created in China sometime during the first millennium with the oldest surviving document being *The Diamond Sutra* from 868 A. D. The printing press revolutionized society in China before being further developed in Europe 600 years later by German Johannes Gutenberg when he created the Gutenberg press. Printing Press - HISTORY

Gutenberg’s 15th-century invention of the metal movable type printing press made the mass production of print media easier. Not only was it much cheaper to produce written material, but new transportation technologies helped texts to reach a wider audience. In 1810, another German printer, Friedrich Koenig, pushed media production even further when he essentially hooked the steam engine up to a printing press, enabling the industrialization of printed media. In 1800, a hand-operated printing press could produce about 480 pages per hour; Koenig’s machine more than doubled this rate. (By the 1930s, many printing presses had an output of 3000 pages an hour.) This increased efficiency helped lead to the rise of the daily newspaper.

As Europeans colonized the land that would come to be called the United States of America, the newspaper was an essential medium. At first, newspapers helped the Europeans stay connected with events in their respective countries. But as a more common way of life started throughout the states newspapers helped give expression to a burgeoning "American" culture. Political scientist Benedict Anderson has argued that newspapers helped forge this sense of national identity by treating readers across the country as part of one unified group with common goals and values. Newspapers, he said, helped create an “imagined community.”

In the 1830s, the major daily newspapers faced a new threat with the rise of the penny press—newspapers that were low-priced broadsheets. These papers served as a cheaper, more sensational daily news source and privileged news of murder and adventure over the dry political news of the day. While earlier newspapers catered to a wealthier, more educated audience, the penny press attempted to reach a wide swath of readers through cheap prices and entertaining (often scandalous) stories. The penny press is the forerunner to today’s gossip tabloids.

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The Real Jay Gould.
THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE MAN'S CHARACTER AND LIFE.
In The Sunday World.

BROOKLYN EVENING EDITION
The World.

I Want That $500.00.

PRICE ONE CENT. NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1892. PRICE ONE CENT.

SIBERIA A LIVING HELL. SEE THE SUNDAY WORLD.

LAST EDITION.

THE PAUPER-SMUGGLERS.

New York Officials Seeking a Method to Bring Them to Justice.

THIS CITY A DUMPING GROUND.

Massachusetts Authorities Practically Confess the Status of Hyed and Foley.

BEN. BEN BUTLER SAYS IT'S SO.

Paupers and Lunatics Have Been Shipped Here Systematically for Years.

MANY PATIENTS EXPOSED.

Typhus Carries Off an Inmate of Bellevue's Alcoholic Ward.

Dark How Lodging-Houses Now Closely Watched.

PROOFS OF MURDER.

Startling Developments in the Ellen Norton Case.

Inquest to Be Held by Coroner Drew This Afternoon.

Evidence That the Prisoners Were Seen Following the Girl.

CAN THEY STOP IT?

LAST EDITION.

LABRETAGNE'S SMASH

The French Liner Badly Damaged by Crashing Into a Pier.

She Will Be Unable to Go to Sea for Ten Days.

MRS. LESLIE WASN'T TIPPED.

Justice Hyan Now Thinks Her Absence Was Purely Accidental.

OLDEST BARONMASTER DEAD.

Charles Bates Dies This Morning After a Long Illness.

FORGER WALLACE IS DUSTRIOUS

He Bought Lots of Goods with Worthless Checks.

MAN BURNED TO DEATH.

PRELIARO AND WIFE IN JAIL.

THIS STATUE STORY TOO LATE.

WEDDED AT A POORHOUSE.

WALLISTER IS FOUND ASLEEP.

A VERDICT FOR $10,000.

ELIAS FAIR IS MISSING.

RECEIVER RESTRAINED.

PROF. YOS BISSLER SENT TO JAIL.

MRS CLEVELAND COMES TO TOWN

M'LAUGHLIN IS INCURABLE.

DR. CECIL APPEALED.

JUDGE J. T. CHIPMAN DEAD.

BE WEDDED FOUR TIMES A YEAR.

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

The penny press appealed to readers' desires for lurid tales of murder, scandal, and racial fear-mongering which leads to today's tabloids. Magazine covers courtesy of Tabloid covers for the week of February 13, 2012 * starcasm.net



Radio, Television, Film

In the early decades of the 20th century, the first major non-print forms of mass media—film and radio—exploded in popularity. Radios, which were less expensive than telephones and widely available by the 1920s, especially had the unprecedented ability to allow huge numbers of people to listen to the same event at the same time. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge's pre-election speech reached more than 20 million people. Radio was a boon for advertisers, who now had access to a large and captive audience. An early advertising consultant claimed that the early days of radio were "a glorious opportunity for the advertising man to spread his sales propaganda" thanks to "a countless audience, sympathetic, pleasure-seeking, enthusiastic, curious, interested, approachable in the privacy of their homes."Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005).

The reach of radio also further helped forge an American culture. The medium was able to downplay regional differences and encourage a unified sense of the American lifestyle—a lifestyle that was increasingly driven and defined by consumer purchases. "Americans in the 1920s were the first to wear ready-made, exact-size clothing…to play electric phonographs, to use electric vacuum cleaners, to listen to commercial radio broadcasts, and to drink fresh orange juice year-round."Digital History, "The Formation of Modern American Mass Culture," *The Jazz Age: The American 1920s*, 2007, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/dat...y.cfm?hhid=454(accessed July 15, 2010).

The post-World War II era in the United States was marked by prosperity, and by the introduction of a seductive new form of mass communication: Television. In 1946, there were about 17,000 televisions in the entire United States. Within seven years, two-thirds of American households owned at least one set. As the United States' gross national product (GNP) doubled in the 1950s, and again in the 1960s, the American home became firmly ensconced as a consumer unit.

Broadcast television was the dominant form of mass media. From the '60s to '90s there were just three major networks (ABC, NBC, CBS), and they controlled over 90 percent of the news programs, live events, and sitcoms viewed by Americans. On some nights, close to half the nation watched the same show! Some social critics argued that television was fostering a homogenous, conformist culture by reinforcing ideas about what "normal" American life looked like. But television also contributed to the counterculture of the 1960s. The Vietnam War was the nation's first televised military conflict, and nightly images of war footage and war protestors helped intensify the nation's internal conflicts.

Broadcast technology, including radio and television, had such a hold of the American imagination that newspapers and other print media found themselves having to adapt to the new media landscape. Print media was more durable and easily archived, and allowed users more flexibility in terms of time—once a person had purchased a magazine, they could read it whenever and

wherever they'd like. Broadcast media, in contrast, usually aired programs on a fixed schedule, which allowed it to both provide a sense of immediacy but also impermanence—until the advent of digital video recorders (DVRs) in the 21st century, it was impossible to pause and rewind a television broadcast.

The media world faced drastic changes once again in the 1980s and 1990s with the spread of cable television. During the early decades of television, viewers had a limited number of channels from which to choose. In 1975, the three major networks accounted for 93 percent of all television viewing. By 2004, however, this share had dropped to 28.4 percent of total viewing, thanks to the spread of cable television. Cable providers allowed viewers a wide menu of choices, including channels specifically tailored to people who wanted to watch only golf, weather, classic films, sermons, or videos of sharks. Still, until the mid-1990s, television was dominated by the three large networks. The Telecommunications Act of 1996, an attempt to foster competition by deregulating the industry, actually resulted in many mergers and buyouts of small companies by large companies. The broadcast spectrum in many places was in the hands of a few large corporations. In 2003, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) loosened regulation even further, allowing a single company to own 45 percent of a single market (up from 25 percent in 1982).

Technological Transitions Shape Media Industries

New media technologies both spring from and cause cultural change. For this reason, it can be difficult to neatly sort the evolution of media into clear causes and effects. Technological innovations such as the steam engine, electricity, wireless communication, and the Internet have all had lasting and significant effects on American culture. Electricity altered the way people thought about time, since work and play were no longer dependent on the daily rhythms of sunrise and sunset. Wireless communication collapsed distance. The Internet revolutionized the way we store and retrieve information.

The contemporary media age can trace its origins back to the electrical telegraph, patented in the United States by Samuel Morse in 1837. Thanks to the telegraph, communication was no longer linked to the physical transportation of messages. Suddenly, it didn't matter whether a message needed to travel five or five hundred miles. Telegraph lines began to stretch across the globe, making their own kind of worldwide web.

Not long after the telegraph, wireless communication (which eventually led to the development of radio, television, and other broadcast media) emerged as an extension of telegraph technology. Although many 19th-century inventors, including Nikola Tesla, had a hand in early wireless experiments, it was Italian-born Guglielmo Marconi who is recognized as the developer of the first practical wireless radio system. This mysterious invention, where sounds seemed to magically travel through the air, captured the world's imagination. Early radio was used for military communication, but soon the technology entered the home.

The 19th-century development of photographic technologies would lead to the later innovations of cinema and television. As with wireless technology, several inventors independently came up with photography at the same time, among them, the French inventors, Joseph Niepce and Louis Daguerre, and British scientist William Henry Fox Talbot. In the United States, George Eastman developed the Kodak camera in 1888. Moving pictures were first seen around the turn of the century, with the first U.S. projection hall opening in Pittsburgh in 1905. By the end of the 1930s, Americans were watching color films with full sound, including *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Television existed before World War II but really began to take off in the 1950s. In 1947, there were 178,000 television sets made in the United States; five years later, there were 15 million. Radio, cinema, and live theater all saw a decline in the face of this new medium that allowed viewers to be entertained with sound and moving pictures without having to leave their homes.

For the last stage in this fast history of media technology, how's this for a prediction? In 1969, management consultant Peter Drucker predicted that the next major technological innovation after television would be an "electronic appliance" that would be "capable of being plugged in wherever there is electricity and giving immediate access to all the information needed for schoolwork from first grade through college." He said it would be the equivalent of Edison's light bulb in its ability to revolutionize how we live. He had, in effect, predicted the computer. He was prescient about the effect that computers and the Internet would have on education, social relationships, and the culture at large. The inventions of random access memory (RAM) chips and microprocessors in the 1970s were important steps along the way to the Internet age. As Briggs and Burke note, these advances meant that "hundreds of thousands of components could be carried on a microprocessor." The reduction of many different kinds of content to digitally stored information meant that "print, film, recording, radio and television and all forms of telecommunications [were] now being thought of increasingly as part of one complex."

Key Takeaways

- Gutenberg's invention of the printing press enabled the mass production of media, which was then industrialized by Friedrich Koenig in the early 1800s. These innovations enabled the daily newspaper, which united the urbanized, industrialized populations of the 19th century.
- In the 20th century, radio allowed advertisers to reach a mass audience and helped spur the consumerism of the 1920s—and the Great Depression of the 1930s. After World War II, television boomed in the United States and abroad, though its concentration in the hands of three major networks led to accusations of conformity. The spread of cable and subsequent deregulation in the 1980s and 1990s led to more channels, but not necessarily more diverse ownership.
- Technological transitions have also had a great effect on the media industry, although it is difficult to say whether technology caused a cultural shift or rather resulted from it. The ability to make technology small and affordable enough to fit into the home is an important aspect of the popularization of new technologies.

Exercise

Choose two different types of mass communication—radio shows, television broadcasts, Internet sites, newspaper advertisements, and so on from two different kinds of media. Make a list of what role(s) each one fills, keeping in mind that much of what we see, hear, or read in the mass media has more than one aspect. Consider the following questions: Does the type of media suit the social role? Why did the creators of this particular message present it in a particular way, and in this particular medium?

Reference

Doug Ramsey, "UC San Diego Experts Calculate How Much Information Americans Consume." University of San Diego News Center, December 9, 2009

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9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

Learning Objectives

- Identify some major social networking sites, and give possible uses and demographics for each one.
- Show the positive and negative effects of blogs on the distribution and creation of information.
- Explain the ways privacy has been addressed on the Internet.
- Identify new information that marketers can use because of social networking.

Although GeoCities lost market share, Friendster fell stagnant, and theGlobe.com never really made it to the 21st century, social networking has persisted. There are many different types of social media available today, from social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, to video centers like YouTube and Vimeo, multimedia communication platforms like Tik-Tok and SnapChat, photo repositories like Instagram, Tumblr and Flickr, or micro-communicators like Twitter, or blogging services like Liverjournal, Blogger and WordPress. All these sites bring something different to the table, and a few of them even try to bring just about everything to the table at once. Some are optimized to work best on mobile/cellular devices, while all have access via a desktop platform.

Social Networking and Mass Communication



Social networking services—like Facebook, Twitter, Tik-Tok, and LinkedIn —provide a limited but public platform for users to create a “personal profile” that can reach a mass communication level. As Internet technology evolves rapidly, most users have few qualms about moving to whichever site offers the better experience; most users have profiles and accounts on many services at once. But as relational networks become more and more established and concentrated on a few social media sites, it becomes increasingly difficult for newcomers and lagging challengers to offer the same rich networking experience. The character of social networking is highly dependent on the type of social circle.

LinkedIn caters to business professionals looking for networking opportunities. LinkedIn is free to join and allows users to post resumes and job qualifications to make "connections" of various degrees. Its tagline, “Relationships matter,” emphasizes the role of an increasingly networked world in business, a LinkedIn user can use the site to promote professional services.

Twitter offers a different approach to social networking, allowing users to “tweet” 140+-character messages to their “followers,” making it something of a hybrid of instant messaging and blogging. Twitter is openly searchable, meaning that anyone can visit the site and quickly find out what other Twitter users are saying about any subject. Twitter has proved useful for journalists reporting on breaking news, as well as highlighting the “best of” the Internet. Twitter has also been useful for marketers looking for a free public forum to disseminate marketing messages.

Another category of social media, blogs began as an online, public version of a diary or journal. Short for “web logs,” these personal sites give anyone a platform to write about anything they want to. Posting tweets on the Twitter service is considered micro-blogging (because of the extremely short length of the posts). Some services, like LiveJournal, highlighted their ability to provide up-to-date reports on personal feelings, even going so far as to add a “mood” shorthand at the end of every post. The Blogger service allows users with Google accounts to follow friends’ blogs and post comments. WordPress.com, the company that created the open-source blogging platform WordPress.org, and LiveJournal both started the freemium model by allowing a basic selection of settings for free, with the option to pay for things like custom styles and photo hosting space. What these all have in

common, however, is their bundling of social networking (such as the ability to easily link to and comment on friends' blogs) with an expanded platform for self-expression. At this point, most traditional media companies have incorporated blogs, Twitter, and other social media as a way to allow their reporters to update instantly and often. This form of media convergence is now a necessary part of doing business.

There are many other types of social media out there, many of which can be called to mind with a single name: YouTube (video sharing), Wikipedia (open-source encyclopedia composed of "wikis" editable by any user), Reddit and Discord (community billboards) Flickr (photo sharing), Digg (content sharing), Instagram (photoblogging), SnapChat (video communication) and TikTok with hundreds more that cater to niche audiences. Traditional media outlets have begun referring to these social media services and others like them as "Web 2.0." Web 2.0 is not a new version of the web; rather, the term is a reference to the increased focus on user-generated content and social interaction on the web, as well as the evolution of online tools to facilitate that focus. Instead of relying on professional reporters to get information about a protest in Iran, a person could just search for "Iran" on Twitter and likely end up with hundreds of tweets linking to everything from blogs to CNN.com to YouTube videos from Iranian citizens themselves. In addition, many of these tweets may actually be instant updates from people using Twitter in Iran. This allows people to receive information straight from the source, without being filtered through news organizations or censored by governments.

Going Viral



Figure 9.3.1: A homemade music video of the band Ok Go went viral in 2006 creating an international marketing phenomenon.

Media that is spread from person to person when, for example, a friend sends you a link saying "You've got to see this!" is said to have "gone viral." Marketing and advertising agencies have deemed advertising that makes use of this phenomenon as "viral marketing." Yet many YouTube/Snapchat/TikTok sensations have not come from large marketing firms. For instance, the four-piece pop-punk band OK Go filmed a music video on a tiny budget for their song "Here It Goes Again" and released it exclusively on YouTube in 2006. Featuring a choreographed dance done on eight separate treadmills, the video quickly became a viral sensation. The video helped OK Go attract millions of new fans and earned them a Grammy award in 2007, making it one of the most notable successes of viral Internet marketing. As of May 2021, the remastered official video released in 2009 has over 56,265,825 views and counting. Viral marketing is, however, notoriously unpredictable and is liable to spawn remixes, spin-offs, and spoofs that can dilute or damage the messages that marketers intend to spread. Yet, when it is successful, viral marketing can reach millions of people for very little money and can even make it into mainstream news.

Recent successes and failures in viral marketing demonstrate how difficult it is for marketers to control their message as it is unleashed virally.

Not all viral media is marketing, however. In 2007, someone posted a link to a new trailer for *Grand Theft Auto IV* on the video games message board of the web forum 4chan.org. When users followed the link, they were greeted not with a video game trailer but with Rick Astley singing his 1987 hit "Never Gonna Give You Up." This technique—redirecting someone to that particular music video—became known as Rickrolling and quickly became one of the most well-known Internet memes of all time. Even then-President Obama succumbed to an attack. *Fox News*, "The Biggest Little Internet Hoax on Wheels Hits Mainstream," April 22, 2008, www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,352010,00.html.

An Internet meme is a concept that quickly replicates itself throughout the Internet, and it is often nonsensical and absurd. One of the earliest memes, "Lolcats," consists of misspelled captions—"I can has cheezburger?" is a classic example—over pictures of cats. Often, these memes take on a metatextual quality, such as the meme "Milhouse is not a meme," in which the character Milhouse (from the television show *The Simpsons*) is told that he is not a meme. Chronicling memes is notoriously difficult, because they typically spring into existence seemingly overnight, propagate rapidly, and disappear before ever making it onto the radar of mainstream media—or even the mainstream Internet user.

Benefits and Problems of Social Media

Social media allows an unprecedented volume of personal, informal communication in real-time from anywhere in the world. It allows users to keep in touch with friends on other continents, yet keeps the conversation as casual as a Facebook post. In addition, blogs allow us to gauge a wide variety of opinions and have given "breaking news" a whole new meaning. Now, news can be distributed through many major outlets almost instantaneously, and different perspectives on any one event can be aired concurrently. In addition, news organizations can harness bloggers as sources of real-time news, in effect outsourcing some of their news-gathering efforts to bystanders on the scene. This practice of harnessing the efforts of several individuals online to solve a problem is known as crowdsourcing.

The downside of the seemingly infinite breadth of online information is that there is often not much depth to the coverage of any given topic. The superficiality of information on the Internet is a common gripe among many journalists who are now rushed to file news reports several times a day in an effort to complete with the "blogosphere," or the crowd of bloggers who post both original news stories and aggregate previously published news from other sources. Whereas traditional print organizations at least had the "luxury" of the daily print deadline, now journalists are expected to blog or tweet every story and file reports with little or no analysis, often without adequate time to confirm the reliability of their sources. Ken Auletta, "Non-Stop News," Annals of Communications, *New Yorker*, January 25, 2010.

Additionally, news aggregators like Google News profit from linking to journalists' stories at major newspapers and selling advertising, but these profits are not shared with the news organizations and journalists who created the stories. It is often difficult for journalists to keep up with the immediacy of the nonstop news cycle, and with revenues for their efforts being diverted to news aggregators, journalists and news organizations increasingly lack the resources to keep up this fast pace. Twitter presents a similar problem: Instead of getting news from a specific newspaper, many people simply read the articles that are linked from a Twitter feed. As a result, the news cycle leaves journalists no time for analysis or cross-examination. Increasingly, they will simply report, for example, what a politician or public relations representative says without following up on these comments or fact-checking them. This further shortens the news cycle and makes it much easier for journalists to be exploited as the mouthpieces of propaganda.

Consequently, the very presence of blogs and their seeming importance even among mainstream media has made some critics wary. Internet entrepreneur Andrew Keen is one of these people, and his book *The Cult of the Amateur* follows up on the famous thought experiment suggesting that infinite monkeys, given infinite typewriters, will one day randomly produce a great work of literature: Proposed by T. H. Huxley (the father of Aldous Huxley), this thought experiment suggests that infinite monkeys given infinite typewriters would, given infinite time, eventually write *Hamlet*. "In our Web 2.0 world, the typewriters aren't quite typewriters, but rather networked personal computers, and the monkeys aren't quite monkeys, but rather Internet users."Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet Is Killing Our Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2007). Keen also suggests that the Internet is really just a case of my-word-against-yours, where bloggers are not required to back up their arguments with credible sources. "**These days, kids can't tell the difference between credible news by objective professional journalists and what they read on [a random website]**," Keen said. Commentators like Keen worry that this trend will lead to people's inability to distinguish credible information from a mass of sources, eventually leading to a sharp decrease of credible sources of information.

For defenders of the Internet, this argument seems a bit overwrought: "A legitimate interest in the possible effects of significant technological change in our daily lives can inadvertently dovetail seamlessly into a 'kids these days' curmudgeonly sense of generational degeneration, which is hardly new."Greg Downey, "Is Facebook Rotting Our Children's Brains?" Neuroanthropology.net, March 2, 2009, http://neuroanthropology.net/2009/03/02/is-facebook-rotting-our-childrens-brains/. Greg Downey, who runs the collaborative blog Neuroanthropology, says that fear of kids on the Internet—and on social media in particular—can slip into "a 'one-paranoia-fits-all' approach to technological change." For the argument that online experiences are

"devoid of cohesive narrative and long-term significance," Downey offers that, on the contrary, "far from evacuating narrative, some social networking sites might be said to cause users to 'narrativize' their experience, engaging with everyday life already with an eye toward how they will represent it on their personal pages."

Another argument in favor of social media defies the warning that time spent on social networking sites is destroying the social skills of young people. "The debasement of the word 'friend' by [Facebook's] use of it should not make us assume that users can't tell the difference between friends and Facebook 'friends,'" writes Downey. On the contrary, social networks (like the Usenet of the past) can even provide a place for people with more obscure interests to meet one another and share commonalities. Twitter has, in many ways, changed yet again the way social media is conceived. Rather than connecting with "friends," Twitter allows social media to be purely a source of information, thereby making it far more appealing to adults. In addition, while 140 characters may seem like a constraint to some, it can be remarkably useful to the time-strapped user looking to catch up on recent news.

Social media's detractors also point to the sheer banality of much of the conversation on the Internet. Again, Downey keeps this in perspective: "The banality of most conversation is also pretty frustrating," he says. Downey suggests that many of the young people using social networking tools see them as just another aspect of communication. However, Downey warns that online bullying can pervade larger social networks while shielding perpetrators through anonymity.

Another downside of many of the Internet's segmented communities is that users tend to be exposed only to the information **they are interested in and opinions they agree with**. This lack of exposure to novel ideas and contrary opinions can create or reinforce a lack of understanding among people with different beliefs, and make political and social compromise more difficult to come by.

There are clearly some important arguments to consider regarding the effects of the web and social media in particular. The main concerns come down to two things: the possibility that the volume of amateur, user-generated content online is overshadowing better-researched sources, and the questionable ability of users to tell the difference between the two.

Marketing & Privacy Issues With Social Networking

Social networking provides unprecedented ways to keep in touch with friends, but that ability can sometimes be a double-edged sword. Users can update friends with every latest achievement—"[your name here] just won three straight games of solitaire!"—but may also unwittingly be updating bosses and others from whom particular bits of information should be hidden. The shrinking of privacy online has been rapidly exacerbated by social networks, and for a surprising reason: conscious decisions made by participants. Putting personal information online—even if it is set to be viewed by only select friends—has become fairly standard.



Figure 9.3.2: Photo by Saksham Choudhary from Pexels.

Dr. Kieron O'Hara studies privacy in social media and calls this era "Intimacy 2.0," Zoe Kleinman, "How Online Life Distorts Privacy Rights for All," *BBC News*, January 8, 2010, a riff on the buzzword "Web 2.0." One of O'Hara's arguments is that legal issues of privacy are based on what is called a "reasonable standard." According to O'Hara, the excessive sharing of personal information on the Internet by *some* constitutes an offense to the privacy of *all*, because it lowers the "reasonable standard" that can be legally enforced. In other words, as cultural tendencies toward privacy degrade on the Internet, it affects not only the privacy of those who choose to share their information but also the privacy of those who do not.

Social media on the Internet has been around for a while, and it has always been of some interest to marketers. The ability to target advertising based on demographic information given willingly to the service—age, political preference, gender, and location—allows marketers to target advertising extremely efficiently. Increasingly, marketers are turning to social networks as a way to reach these consumers even creating a new category of employment called Social Media "Influencers" and "Content Creators" who monetize their fanbase on various sites and apps. Culturally, these developments indicate a mistrust among consumers of traditional marketing techniques; marketers must now use new and more personalized ways of reaching consumers if they are going to sell their products.

Key Takeaways

- Social networking sites often encompass many aspects of other social media. For example, Facebook began as a collection of profile pictures with very little information, but soon expanded to include photo albums (like Flickr) and micro-blogging (like Twitter). Other sites, like MySpace, emphasize connections to music and customizable pages, catering to a younger demographic. LinkedIn specifically caters to a professional demographic by allowing only certain kinds of information that is professionally relevant.
- Blogs speed the flow of information around the Internet and provide a critical way for nonprofessionals with adequate time to investigate sources and news stories without the necessary platform of a well-known publication. On the other hand, they can lead to an “echo chamber” effect, where they simply repeat one another and add nothing new. Often, the analysis is wide-ranging, but it can also be shallow and lack the depth and knowledge of good critical journalism.
- Facebook has been the leader in privacy-related controversy, with its seemingly constant issues with privacy settings. One of the critical things to keep in mind is that as more people become comfortable with more information out in the open, the “reasonable standard” of privacy is lowered. This affects even people who would rather keep more things private.
- Social networking allows marketers to reach consumers directly and to know more about each specific consumer than ever before. Search algorithms allow marketers to place advertisements in areas that get the most traffic from targeted consumers. Whereas putting an ad on TV reaches all demographics, online advertisements can now be targeted specifically to different groups.

Exercise

1. Draw a Venn diagram of two social networking sites mentioned in this chapter. Sign up for both of them (if you’re not signed up already) and make a list of their features and their interfaces. How do they differ? How are they the same?
2. Write a few sentences about how a marketer might use these tools to reach different demographics.

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9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Describe the effects of globalization on culture.
- Identify the possible effects of news migrating to the Internet.
- Define the Internet paradox.

It's in the name: *World Wide Web*. The Internet has broken down communication barriers between cultures in a way that could only be dreamed of in earlier generations. Now, almost any news service across the globe can be accessed on the Internet and, with the various translation services available (like Babelfish and Google Translate), be relatively understandable. In addition to the spread of American culture throughout the world, smaller countries are now able to cheaply export culture, news, entertainment, and even propaganda.

> *All around the world, the internet continues to transform how we connect with others, organize the flow of things, and share information. With its growing influence on individual consumers and large economies alike, the internet has become an increasingly vital part of our day-to-day lives. In 2019, the number of internet users worldwide stood at 3.97 billion, which means that more than half of the global population is currently connected to the world wide web. But while the digital population is visibly growing in many parts of the world, internet access and availability can differ significantly depending on the region. (Jeff Johnson at statistica.com)*



The Internet has been a key factor in driving globalization in recent years. Many jobs can now be outsourced entirely via the Internet. Teams of software programmers in India can have a website up and running in very little time, for far less money than it would take to hire American counterparts. Communicating with these teams is now as simple as sending emails and instant messages back and forth, and often the most difficult aspect of setting up an international video conference online is figuring out the time difference. Especially for electronic services such as software, outsourcing over the Internet has greatly reduced the cost to develop a professionally coded site.

Electronic Media and the Globalization of Culture

The increase of globalization has been an economic force throughout the last century, but economic interdependency is not its only by-product. At its core, globalization is the lowering of economic and cultural impediments to communication between countries all over the globe. Globalization in the sphere of culture and communication can take the form of access to foreign newspapers (without the difficulty of procuring a printed copy) or, conversely, the ability of people living in previously closed countries to communicate experiences to the outside world relatively cheaply.

Television, film, and videos (especially YouTube) have the primary ways for American entertainment to reach foreign shores. This trend has been going on for some time now as American popular culture is, and has been, a crucial export. This idea of a truly globalized culture—one in which content can be distributed as easily as it can be received—now has the potential to be realized through the Internet. While some political and social barriers still remain, from a technological standpoint there is nothing to stop the two-way flow of information and culture across the globe.

New Media: Internet Convergence and American Society

One only needs to go to CNN's official Twitter feed and begin to click random faces in the "Following" column to see the effect of **media convergence** through the Internet. Hundreds of different options abound, many of them individual journalists' Twitter feeds, and many of those following other journalists. Traditional media outlets use Twitter not as a communication tool in itself but as a way to allow viewers to aggregate a large amount of information they may have missed. Instead of visiting multiple home pages to see the day's top stories from multiple viewpoints, Twitter users only have to check their own Twitter pages to get updates from all

the organizations they "follow." Media conglomerates then use Twitter as part of overall integration of media outlets; the Twitter feed is there to support the news content, not to report the content itself.



Internet-Only Sources

The Internet overtook print media as a primary source of information for national and international news in the United States in 2008. Television was still far in the lead, but especially among younger demographics, the Internet and social media are primary ways to learn about the day's news. With 40 percent of the public receiving their news from the Internet (see Figure 11.8, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "Internet Overtakes Newspapers as News Outlet," December 23, 2008) media outlets had to shift focus to make their presence known on the web. One of the most remarkable shifts out of that rush was the establishment of online-only news sources.

The conventional argument claims that the anonymity and the echo chamber of the Internet undermine worthwhile news reporting, especially for topics that are expensive to report on. The ability of large news organizations to put reporters in the field is one of their most important contributions and (because of its cost) is often one of the first things to be cut back during times of budget problems. However, as the Internet has become a primary news source for more and more people, new media outlets—publications existing entirely online—have begun to appear.

In 2006, two reporters for the *Washington Post*, John F. Harris and Jim VandeHei, left the newspaper to start a politically centered website called POLITICO. Rather than simply repeating the day's news in a blog, they were determined to start a journalistically viable news organization on the web. The different ways that Politico reaches out to its supporters—blogs, Twitter feeds, regular news articles, and now even a print edition—show how media convergence has even occurred within the Internet itself. The interactive nature of its services and the active comment boards on the site also show how the media have become a two-way street: more of a public forum than a straight news service.

Key Takeaways

- The Internet has made pop culture transmission a two-way street. The power to influence popular culture no longer lies with the relative few with control over traditional forms of mass media; it is now available to the great mass of people with access to the Internet. As a result, the cross-fertilization of pop culture from around the world has become a commonplace occurrence.
- The Internet's key difference from traditional media is that it does not operate on a set intervallic time schedule. It is not "periodical" in the sense that it comes out in daily or weekly editions; it is always updated. As a result, many journalists file both "regular" news stories and blog posts that may be updated and that can come at varied intervals as necessary. This allows them to stay up-to-date with breaking news without necessarily sacrificing the next day's more in-depth story.

Exercise 9.4.1

1. Pick a method of in-person communication and a method of Internet communication, and compare and contrast these using a Venn diagram.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

9.5: Ethics of Mass Media

9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

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9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of racial and gender diversity in mass media.
- Identify the ethical concerns associated with race and gender stereotypes.
- List some common concerns about sexual content in the media.

In the competitive and rapidly changing world of mass-media communications, media professionals—overcome by deadlines, bottom-line imperatives, and corporate interests—can easily lose sight of the ethical implications of their work. However, as entertainment law specialist Sherri Burr points out, "Because network television is an audiovisual medium that is piped free into ninety-nine percent of American homes, it is one of the most important vehicles for depicting cultural images to our population."Sherri Burr, "Television and Societal Effects: An Analysis of Media Images of African-Americans in Historical Context," *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 4 (2001): 159. Considering the profound influence mass media like television have on cultural perceptions and attitudes, it is important for the creators of media content to grapple with ethical issues.

Stereotypes, Prescribed Roles, and Public Perception

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. According to U.S. Census statistics from 2019, 39.9% of the population identifies its race as non-white, 51% as female or female-identifying, and 8.6% are disabled yet in network television broadcasts, major publications, and other forms of mass media and entertainment, representation is either absent or presented as heavily stereotyped, two-dimensional characters. Rarely are Black, Indigenous or People of Color depicted as complex characters with the full range of human emotions, motivations, and behaviors. Meanwhile, the stereotyping of women, gays, lesbians, and individuals with disabilities in mass media has also been a source of concern.

The word *stereotype* originated in the printing industry as a method of making identical copies, and the practice of stereotyping people is much the same: a system of identically replicating an image of an "other." In D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, a film that relied on racial stereotypes to portray Southern whites as victims in the American Civil War, stereotypes—especially those disseminated through mass media—become a form of social control, shaping collective perceptions and individual identities. In American mass media, the white man is still shown as the standard: the central figure of television narratives and the dominant perspective on everything from trends, to current events, to politics. White maleness becomes an invisible category because it gives the impression of being the norm according to Joanna Hearne, "Hollywood Whiteness and Stereotypes."

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9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe two ways that newspapers control stories.
- Define watchdog journalism.
- Describe how television has impacted journalistic styles.

Since 1896, *The New York Times* has printed the phrase "All the News That's Fit to Print" as its masthead motto. The phrase itself seems innocent enough, and it has been published for such a long time now that many probably skim over it without giving it a second thought. Yet, the phrase represents an interesting phenomenon in the newspaper industry: control. Papers have long been criticized for the way stories are presented, yet newspapers continue to print—and readers continue to buy them.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

In 1997, *The New York Times* publicly claimed that it was "an independent newspaper, entirely fearless, free of ulterior influence and unselfishly devoted to the public welfare."Edward S. Herman, "All the News Fit to Print: Structure and Background of the New York Times," *Z Magazine*, April 1998, www.thirdworldtraveler.com/He...it_Herman.html. Despite this public proclamation of objectivity, the paper's publishers have been criticized for choosing which articles to print based on personal financial gain. In reaction to that statement, scholar Edward S. Herman wrote that the issue is that *The New York Times* "defin[es] public welfare in a manner acceptable to their elite audience and advertisers."Edward S. Herman, "All the News Fit to Print: Structure and Background of the New York Times," *Z Magazine*, April 1998, www.thirdworldtraveler.com/He...it_Herman.html. *The New York Times* has continually been accused of determining what stories are told. For example, during the 1993 debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), *The New York Times* clearly supported the agreement. In doing so, the newspaper exercised editorial control over its publication and the information that went out to readers.

However, *The New York Times* is not the only newspaper to face accusations of controlling which stories are told. In his review of *Read All About It: The Corporate Takeover of America's Newspapers*, Steve Hoenisch, editor of *Criticism.com*, offers these harsh words about what drives the stories printed in today's newspaper:

I've always thought of daily newspapers as the guardians of our—meaning the public's—right to know. The guardians of truth, justice, and public welfare and all that. But who am I fooling? America's daily newspapers don't belong to us. Nor, for that matter, do they even seek to serve us any longer. They have more important concerns now: appeasing advertisers and enriching stockholders. Steven Hoenisch, "Corporate Journalism," review of *Read All About It: The Corporate Takeover of America's Newspapers*, by James D. Squires, http://www.criticism.com/md/crit1.html#section-Read-All-About-It.

More and more, as readership declines, newspapers must answer to advertisers and shareholders as they choose which stories to report on.

However, editorial control does not end there. Journalists determine not only what stories are told but also how those stories are presented. This issue is perhaps even more delicate than that of selection. Most newspaper readers still expect news to be reported objectively and demand that journalists present their stories in this manner. However, careful public scrutiny can burden journalists, while accusations of controlling information affect their affiliated newspapers. However, this scrutiny takes on importance as the public turns to journalists and newspapers to learn about the world.

Journalists are also expected to hold themselves to high standards of truth and originality. Fabrication and plagiarism are prohibited. If a journalist is caught using these tactics, then his or her career is likely to end for betraying the public's trust and for damaging the publication's reputation. For example, *The New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair lost his job in 2003 when his plagiary and fabrication were discovered, and *The New Republic* journalist Stephen Glass was fired in 1998 for inventing stories, quotes, and sources.

Despite the critiques of the newspaper industry and its control over information, the majority of newspapers and journalists take their roles seriously. Editors work with journalists to verify sources and to double-check facts so readers are provided accurate

information. In this way, the control that journalists and newspapers exert serves to benefit their readers, who can then be assured that the articles printed are correct.

The New York Times Revisits Old Stories

Despite the criticism of *The New York Times*, the famous newspaper has been known to revisit their old stories to provide a new, more balanced view. One such example occurred in 2004 when, in response to criticism on their handling of the Iraq War, *The New York Times* offered a statement of apology. The apology read as follows:

We have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged—or failed to emerge. Editorial, "The Times and Iraq," *New York Times*, May 26, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html.

Although the apology was risky—it essentially admitted guilt in controlling a controversial story—*The New York Times* demonstrated a commitment to ethical journalism.

Watchdog Journalism

One way that journalists control stories for the benefit of the public is by engaging in watchdog journalism. This form of journalism provides the public with information about government officials or business owners while holding those officials to high standards of operation. Watchdog journalism is defined as "(1) independent scrutiny by the press of the activities of government, business, and other public institutions, with an aim toward (2) documenting, questioning, and investigating those activities, to (3) provide publics and officials with timely information on issues of public concern."W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, "The Watchdog Role," in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 169.

One of the most famous examples of watchdog journalism is the role that Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post* played in uncovering information about the Watergate break-in and scandal that ultimately resulted in President Richard Nixon's resignation. Newspapers and journalists often laud watchdog journalism, one of the most important functions of newspapers, yet it is difficult to practice because it requires rigorous investigation, which in turn demands more time. Many journalists often try to keep up with news as it breaks, so journalists are not afforded the time to research the information—nor to hone the skills—required to write a watchdog story. "Surviving in the newsroom—doing watchdog stories—takes a great deal of personal and political skill. Reporters must have a sense of guerilla warfare tactics to do well in the newsroom."W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, "The Watchdog Role," in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182.

To be successful, watchdog journalists must investigate stories, ask tough questions, and face the possibility of unpopularity to alert the public to corruption or mismanagement while elevating the public's expectations of the government. At the same time, readers can support newspapers that employ this style of journalism to encourage the press to engage in the challenging watchdog form of journalism. As scholars have observed, "not surprisingly, watchdog journalism functions best when reporters understand it and news organizations and their audiences support it."W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, "The Watchdog Role," in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 185.

Impact of Television and the Internet on Print

Newspapers have control over which stories are told and how those stories are presented. Just as the newspaper industry has changed dramatically over the years, journalistic writing styles have been transformed. Many times, such changes mirrored a trend shift in readership; since the 1950s, however, newspapers have had to compete with television journalism and, more recently, the Internet. Both television and the Internet have profoundly affected newspaper audiences and journalistic styles.

Case Study: *USA Today*

USA Today, founded in 1982 and known for its easy-to-read stories, is but one example of a paper that has altered its style to remain competitive with television and the Internet. In the past, newspapers placed their primary focus on the written word.

Although some newspapers still maintain the use of written narration, many papers have shifted their techniques to attract a more television-savvy audience. In the case of *USA Today*, the emphasis lies on the second track—the visual story—dominated by large images accompanied by short written stories. This emphasis mimics the television presentation format, allowing the paper to cater to readers with short attention spans.

A perhaps unexpected shift in journalistic writing styles that derives from television is the more frequent use of present tense, rather than past tense, in articles. This shift likely comes from television journalism's tendency to allow a story to develop as it is being told. This subtle but noticeable shift from past to present tense in narration sometimes brings a more dramatic element to news articles, which may attract readers who otherwise turn to television news programs for information.

Like many papers, *USA Today* has redesigned its image and style to keep up with the sharp immediacy of the Internet and with the entertainment value of television. In fact, the paper's management was so serious about their desire to compete with television that from 1988 to 1990 they mounted a syndicated television series titled *USA Today: The Television Show* (later retitled *USA Today on TV*)."U.S.A Today: The Television Series," Internet Movie Database, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094572/. Despite its short run, the show demonstrated the paper's focus on reaching out to a visual audience, a core value that it has maintained to this day. Today, *USA Today* has established itself as a credible and reliable news source, despite its unorthodox approach to journalism.

Key Takeaways

- Newspapers control which stories are told by selecting which articles make it to print. They also control how stories are told by determining the way in which information is presented to their readers.
- Watchdog journalism is an investigative approach to reporting that aims to inform citizens of occurrences in government and businesses.
- Television has not only contributed to the decline of readership for newspapers but has also impacted visual and journalistic styles. Newspapers, such as *USA Today*, have been profoundly affected by the television industry. *USA Today* caters to television watchers by incorporating large images and short stories, while primarily employing the present tense to make it seem as though the story is unfolding before the reader.

Exercise

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Compare the journalistic styles of *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Examine differences in the visual nature of the newspapers as well as in the journalistic style.
2. How has television affected these particular newspapers?
3. What noticeable differences do you observe? Can you find any similarities?
4. How did each newspaper cover events differently? How did each newspaper's coverage change the focus and information told? Did you find any watchdog stories, and, if so, what were they?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Getting Started with Public Speaking

In this chapter, we are switching gears to getting you ready for public speaking. We will be looking at the basics for choosing your topics in terms of the type of speech and your audience.

10.1: What are the Different Types of Speeches?

10.2: Who is My Audience?

10.3: What Do I Speak About?

Reference

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10.1: What are the Different Types of Speeches?

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the three main types of speeches.
2. Discuss the importance of differentiating between the three.

Speeches have traditionally been seen to have one of three broad purposes: to inform, to persuade, and— Well, to be honest, different words are used for the third kind of speech purpose: to inspire, to amuse, to please, to delight, or to entertain. We will just use “to inspire” as the overall term here.

Your instructor will most likely assign you an informative and persuasive speech, and then perhaps one more. The third one might be a special occasion speech, such as a tribute (commemorative), an after-dinner speech, a toast, or a eulogy. These four types of speeches fit into the category of “to inspire” or “to entertain.” It should be understood that these three purposes are not necessarily exclusive of the others. A speech designed to be persuasive can also be informative and entertaining, even if neither of those is the main purpose. To further demonstrate this, look at the examples below in Figure **10.1.1**.

Figure 10.1.1: General Purposes and Speech Topics

To Inform	To Persuade	To Entertain
Civil rights movement	Gun control	Comedic monologue
Renewable energy	Privacy rights	My craziest adventure
Reality television	Prison reform	A “roast”

Some of the topics listed above could fall into another category depending on how the speaker approached the topic, or they could contain elements of both. For example, you may have to inform your audience about your topic in one main point before you can persuade them, or you may include some entertaining elements in an informative or persuasive speech to help make the content more engaging for the audience. There should not be elements of persuasion included in an informative speech, since persuading is contrary to the objective approach that defines an informative speech. In any case, while there may be some overlap between topics, most speeches can be placed into one of the categories based on the overall content of the speech.

Reference

Tucker, Barbara; Barton, Kristin; Burger, Amy; Drye, Jerry; Hunsicker, Cathy; Mendes, Amy; and LeHew, Matthew, "Exploring Public Speaking: 4th Edition" (2019). *Communication Open Textbooks*. 1. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/communication-textbooks/1 - CC BY-NC 2.0

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10.2: Who is My Audience?

Learning Objectives

1. Define audience-centered, audience analysis, and demographic characteristics.
2. List and explain the various demographic characteristics used to analyze an audience.
3. Define the meanings of attitudes, beliefs, values, and needs.
4. Diagram Maslow's hierarchy of needs and explain its usefulness to public speaking.
5. Describe contextual factors that should be considered when preparing a speech.

The Importance of Audience Analysis

This section will look at the audience from both sides of the microphone, so to speak. First, it will examine how a presenter can fully understand the audience, which will aid the speaker in constructing the approach and content of the speech. Secondly, this chapter will examine the public speaker as an audience member and how to get the most out of a speech, even if the topic does not seem immediately interesting.

You are not using the speech to dump a large amount of content on the audience; you are making that content important, meaningful, and applicable to them. Additionally, the way the audience perceives you and your connection to them—such as whether there is mutual trust and respect—will largely determine your success with the audience. The speaker must respect the audience as well and the audience should trust the speaker

Demographic Characteristics

When we use the term **audience analysis**, we mean *looking at the audience first by its demographic characteristics and then by their internal psychological traits*. "Demo-" comes to the Greek root word *demos* meaning "people," and "-graphic" means description or drawing. Demographic characteristics describe *the outward characteristics of the audience*. This textbook will discuss eleven of them below, although you might see longer or shorter lists in other sources. Some of them are obvious and some not as much. But before we get into the specific demographic characteristics, let's look at three principles.

First, be careful not to stereotype on the basis of a demographic characteristic. **Stereotyping** is *generalizing about a group of people and assuming that because a few persons in that group have a characteristic, all of them do*. If someone were sitting near campus and saw two students drive by in pickup trucks and said, "All students at that college drive pickup trucks," that would be both stereotyping. At the same time, one should not totalize about a person or group of persons. **Totalizing** is *taking one characteristic of a group or person and making that the "totality" or sum total of what that person or group is*. Totalizing often happens to persons with disabilities, for example; the disability is seen as the totality of that person, or all that person is about. This can be both harmful to the relationship and ineffective as a means of communicating. Avoiding stereotyping and totalizing is important because you cannot assume everything about an audience based on just one demographic characteristic. Only two or three might be important, but in other cases, several demographic characteristics matter. The age of a group will be important in how they think about investing their money, but so will the socio-economic level, career or profession, and even where they live. Even their religious beliefs may come into it since many religious groups have teachings about how much income should be given to charity. A good speaker will be aware of more than one or two characteristics of the audience.

Second, in terms of thinking about demographic characteristics, not all of them are created equal, and not all of them are important in every situation. When parents come to a PTA meeting, they are concerned about their children and playing the important role of "parent," rather than being concerned about their profession. When senior citizens are thinking about how they will pay for their homes in retirement years, their ethnicity probably has less to do with it as much as their age and socio-economic level.

Third, there are two ways to think about demographic characteristics: positively and negatively. In a positive sense, the demographic characteristics tell you what might motivate or interest the audience or even bind them together as a group. In a negative sense, the demographic characteristic might tell you what subjects or approaches to avoid. Understanding your audience is not a game of defensive tic-tac-toe, but a means of relating to them.

For example, a common example is given about audiences of the Roman Catholic faith. Speakers are warned not to "offend" them by talking about abortion, since official Roman Catholic teaching is against abortion. However, this analysis misses three points.

First, even if most Roman Catholics take a pro-life position, they are aware of the issues and are adults who can listen and think about topics. Additionally, not all Roman Catholics agree with the official church stance, and it is a complex issue. Second, Roman Catholics are not the only people who hold views against abortion. Third, and most important, if all the speaker thinks about Roman Catholics is that they are against something, the speaker might miss all the things the audience is for and what motivates them. In short, think about how the demographic characteristics inform what to talk about and how not just what to avoid talking about.

There is one more point to be made about demographic characteristics before they are listed and explained. In a country of increasing diversity, demographic characteristics are dynamic. People change as the country changes. What was true about demographic characteristics—and even what was considered a demographic characteristic—has changed in the last fifty years. For example, the number of Internet users in 1980 was minuscule (mostly military personnel). Another change is that the percentage of the population living in the Great Lakes areas has dropped as the population has either aged or moved southward.



Figure 10.2.1: Good speakers should always assume a diversity of backgrounds and opinions among their audience members. TEDx UniversityofTulsa – Audience – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

What follows is a listing of eleven of the more common demographic characteristics that you might use in understanding your audience and shaping your speech to adapt to your audience.

Age

The first demographic characteristic is age. In American culture, we have traditionally ascribed certain roles, behaviors, motivations, interests, and concerns to people of certain ages. Young people are concerned about career choices; people over 60 are concerned about retirement. People go to college from the age of 18 to about 24. Persons of 50 years old have raised their children and are “empty nesters." These neat categories still exist for many, but in some respects, they seem outdated.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), 38% of college students are over 25 years old. Some women and men wait until their late thirties to have children, and thus at 50 have preteens in the house. More and more grandparents are raising grandchildren, and some people foster or adopt children in their middle years. Combining the longer lives Americans are living with the economic recession of 2008 and following, 62 is no longer a reasonable age for retirement for many.

Therefore, knowing that your audience is 18, 30, 55, or 70 is important, but it is just one of many factors. In your classroom audience, for example, you may find 30-year-old returning, nontraditional college students, young entrepreneurs, 17-year-old dual enrollment students, and veterans who have done three or four tours in the Middle East as well as 18- or 19-year old traditional college students.

Gender

The second demographic characteristic commonly listed is gender. This area is open to misunderstanding as much as any other. Despite stereotypes, not all women have fifty pairs of shoes with stiletto heels in their closets, and not all men love football. In almost all cases you will be speaking to a “mixed” audience of men and women, so you will have to keep both groups in mind. If you are speaking to a group of all men or all women and you are of the same gender as the audience, you might be able to use some appropriate common experiences to connect with the audience. However, if you are a woman speaking to an all-male audience or a man speaking to an all-female audience, those are situations in which to be aware of overall gender differences in communication.

According to Deborah Tannen (2007), a scholar of linguistics and a well-known author, men and women in the United States have divergent communication styles. She is quick to point out neither is all good or all bad nor do they apply to every single person. The two communication styles are just different, and not recognizing the differences can cause problems, or "noise," in communication. Although she normally applies these principles to family, marital, and work relationships, they can be applied to public speaking.

According to Tannen, women tend to communicate more inductively; they prefer to give lots of details and then move toward a conclusion. Other research on differences in gender communication indicates that women listen better, interrupt less, and collaborate more, although there is research to indicate this is not the case. (Keep in mind these are generalized tendencies, not necessarily true of every single woman or man.) Women tend to be less direct, to ask more questions, to use "hedges" and qualifiers ("it seems to me," "I may be wrong, but…") and to apologize more, often unnecessarily. Other research indicates women praise more, consequently expect more praise, and interpret lack of praise differently from how men do (Floyd, 2017).

This pattern of less direct communication ascribed to many women may not sound the same to men as it does to women. To men it may seem that a female speaker is unsure or lacks confidence, whereas the female speaker is doing it out of habit or because she thinks it sounds open-minded and diplomatic; possibly, the strategy has worked before and/or in most cases. Tannen calls women's style of communication "rapport" style, whereas she labels male communication as more of a "report" style. Some communication scholars call these differences "expressive" (women) vs. informational (men) (Floyd 2017).



Figure **10.2.2**:"Senator Pia Cayetano" by roger_alcantara is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Male speakers, on the other hand, are more deductive and direct; they state their point, give limited details to back it up, and then move on. Men may be less inclined to ask questions and qualify what they say; they might not see any reason to add unnecessary fillers. Men also may tend toward basic facts, giving some the impression they are less emotional in their communication, which is a stereotype. Finally, men are socialized to "fix" things and may give advice to women when it is not really needed or wanted.

These generalized differences in communication by gender have led to much material for comedians and YouTube videos and much discussion and soul-searching about women's supposed habitually apologizing. In some ways, these differences are traditional and some writers, especially women, are trying to help others avoid these patterns without losing the positive side of female or male communication differences. For example, books such as *Lean In* (Sandberg, 2013) are meant to teach women to negotiate for better salaries and conditions and avoid common communication behaviors that hurt their ability to negotiate. Also, many differences are situational and have to do with relative levels of power and other factors. However, it is unlikely these general tendencies are going to disappear any time soon.

Therefore, if you are a woman speaking to an all-male audience, be direct without mimicking "male talk." It might be a good idea to avoid excessive detail and description; it will be seen as getting off-topic. Do not follow the habit of starting sentences with "I

don't know if this is 100% correct, but…" or even worse, the habitual "I'm sorry, but…" If on the other hand you are a male speaking to a primarily female audience, realize that women want knowledge but not to have their problems fixed. Men also seem abrupt when talking to women, and much research supports the conclusion that men talk more than women in groups and interrupt more. So, male speakers should allow time for questions and work hard at listening.

This section on gender has taken a typical, traditional "binary" approach. Today, more people openly identify as a gender other than traditionally male or female. Even those of us who identify as strictly male or female do not fully follow traditional gender roles. This is an area for growing sensitivity. At the same time, the purpose, subject, and context of the speech will probably define how and whether you address the demographic characteristic of gender.

Age and gender are the two main ways we categorize people: a teenaged boy, an elderly lady, a middle-aged man; a young mother. There are several other demographic characteristics, however.

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Race, ethnicity, and culture are often lumped together; at the same time, these categorizations can be controversial. We will consider race, ethnicity, and culture in one section because of their interrelationship although they are distinct categories. We might think in terms of a few racial groups in the world: Caucasian, African, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American. Each one of these has many ethnicities. Caucasians have ethnicities of Northern European, Arab, some South Asian people groups, Mediterranean, etc. Then each ethnicity has cultures. Mediterranean ethnicities include Greek, Italian, Spanish, etc., and then each of these has subcultures, and so on. It should be noted that many social scientists today reject the idea of race as a biological reality altogether and see it as a social construct. This means it is a view of humanity that has arisen over time and affects our thinking about others.

Unfortunately, dividing these categories and groups is not that easy, and these categories are almost always clouded by complicated political and personal concerns, which we do not have time or space to address here. Most audiences will be **heterogeneous**, or *a mixture of different types of people and demographic characteristics*, as opposed to **homogeneous**, *very similar in many characteristics* (a group of single, 20-year-old, white female nursing students at your college). Therefore, be sensitive to your audience members' identification with a culture. Anglos are often guilty of confusing Hispanic (a language category) with cultures (a more regional or historical category), and overlooking that Mexican is not Puerto Rican is not Cuban is not Colombian. In the same way for Caucasians, a Canadian is not an Australian is not an American is not a Scot, just because their last names, basic looks, and language seem almost the same (well, sort of!). "American" itself is a problematic term since "American" can refer to every country in the Western Hemisphere.

As mentioned in a previous example, focus as much on the positives—what that culture values—rather than what the culture does not like or value. Now we turn to an even more complicated category, religion.

Religion

Religion, casually defined as beliefs and practices about the transcendent, deity, and the meaning of life, can be thought of as an *affiliation* and as a *life commitment*. According to polls, due to either family or choice, a majority of Americans (although the percentage is shrinking) have some kind of religious affiliation, identity, or connection. It may simply be where they were christened as an infant, but it is a connection—"I'm in that group." About 23% of Americans are being called "nones" because they do not claim a formal religious affiliation (Pew Research, 2015).

On the other hand, a person may have an affiliation with a religious group but have no real commitment to it. The teaching and practices of the group, such as a denomination, may not affect the personal daily life of the member. Likewise, someone who has an affiliation may develop his or her own variations of beliefs that do not match the established organization's doctrines. Unless the audience is brought together because of common faith concerns or the group shares the same affiliation or commitment, religious faith may not be relevant to your topic and not a central factor in the audience analysis. As with other categories, be careful not to assume or stereotype about religious groups.

Religion, like ethnicity and culture, is an area where you should be conscious of the diversity of your audience. Not everyone worships in a "church," and not everyone attends a house of worship on Sunday. Not everyone celebrates Christmas the way your family does, and some do not celebrate it at all.

Group Affiliation

Without getting into a sociological discussion, we can note that one demographic characteristic and source of identity for some is group affiliation. To what groups do the audience members predominantly belong? Sometimes it will be useful to know if the group is mostly Republican, Democrat, members of a union, members of a professional organization, and so on. In many cases, your reason for being the speaker is connected to the group identity. Again, be mindful of what the group values and what binds the audience together.

Region

Region, another demographic characteristic, relates to where the audience members live. We can think of this in two ways. We live in regions of the country: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Rocky Mountain region, Northwest, and West Coast. These regions can be broken down even more, such as coastal Southeastern states. Americans, especially in the East, are very conscious of their state or region and identify with it a great deal.

The second way to think about region is as "residence" or whether the audience lives in an urban area, the suburbs, or a rural area. If you live in the city, you probably do not think about being without a cell phone or Internet service, but many people in rural areas do not take those for granted. The clubs that students in rural high schools belong to might be very different from what a student in a city would join.

Occupation

Occupation may be a demographic characteristic that is central to your presentation. For the most part in the U.S., we choose our occupations because they reflect our values, interests, and abilities, and as we associate with colleagues in that occupation, those values, interests, and abilities are strengthened. You are probably in college to enter a specific career that you believe will be economically beneficial and personally fulfilling. We sometimes spend more time at work than any other activity, except sleeping. Messages that acknowledge the importance, diversity, and reasons for occupations will be more effective. At the same time, if you are speaking to an audience with different occupations, do not use jargon from one specific occupation.

Education

The next demographic characteristic is education, which is closely tied to occupation and is often, though not always, a matter of choice. In the United States, education usually reflects what kind of information and training a person has been exposed to, but it does not necessarily reflect intelligence. An individual with a bachelor's degree in physics or computer science will probably know a great deal more about those fields than someone with a Ph.D. in English. Having a certain credential is supposed to be a guarantee of having learned a set of knowledge or attained certain skills. Some persons, especially employers, tend to see achieving a credential such as a college degree as the person's having the "grit" to finish an academic program (Duckworth, 2016). We are also generally proud of our educational achievements, so they should not be disregarded.

Socio-economic Level

Socio-economic level, another demographic characteristic, is also tied to occupation and education in many cases. We expect certain levels of education or certain occupations to make more money. While you cannot know the exact pay of your audience members, you should be careful about references that would portray your own socio-economic level as superior to their own. Saying, "When I bought my BMW 7 Series" (a car that retails at over $80,000) would not make a good impression on someone in the audience who is struggling to make a car payment on her used KIA. One time a lawyer for a state agency was talking to a group of college professors about how she negotiated her salary. She mentioned that she was able to get her salary raised by an amount that was more than the annual salary of the audience members. Her message, which was a good one, was lost in this case because of insensitivity to the audience.

Sexual Orientation

The next few demographic characteristics are more personal and may not seem important to your speech topic, but then again, they may be the most important for your audience. Sexual orientation, usually referred to by the letters LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-gendered, Queer), is a characteristic not listed in speech textbooks forty years ago. As acceptance of people of various sexual orientations and lifestyles becomes more common, we can expect that these differences will lead to people feeling free to express

who they are and not be confined to traditional gender roles or stereotypes. For this reason, it is useful to employ inclusive language, such as “partner” or “spouse.”

Family Status

Family status, such as whether the audience members are married, single, divorced, or have children or grandchildren may be very important to the concerns and values of your audience and even the reason the audience is brought together. For example, young parents could be gathered to listen to a speaker because they are concerned about the health and safety of children in the community. Getting married and/or having a child often creates a major shift in how persons view the world, responsibilities, and priorities. A speaker should be aware if she is talking to single, married, divorced, or widowed persons and if the audience members are parents, especially with children at home.

Does this section on demographic characteristics leave you wondering, “With all this diversity, how can we even think about an audience?” If so, do not feel alone in that thought. As diversity increases, audience understanding and adaptation become more difficult. To address this concern, you should keep in mind the primary reason the audience is together and the demographic characteristics they have in common—*their common bonds*. For example, your classmates may be diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, or religion, but they have a profession (all students) and region (living near or on the campus), group identity (campus organizations or major) as well as, possibly, other characteristics in common. Perhaps your instructor will do an exercise in class that helps you explore the demographic characteristics displayed in your class audience. You might find that most live with their parents, or that 60% of them are planning to enter a health profession, or that one-third of them have children at home. Knowing these facts will help you find ways to choose topics, select approaches and sources for those topics, know when you should explain an idea in more detail, avoid strategies that would become barriers to communicating with the audience, and/or include personal examples to which the audience members can relate.

Psychographic Characteristics

Whereas demographic characteristics describe the “facts” about the people in your audience and are focused on the external, **psychographic characteristics** *explain the inner qualities*. Although there are many ways to think about this topic, here the ones relevant to a speech will be explored: beliefs, attitudes, needs, and values. As you can see in Figure **10.2.3**, we can think of our attitudes, beliefs, and values as layers that make up our perception and knowledge.

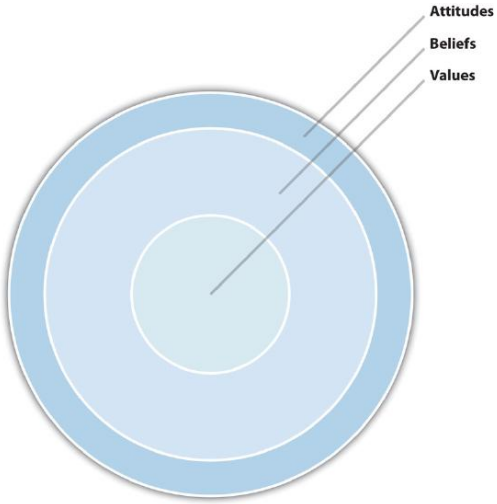


Figure **10.2.3**: **Psychological Analysis: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values.** University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing - *Chapter 9: Preparing a Speech* – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Attitudes

At the outermost level, attitudes are our likes and dislikes, and they are easier to influence than beliefs or values because they are often reactionary. **Attitude** is defined as *a stable positive or negative response to a person, idea, object, or policy* (Bem 1970). More specifically, Myers (2012) defines it as “a favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction toward someone or something, exhibited in one’s beliefs, feelings, or intended behavior” (p. 36). How do you respond when you hear the name of a certain singer,

movie star, political leader, sports team, or law in your state? Your response will be either positive or negative, or maybe neutral if you are not familiar with the object of the attitude. Where did that attitude come from? Psychologists and communication scholars study attitude formation and change probably as much as any other subject and have found that attitude comes from experiences, peer groups, beliefs, rewards, and punishments.

Do not confuse attitude with “mood.” Attitudes are stable; if you respond negatively to Brussels sprouts today, you probably will a week from now. That does not mean they are unchangeable, only that, they change slowly and in response to certain experiences, information, or strategies. We will examine how to change attitudes in the chapter on persuasion. Changing attitudes is a primary task of public speakers because attitudes are the most determining factor in what people actually do. In other words, attitudes lead to actions, and interestingly, actions lead to and strengthen attitudes.

Beliefs

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

Daryl Bem (1970) defined **beliefs** as “statements we hold to be true.” Notice this definition does not say the beliefs are true, only that we *hold them to be true and as such, they determine how we respond to the world around us*. Stereotypes are a kind of belief: we believe all the people in a certain group are “like that” or share a trait. Beliefs are not confined to the religious realm but touch all aspects of our experience. Sports fans believe certain things about their favorite teams. Republicans and Democrats believe certain, usually different, principles about how the government should be run.

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

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

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

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

Values

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

- nostalgia (the person’s parents owned one in the 1960s and it reminds him of good times),
- display (the person wants to show it off and get “oohs” and “ahs”),
- materialism (the person believes the adage that the one who dies with the most toys wins),
- aesthetics and beauty (the person admires the look of the car and enjoys maintaining the sleek appearance),
- prestige (the person has earned enough money to enjoy and show off this kind of vehicle), or

- physical pleasure (the driver likes the feel of driving a sports car on the open road).

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

Needs

The fourth psychographic characteristic needs, which are *important deficiencies that we are motivated to fulfill*. You may already be familiar with the well-known diagram known as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). It is commonly discussed in the fields of management, psychology, and health professions. A version of it is shown in Figure **10.2.4**. (Some recent versions show it with 8 levels.) It is one way to think about needs. In trying to understand human motivation, Maslow theorized that as our needs represented at the base of the pyramid are fulfilled, we move up the hierarchy to fulfill other types of needs (McLeod, 2014).

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

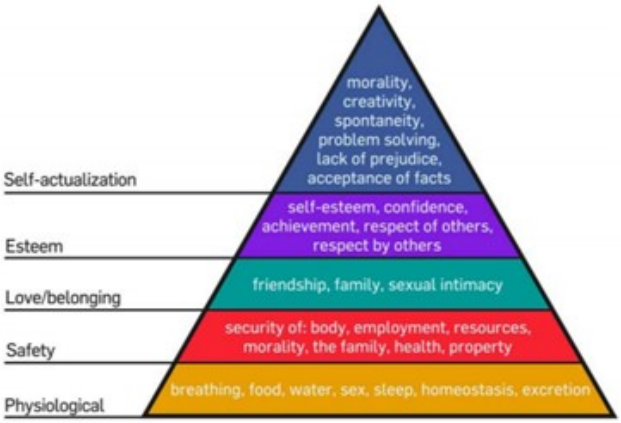


Figure **10.2.4**: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – CC BY-NC 2.0.

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

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

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

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

Contextual Factors of Audience Analysis

The “facts about” and “inner qualities” (demographic and psychographic characteristics) of the audience influence your approach to any presentation. The context (place and time) of the speech does also. What follows are some questions to consider when planning your presentation.

1. How much time do I have for the presentation? As mentioned in Chapter 1, we must respect the time limits of a speech. In most cases, you will have little control over the time limits. In class the instructor assigns a five- to six-minute speech; at work, there may be an understood twenty-minute presentation rule in the organization, since attention can diminish after a certain length. You might be asked to speak to a community group for your company and be told that you have thirty minutes —that seems like a long time, but if you are really passionate about the subject, that time can go quickly.

Knowing the time limit for a speech does three things for the speaker. First, it lets them know how much of a given topic can realistically be covered. Secondly, the speaker must practice being sure that the content actually fits in the time given, so the practice leads to a better speech. Third, time limits impose discipline and focus on the speaker.

In reference to practice, which we will address in detail in Chapter 11, this might be a good place to dispel the “practice makes perfect” myth. It is possible to practice incorrectly, so in that case, **practice will make permanent, not perfect**. There is a right way and a wrong way to practice a speech, musical instrument, or sport.

2. What time of the day is the presentation? An audience at 8:00 in the morning is not the same as at 2:00 p.m. An audience at Monday at 10:00 a.m. is not the same as at 3:00 Friday afternoon. The time of your presentation may tell you a great deal about how to prepare. For example, if the audience is likely to be tired, you might want to get them physically active or talking to each other in a part of the speech, especially if it is a longer presentation.

3. Why is the audience gathered? In the case of your speech class, everyone is there, of course, because they want a grade and because they are students at the college. However, they also have a career and educational goals and probably are at a certain stage in their education. In other contexts, the audience is there because of common interest, commitment, or responsibility. What is it? Everything you do in the speech should be relevant to that reason for their being there.



Figure 10.2.5: When you speak in a classroom or at a business meeting, you may have a captive audience. Presbyterian Women – Business Meeting – CC BY-NC 2.0.

4. What is the physical space like? Straightforward, with the audience in rows and hard seats, as in a classroom? A typical boardroom with a long table and a dozen or more chairs around it? Big sofas and armchairs, where the audience might get too comfortable and drowsy? Can the speaker walk around and get closer to the audience? Does the speaker have to stay behind a lectern or on a platform? Is there audiovisual equipment? Is the room well-lit? Sometimes you will have no control over the physical space, especially in the speech classroom, but you should try to exert all the control you possibly can in other situations. Even the temperature of the room or outside noise can affect your speech’s effectiveness. Just closing the door can make a world of difference in the physical space and its effect on the audience

5. Related to number 4 is “How large will the audience be?” Ten people or one hundred? This factor will probably affect your delivery the most. You may need to increase your volume in a venue with a large audience, or you might have to use a microphone, which could limit walking around and getting close to the group. On the other hand, you might want to directly interact with the audience if it is a smaller, more intimate number of people. The size of the audience will also affect your choice of visual aids.

6. What does the audience expect? Why were you asked to speak to them? Again, in the class, you will have certain specifications for the presentations, such as type of speech, length, kinds of sources used, and presentation aids or lack of them. In other contexts, you will need to ask many questions to know the context fully.

Knowing these details about the audience can greatly impact how successful you are as a speaker, and not knowing them can potentially have adverse effects. For example, a professor was asked to speak to the faculty of another college about 120 miles away on the subject of research about teaching college students. Because the campus she was visiting was a branch campus, she assumed (always dangerous) that only the faculty on that small branch campus would be present. Actually, the faculty of the whole college—over 400 instructors in a college of over 21,000 students—showed up. Although the speaker was very conscious of time limits (30 minutes), subject matter, needs of the audience, and expectations, the change in the size of the expected audience was a shock.

It all went well because she was an experienced speaker, but she was a little embarrassed to realize she had not asked the actual size of the audience. Of course, the auditorium was much larger than she expected, the slides she planned to use were inappropriate, and she could not walk around. Instead, she was “stuck” behind a lectern. This is all to say that the importance of knowing your audience and taking the time to prepare based on that knowledge can make your speech go much more smoothly, and not doing so can lead to unexpected complications.

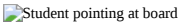


Figure **10.2.6**: "Student pointing at board" by pennstatenews is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Exercise

1. Getting integrated: Why do some people dread public speaking or just want to avoid it? Identify some potential benefits of public speaking in academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts that might make people see public speaking in a different light.
2. Conduct some preliminary audience analysis of your class and your classroom. What are some demographics that might be useful for you to consider? What might be some attitudes, beliefs, and values people have that might be relevant to your speech topics? What situational factors might you want to consider before giving your speech?

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10.3: What Do I Speak About?

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the general purpose of a speech.
2. List strategies for narrowing a speech topic.
3. Compose an audience-centered, specific purpose statement for a speech.
4. Compose a thesis statement that summarizes the central idea of a speech.
5. Compose a preview statement that highlights the main points of a speech.

General Purpose

The first step when developing a speech involves determining the **general purpose** of the speech. As mentioned earlier, there are only three general purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to inspire. Don't forget the previous warning, if you've been told that you will be delivering an informative speech, you are automatically constrained from delivering a speech to persuade. In most public speaking classes, it will be easy to determine the general purpose of your speeches because generally, teachers will tell you the exact purpose for each speech in the class.

Choosing a Topic

Once you have determined (or been assigned) your general purpose, you can begin the process of choosing a topic. In this class, you may be given the option to choose any topic for your informative or persuasive speech, but in most academic, professional, and personal settings, there will be some parameters set that will help guide your topic selection. Speeches in future classes will likely be organized around the content being covered in the class. Speeches delivered at work will usually be directed toward a specific goal such as welcoming new employees, informing about changes in workplace policies, or presenting quarterly sales figures. We are also usually compelled to speak about specific things in our personal lives, like addressing a problem at our child's school by speaking out at a school board meeting. In short, it's not often that you'll be starting from scratch when you begin to choose a topic.

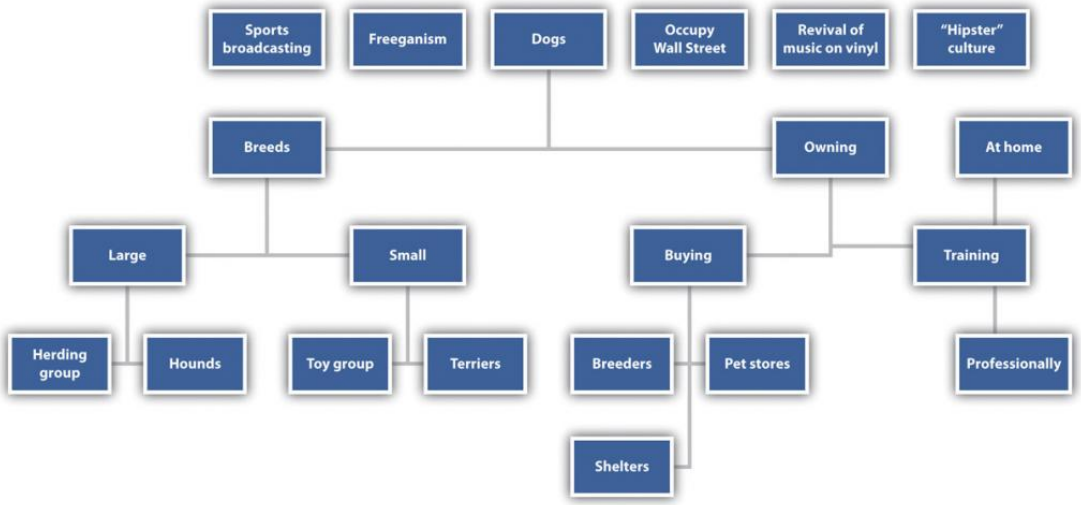


Figure 10.3.1: Brainstorming and Narrowing a Topic. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing - *Chapter 9: Preparing a Speech* – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Whether you've received parameters that narrow your topic range or not, the first step in choosing a topic is brainstorming. **Brainstorming** involves *generating many potential topic ideas in a fast-paced and non-judgmental manner*. Brainstorming can take place multiple times as you narrow your topic. For example, you may begin by brainstorming a list of your personal interests that can then be narrowed down to a speech topic. It makes sense that you will enjoy speaking about something that you care about or find interesting. The research and writing will be more interesting, and the delivery will be easier since you won't have to fake enthusiasm for your topic. Speaking about something you're familiar with and interested in can also help you manage speaking anxiety. While it's good to start with your personal interests, some speakers may get stuck here if they don't feel like they can make

their interests relevant to the audience. In that case, you can look around for ideas. If your topic is something that's being discussed in newspapers, on television, in the lounge of your dorm, or around your family's dinner table, then it's likely to be of interest and be relevant since it's current. Figure **10.3.1** shows how brainstorming works in stages. A list of topics that interest the speaker is on the top row. The speaker can brainstorm subtopics for each idea to see which one may work the best. In this case, the speaker could decide to focus his or her informative speech on three common ways people come to own dogs: through breeders, pet stores, or shelters.

Overall you can follow these tips as you select and narrow your topic:

1. Brainstorm topics that you are familiar with, interest you, and/or are currently topics of discussion.
2. Choose a topic appropriate for the assignment/occasion.
3. Choose a topic that you can make relevant to your audience.
4. Choose a topic that you have the resources to research (access to information, people to interview, etc.).

Formulating a Specific Purpose Statement

Once you have brainstormed, narrowed, and chosen your topic, you can begin to draft your specific purpose statement. Your specific purpose is a one-sentence statement that includes the objective you want to accomplish in your speech. You do not speak aloud your specific purpose during your speech; you use it to guide your researching, organizing, and writing. A good specific purpose statement is audience-centered, agrees with the general purpose, addresses one main idea, and is realistic. This formula will help you in putting together your specific purpose statement:

> **Specific Communication Word** *(inform, explain, demonstrate, describe, define, persuade, convince, prove, argue)*
>
> **Target Audience** *(my classmates, the members of the Social Work Club, my coworkers)*
>
> **The Content** *(how to bake brownies, that Macs are better than PCs)*

Each of these parts of the specific purpose is important. The first two parts make sure you are clear on your purpose and know specifically who will be hearing your message. However, we will focus on the last part here. The content part of the specific purpose statement must first be singular and focused, and the content must match the purpose. The word "and" really should not appear in the specific purpose statement since that would make it seem that you have two purposes and two topics. Obviously, the specific purpose statement's content must be very narrowly defined and, well, specific. One mistake beginning speakers often make is to try to "cover" too much material. They tend to speak about the whole alphabet, A-Z on a subject, instead of just "T" or "L." This comes from an emphasis on the topic more than the purpose, and from not keeping audience and context in mind. In other words, go deep (specific), not broad. Examples in this chapter will show what that means.

Second, the content must match the focus of the purpose word. A common error is to match an informative purpose with a persuasive content clause or phrase. For example,

> *To explain to my classmates why term life insurance is a better option than whole life insurance policies.*
>
> *To inform my classmates about how the recent Supreme Court decision on police procedures during arrests is unconstitutional.*

Sometimes it takes an unbiased second party to see where your content and purpose may not match.

Third, the specific purpose statement should be relevant to the audience. How do the purpose and its topic touch upon their lives, wallets, relationships, careers, etc.? It is also a good idea to keep in mind what you want the audience to walk away with or what you want them to know, to be able to do, to think, to act upon, or to respond to your topic—your outcome or result.

For example, "to explain to my classmates the history of NASA" would be far too much material and the audience may be unsure of its relevance. A more specific one such as "to inform my classmates about the decline of the Shuttle program" would be more manageable and closer to their experience. It would also reference two well-known historical tragedies involving the Shuttle program, the Challenger Disaster in 1986 and the Columbia Explosion in 2003. Here are several examples of specific purpose statements. Notice how they meet the standards of being singular, focused, relevant, and consistent.

> *To inform my classmates of the origin of the hospice movement.*
>
> *To describe to my coworkers the steps to apply for retirement.*

To define for a group of new graduate students the term "academic freedom."

To explain to the Lions Club members the problems faced by veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To persuade the members of the Greek society to take the spring break trip to Daytona Beach.

To motivate my classmates to engage in the College's study abroad program.

To convince my classroom audience that they need at least seven hours of sleep per night to do well in their studies.

Now that you understand the basic form and function of a specific purpose statement, let's look at how the same topic for a different audience will create a somewhat different specific purpose statement. Public speaking is not a "one-size-fits-all" proposition. Let's take the subject of participating in the study abroad program. How would you change your approach if you were addressing first-semester freshmen instead of first-semester juniors? Or if you were speaking to high school students in one of the college's feeder high schools? Or if you were asked to share your experiences with a local civic group that gave you a partial scholarship to participate in the program? You would have slightly different specific purpose statements although your experience and basic information are all the same.

For another example, let's say that one of your family members has benefitted from being in the Special Olympics and you have volunteered two years at the local event. You could give a tribute (commemorative speech) about the work of Special Olympics (with the purpose to inspire), an informative speech on the scope or history of the Special Olympics, or a persuasive speech on why audience members should volunteer at next year's event. "Special Olympics" is a keyword for every specific purpose, but the statements would otherwise be different.

Despite all the information given about specific purpose statements so far, the next thing you read will seem strange: *Never start your speech by saying your specific purpose to the audience. In a sense, it is just for you and the instructor.* For you, it's like a note you might tack on the mirror or refrigerator to keep you on track. For the instructor, it's a way for him or her to know you are accomplishing both the assignment and what you set out to do. Avoid the temptation to default to saying it at the beginning of your speech. It will seem awkward and repetitive.

Formulating a Central Idea Statement

While you will not actually say your specific purpose statement during your speech, you will need to clearly state what your focus and main points are going to be (preferably at the end of the introductory section of your speech). The *statement that contains or summarizes a speech's main points* is commonly known as the **central idea statement** (or just the central idea).

Now, at this point, we need to make a point about terminology. Your instructor may call the central idea statement "the thesis" or "the thesis statement." Your English composition instructor probably uses that term in your essay writing. Another instructor may call it the "main idea statement." All of these are basically synonymous and you should not let the terms confuse you, but you should use the term your instructor uses.

That said, is the central idea statement the very same thing as the thesis sentence in an essay? Yes, in that both are letting the audience know without a doubt your topic, purpose, direction, angle, and/or point of view. No, in that the rules for writing a "thesis" or central idea statement in a speech are not as strict as in an essay. For example, it is acceptable in a speech to announce the topic and purpose, although it is usually not the most artful or effective way to do it. You may say,

"In this speech, I will try to motivate you to join me next month as a volunteer at the regional Special Olympics."

That would be followed by a **preview statement** of what the speaker's arguments or reasons for participating will be, such as,

"You will see that it will benefit the community, the participants, and you individually."

However, another approach is to "capsulize" the purpose, topic, approach, and preview in one succinct statement.

"Your involvement as a volunteer in next month's regional Special Olympics will be a rewarding experience that will benefit the community, the participants, and you personally."

This last version is really the better approach and most likely the one your instructor will prefer.

So, you don't want to just repeat your specific purpose in the central idea statement, but you do want to provide complete information. Also, unlike the formal thesis of your English essays, the central idea statement in a speech can and should use

personal language (I, me, we, us, you, your, etc.) and should attempt to be attention-getting and audience-focused. And importantly, just like a formal thesis sentence, it must be a complete, grammatical sentence.

The point of your central idea statement in terms of your audience is to reveal and clarify the ideas or assertions you will be addressing in your speech, more commonly known as your main points, to fulfill your specific purpose. However, as you are processing your ideas and approach, you may still be working on them. Sometimes those main points will not be clear to you immediately. As much as we would like these writing processes to be straightforward, sometimes we find that we have to revise our original approach. This is why preparing a speech the night before you are giving it is a really, really bad idea. You need lots of time for the preparation and then the practice.

Sometimes you will hear the writing process referred to as "iterative." This word means, among other things, that a speech or document is not always written in the same order as the audience finally experiences it. You may have noticed that we have not said anything about the introduction of your speech yet. Even though that is the first thing the audience hears, it may be one of the last parts you actually compose. It is best to consider your speech flexible as you work on it and to be willing to edit and revise. If your instructor asks you to turn the outline in before the speech, you should be clear on how much you can revise after that. Otherwise, it helps to know that you can keep editing your speech until you deliver it, especially while you practice.



Figure 10.3.2: "Audience listens at Startup School" by Robert Scoble is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Here are some examples of pairs of specific purpose statements and central idea statements.

Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the effects of losing a pet on the elderly.

Central Idea: When elderly persons lose their animal companions, they can experience serious psychological, emotional, and physical effects.

Specific Purpose: To demonstrate to my audience the correct method for cleaning a computer keyboard.

Central Idea: Your computer keyboard needs regular cleaning to function well, and you can achieve that in four easy steps.

Specific Purpose: To persuade my political science class that labor unions are no longer a vital political force in the U.S.

Central Idea: Although for decades in the twentieth century labor unions influenced local and national elections, in this speech I will point to how their influence has declined in the last thirty years.

Specific Purpose: To motivate my audience to oppose the policy of drug testing welfare recipients.

Central Idea: Many voices are calling for welfare recipients to go through mandatory, regular drug testing, but this policy is unjust, impractical, and costly, and fair-minded Americans should actively oppose it.

Specific Purpose: To explain to my fellow civic club members why I admire Representative John Lewis.

Central Idea: John Lewis has my admiration for his sacrifices during the Civil Rights movement and his service to Georgia as a leader and U.S. Representative.

Specific Purpose: To describe how makeup is done for the TV show The Walking Dead.

Central Idea: The wildly popular zombie show The Walking Dead achieves incredibly scary and believable makeup effects, and in the next few min

Notice that in all of the above examples that neither the specific purpose nor the central idea ever exceeds one sentence. You may divide your central idea and the preview of the main points into two sentences or three sentences, depending on what your instructor directs. If your central idea consists of more than three sentences, then you probably are including too much information and taking up the time that is needed for the body of the speech. Additionally, you will have a speech trying to do too much and that goes overtime.

Problems to Avoid with Specific Purpose and Central Idea Statements

- The first problem many students have in writing their specific purpose statement has already been mentioned: specific purpose statements sometimes try to cover far too much and are too broad. For example:

  To explain to my classmates the history of ballet.

  Aside from the fact that this subject may be difficult for everyone in your audience to relate to, it is enough for a three-hour lecture, maybe even a whole course. You will probably find that your first attempt at a specific purpose statement will need refining. These examples are much more specific and much more manageable given the limited amount of time you will have.

  To explain to my classmates how ballet came to be performed and studied in the U.S.

  To explain to my classmates the difference between Russian and French ballet.

  To explain to my classmates how ballet originated as an art form in the Renaissance.

  To explain to my classmates the origin of the ballet dancers' clothing.

- The second problem with specific purpose statements is the opposite of being too broad, in that some specific purposes statements are so focused that they might only be appropriate for people who are already extremely interested in the topic or experts in a field:

  To inform my classmates of the life cycle of a new species of lima bean (botanists, agriculturalists).

  To inform my classmates about the Yellow 5 ingredient in Mountain Dew (chemists, nutritionists).

  To persuade my classmates that JIF Peanut Butter is better than Peter Pan. (organizational chefs in large institutions)

- The third problem happens when the "communication verb" in the specific purpose does not match the content; for example, persuasive content is paired with "to inform" or "to explain." If you resort to the word "why" in the thesis, it is probably persuasive.

  To inform my audience why capital punishment is unconstitutional. **(This cannot be informative since it is taking a side)**

  To persuade my audience about the three types of individual retirement accounts. **(This is not persuading the audience of anything, just informing)**

  To inform my classmates that Universal Studios is a better theme park than Six Flags over Georgia. **(This is clearly an opinion, hence persuasive)**

- The fourth problem exists when the content part of the specific purpose statement has two parts and thus uses "and." A good speech follows the KISS rule—Keep It Simple, Speaker. One specific purpose is enough. These examples cover two different topics.

  To explain to my audience how to swing a golf club and choose the best golf shoes.

  To persuade my classmates to be involved in the Special Olympics and vote to fund better classes for the intellectually disabled.

  To fix this problem, you will need to select one of the topics in these examples and speak on just that:

  To explain to my audience how to swing a golf club.

  OR

To explain to my audience how to choose the best golf shoes.

Of course, the value of this topic depends on your audience's interest in golf and your own experience as a golfer.

- The fifth problem with both specific purpose and central idea statements is related to formatting. Some general guidelines need to be followed in terms of how you write out these elements of your speech:
  - Do not write either statement as a question.
  - Always use complete sentences for central idea statements and infinitive phrases (that is, "to ….."") for the specific purpose statement.
  - Only use concrete language ("I admire Beyoncé for being a talented performer and businesswoman"), and avoid subjective or slang terms ("My speech is about why I think Beyoncé is the bomb") or jargon and acronyms ("PLA is better than CBE for adult learners.")
- Finally, the sixth problem occurs when the speech just gets off track of the specific purpose statement, in that it starts well but veers in another direction. This problem relates to the challenge of developing coherent main points, what might be called "the Roman numeral points" of the speech. The specific purpose usually determines the main points and the relevant structure. For example, if the specific purpose is:

  To inform my classmates of the five stages of grief as described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.

  There is no place in this speech for a biography of Dr. Kubler-Ross, arguments against this model of grief, therapies for those undergoing grief, or steps for the audience to take to get counseling. All of those are different specific purposes. The main points would have to be the five stages, in order, as Dr. Kubler-Ross defined them.

There are also problems to avoid in writing the central idea statement. As mentioned above, remember that:

- The specific purpose and central idea statements are not the same things, although they are related.
- The central idea statement should be clear and not complicated or wordy; it should "stand out" to the audience. As you practice delivery, you should emphasize it with your voice.
- The central idea statement should not be the first thing you say but should follow the steps of a good introduction.

Conclusion

One last word. You should be aware that all aspects of your speech are constantly going to change as you move toward actually giving your speech. The exact wording of your central idea may change and you can experiment with different versions for effectiveness. However, your specific purpose statement should not change unless there is a really good reason, and in some cases, your instructor will either discourage that, forbid it, or expect to be notified. There are many aspects to consider in the seemingly simple task of writing a specific purpose statement and its companion, the central idea statement. Writing good ones at the beginning will save you some trouble later in the speech preparation process.

Exercises

1. Pay attention to the news (in the paper, on the Internet, television, or radio). Identify two informative and two persuasive speech topics that are based in current events.
2. What if your informative speech has the specific purpose statement: To explain the biological and lifestyle cause of Type II diabetes. The assignment is a seven-minute speech, and when you practice it the first time, it is thirteen minutes long. Should you adjust the specific purpose statement? How?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Research

We live in an age where access to information is more convenient than ever before. The days of photocopying journal articles in the stacks of the library or looking up newspaper articles on microfilm are over for most. Yet, even though we have all this information at our fingertips, research skills are more important than ever. In this chapter, we will discuss how to research, what to research, and how to cite your research.

11.1: How do I Research for my Speech?

11.2: What Supporting Materials do I Need?

11.3: How do I Cite my Sources?

Reference

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11.1: How do I Research for my Speech?

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Explain the difference between primary and secondary sources;
- Understand basic library research;
- Distinguish between reliable and unreliable information on the Internet;
- Access and find reliable information on the Internet;
- Construct a short survey usable for analyzing an audience;
- Conduct short interviews for information for speeches;
- Recognize information that should be cited;

We live in an age where access to information is more convenient than ever before. The days of photocopying journal articles in the stacks of the library or looking up newspaper articles on microfilm are over for most. Yet, even though we have all this information at our fingertips, research skills are more important than ever. Our challenge now is not accessing information but discerning what information is credible and relevant. Even though it may sound inconvenient to have to physically go to the library, students who researched the digital revolution did not have to worry as much about discerning. If you found a source in the library, you could be assured of its credibility because a librarian had subscribed to or purchased that content. When you use Internet resources like Google or Wikipedia, you have no guarantees about some of the content that comes up.

The Research Process

As we noted in the "Getting Started" chapter, it's good to speak or choose a topic with which you are already familiar. So existing knowledge forms the first step of your research process. Depending on how familiar you are with a topic, you will need to do more or less background research before you actually start incorporating sources to support your speech. Background research is just a review of summaries available for your topic that helps refresh or create your knowledge about the subject. It is not the more focused and academic research that you will actually use to support and verbally cite in your speech. Figure **11.1.1** illustrates the research process. Note that you may go through some of these steps more than once.

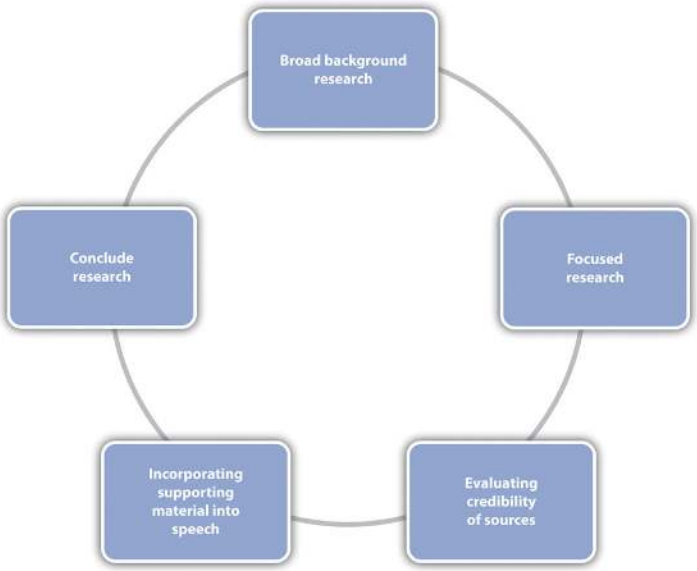


Figure **11.1.1**: **Research Process**. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing - *Chapter 9: Preparing a Speech* – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Doing research involves more than finding a few books or articles on a topic; a researcher's job is to find useful, relevant, and reliable information, which can be challenging. This chapter will help by providing an introduction to research terminology and the research process.

Primary and Secondary Sources

You may hear sources described as either “primary” or “secondary,” and understanding this distinction can help you assess what types of information are useful for your various needs.

A **primary source** is *original and first-hand*. This has different meanings depending on the context but generally refers to the product of someone’s original work, such as the results of a scientist’s study, or an author’s novel. You may access published primary sources in introductory college courses like this one, and you will definitely do so as you progress in your discipline. Keep in mind that primary sources are generally factual rather than analysis or interpretation, although not in all cases.

In your research, you more frequently use secondary sources, which are articles, books, and websites that involve analysis or interpretation of primary sources. While a scientific study would be a primary source, a magazine *article about the findings of that study* would be considered a **secondary source**.

Whether you use a primary or a secondary source depends on our purpose, topic, audience, and context. If you engage in undergraduate research in your junior or senior year and present at a conference, you will be expected to have some primary research. However, for most of your college work, you will be looking for reliable secondary sources. One way to assess the quality of a secondary source is to look at its references or bibliography. A reliable source will cite other sources to support its claims. Likewise, a well-researched speech will provide support for its argument by using evidence obtained from reliable sources.

Most researchers begin their work by evaluating the current information that exists on their topic. They may look at a combination of primary and secondary sources during this process. Their goal is to find out what is currently known about a topic and where the research may be headed. Students completing a research-based assignment will begin much the same way.

Accessing Information Through a Library

We will reiterate several times in this chapter that your first step for research in college should be library resources, **not** Google, Bing, or other general search engines. In most cases, you can still do your library research from the comfort of a computer, which makes it as accessible as Google but gives you much better results. Excellent and underutilized resources at college and university libraries are reference librarians. **Reference librarians**, unlike the people who likely staffed your high school library, are *information-retrieval experts*. At most colleges and universities, you can find a reference librarian who has at least a master’s degree in library and information sciences, and at some larger or specialized schools, reference librarians have doctoral degrees. Research can be a maze, and reference librarians can help you navigate the maze. There may be dead ends, but there’s always another way around to reach the end goal. Unfortunately, many students hit their first dead end and give up or assume that there’s not enough research out there to support their speech. Trust us, if you’ve thought of a topic to do your speech on, someone else has thought of it, too, and people have written and published about it. Reference librarians can help you find that information. We recommend that you meet with a reference librarian face-to-face and take your assignment sheet and topic idea with you. In most cases, students report that they came away with more information than they needed, which is good because you can then narrow that down to the best information. If you can’t meet with a reference librarian face-to-face, many schools now offer the option to do a live chat with a reference librarian, and you can also contact them by e-mail or phone.



Figure **11.1.2**: College and university libraries are often at the cutting edge of information retrieval for academic research. Andre Vandal – The Morrin College Library – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

The library plays an important role for researchers because materials in libraries have been selected for the information needs of their users. College and university libraries provide resources to support the academic programs of study at their institutions.

The Library Catalog

Aside from the human resources available in the library, the **library catalog** is a good place to begin searching. Since it will allow you to *search the library's collection of books, periodicals, and media*, you will have access to a lot of material that broadly covers your topic, and the information you find will help you as you work to narrow the scope of your research. Many libraries have a unique or branded name for their catalog and provide online search functionality. One helpful feature of the catalog's search tool is the ability to sort and refine search results by date, format, author, and other filter options. Additionally, library catalogs allow users to link to electronic books, videos, and other resources directly. These resources can be quite helpful, since users do not need to come to the library building, nor are these resources available only during library hours. You can usually browse your library's physical collection through an online catalog search. A trip to the library to browse is especially useful for books. Since most university libraries use the Library of Congress classification system, books are organized by topic. That means if you find a good book using the online catalog and go to the library to get it, you should take a moment to look around that book because the other books in that area will be topically related.

Searching Databases

You're already familiar with using search engines (like Google), but did you know that these tools only give you access to information that companies and people have shared for free? The content freely available online only represents a fraction of that which actually exists.

A lot of the information that isn't free is protected by paywalls. You may have tried to read an article online, but weren't able to see the full text because you were asked to pay. This can be frustrating when the content is useful for research! Fortunately, you have access to online databases through your library.

Library databases are available 24/7 and provide users with access to the full text of eBooks and articles from **periodicals**, works that are published on a regular, ongoing basis, such as newspapers, magazines, academic journals, and books from around the world. The content in library databases is available because libraries have paid to subscribe to the publications they offer. For the library user, this information is free—but you will have to search the library's databases to access it. you can also use electronic resources such as library databases. Of course, libraries also house stores of physical resources like DVDs, books, academic journals, newspapers, and popular magazines.

Note that if you are trying to use library databases remotely (not via a wired connection to the library's actual network), such as from home or on a business's free Wi-Fi network, you will probably be asked to log in to verify y that you are an authorized user of the library's materials. Because the library has paid to access these subscription resources, they protect access by asking users to verify their status. Your library can help if you aren't sure how to log in or experience difficulty when trying to do so.

While databases index newspapers and popular magazines, college-level researchers especially benefit from their inclusion of articles published in academic journals. Almost all content in academic journals is **peer-reviewed**. The authors of journal articles are experts in their subject areas, and after having conducted research on their topic, write up the results in an article that they submit for publication to a scholarly journal (*a periodical whose target audience is other experts in that disciplinary field*).

Before the editor approves the publication of an article in their journal, they send it to other scholars who are experts in the subject area. The other scholars, peers of the original author, then read the articles and evaluate them according to the standards of that discipline. Only after an article has passed the peer review process can it be published in the academic journal.

Something you may have wondered is whether the terms "scholarly," "peer-reviewed," and "academic" have different meanings when used to describe articles or the journals in which they are published. The answer is no. These terms are used interchangeably.

Historically, academic journals were primarily available in print, but today most readers access them online. When looking at a search results page, it can be challenging to figure out which articles are from popular magazines and which are from scholarly journals. Fortunately, most databases have a filter that lets you limit your results by publication type. As you continue to use the search function in databases, you will notice that it's possible to put additional controls on the displayed results, allowing you to sort and refine.

Filtering your results is just one way to ensure that you find the information you need. Another option is to modify your search technique. The easiest way to do this is to put search phrases in quotation marks. If you're looking for information about attention deficit disorder, using "attention deficit disorder" ensures that the three words stay together in the order in which you have typed them. This can be very helpful to optimize the relevance of your search results. Without quotation marks, the database will look for the words attention, deficit, and disorder. You can also combine search terms using Boolean operators (AND, OR, and NOT), try changing the search parameters, using truncation (to find similar words with the same root; typing medica* will give you results including medical, medically, medication, medications, etc.), or searching with subject headings. An example of a search using some advanced techniques is shown in Figure 11.1.3. Figure 11.1.4 clarifies how different disciplines may categorize primary vs. secondary sources.



Figure 11.1.3: Example of a search with some advanced techniques

Discipline	Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
Humanities	Creative works, diaries, letters, interviews, news reporting	Books, articles, textbooks
Sciences	Results of experiments, research, clinical trials	Books, articles, textbooks
Social Sciences	Census data, statistics, results of experiments of human behavior	Books, articles, textbooks

Figure 11.1.4: Examples of what different fields consider primary and secondary sources

Other Library Services and Resources

A library's online search tools allow you to search their extensive holdings. Know that you can (and should) ask for help if you have problems or questions. Remember that librarians are research experts and can help you to find information, select a topic, refine your search, cite your sources, and much more!

Did you know?

Many libraries offer resource-sharing services, which allow you to borrow items your library does not have available. The delivery can take a few days, so be sure to order items at least a week before you need them!

Research on the Internet

Many of the techniques you use to improve your library searches can help you online too. Keeping phrases together with quotation marks works on many sites, and you can use the minus sign (-) to filter out search terms you'd prefer not to be included. Date range filters and other limiters are available too, helping you narrow your search down even further.

Finding information online is relatively simple, so the challenge researchers face is determining what information is useful and whether it's credible. A quick assessment is easy, and here are a few questions to guide you:

- **Is the information current relative to your needs?** Information in a rapidly-changing field like science or medicine can quickly become outdated. Even social science research is time-sensitive. Laws and demographics can change quickly, and you'll want to be sure the information you're using is up-to-date.

- **Does the information address your topic?** You may not find any single source that directly addresses all facets of your approach to a topic. You can, however, use information from multiple sources to support different parts of your work.
- **Who is the source of information?** The advice of an expert in a subject may be more valuable than the opinion of a layperson or an unqualified source. On the other hand, a salesperson may know a lot about their product, but their perspective is informed by their goal of making a sale. With this in mind, you may ask yourself why was this information created?

The trustworthiness of information you find on the Internet can be harder yet to discern. While a source may have a current date listed, seem to offer relevant information, and claim to be an expert, it's important to go beyond the information they give about themselves and verify that you can believe that they are honestly representing themselves and the information they offer.

Some advice on how to effectively evaluate online information is offered by Washington State University Professor Michael Caulfield, who suggests doing the following:

- **Check for previous work:** Look around to see if someone else has already fact-checked the claim or provided a synthesis of research. Dubious claims can quickly be debunked with a Google search. Some websites that are dedicated to fact-checking include FactCheck.org, Politifact, and Snopes. The first two are focused on political claims, while the third addresses stories from various sources.
- **Go upstream to the source:** Go "upstream" to the source of the claim. Most web content is not original. Get to the source to understand the trustworthiness of the information. You can achieve this by identifying where the information originated. If an article is describing a scientific study, tracking down the original study may reveal that its significant findings weren't accurately represented.
- **Read laterally:** Once you get to the source of a claim, read what other people say about the source (publication, author, etc.). The truth is in the network. While some sources may claim to be experts in their subject areas, it may turn out that other experts in the field consider that source questionable.
- **Circle back:** If you get lost, hit dead ends, or find yourself going down an increasingly confusing rabbit hole, back up and start over knowing what you know now. You're likely to take a more informed path with different search terms and better decisions. If you feel that you are overwhelmed by the amount of information, or can't tell if sources are actually still relevant to your topic, it might be time to start over or seek assistance.

There are many "tests" or "sets of criteria" that you can find in textbooks and on websites for deciding if a website is reliable. Words and concepts such as currency, authority, accessing only certain domain names (.org or .edu as opposed to .com), and inclusion of a bibliography or references section are common. Another is writing style: does the writing style show bias (such as the use of name-calling or loaded language) or poor grammar and editing? These are all good signs that your site may have an agenda beyond the fair presentation of facts. However, your site may seem to pass muster at first sight but not really provide what you need. That is why we have included the advice from Dr. Caulfield here. For more information on this topic, check out:

https://hapgood.us/2017/03/04/how-news-literacy-gets-the-web-wrong/

https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Teach-Information/243973

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3048994

Wikipedia

One common source that many students have questions about using is Wikipedia. Most of us use Wikipedia or similar sites to look up the answers to pressing questions such as "Was Val Kilmer in the film Willow?" or "When is the next solar eclipse?" However, it is unlikely that your instructor will be satisfied with your using evidence from Wikipedia (or other Wiki-type sites).



Figure 11.1.5: Wikipedia's open format also means it doesn't generally meet the expectations for credible, scholarly research. Wikipedia – CC BY-SA 3.0.

Wikipedia revolutionized how many people retrieve information and pioneered *an open-publishing format that allowed a community of people to post, edit, and debate content*. While this is an important contribution to society, Wikipedia is not considered a scholarly or credible source. Like other encyclopedias, Wikipedia should **not** be used in college-level research, because it is not a primary source. In addition, since its content can be posted and edited by anyone, we cannot be sure of the credibility of the content. There is no guarantee that what you read will be up-to-date or correct. Sometimes Wikipedia pages display inaccurate information, including hoax articles or prank edits. Even though there are self-appointed "experts" who monitor and edit some of the information on Wikipedia, we cannot verify their credentials or the review process that information goes through before it's posted.

When it comes down to it, Wikipedia is a good place to go to obtain basic information, general knowledge, personal research, developing news stories, or trivia about your subject. You should access the primary source, footnote citation references at the bottom of the page (if there are any) to look for information elsewhere. **But saying to an audience, "my source for the information in this speech is Wikipedia" will probably do little to convince your audience that you are knowledgeable and have done adequate research for the speech.**

Types of Sources

Keeping in mind the considerations discussed in this section will help you select online sources for use in your work. They will also help you as you navigate the breadth of information on and offline in your daily life. We have already discussed most of these as available through your library database, but let's look specifically at these different types of sources that may be relevant for your speech topic. These include periodicals, newspapers, books, reference tools, interviews, and websites. You must know how to evaluate the credibility of each type of source material.

Periodicals

Periodicals include magazines and journals, as they are published periodically. Many library databases can access periodicals from around the world and from years past. A common database is Academic Search Premier (a similar version is Academic Search Complete). Many databases, like this one, allow you to narrow your search terms, which can be very helpful as you try to find good sources that are relevant to your topic.

Within your search results, you will need to distinguish between magazines and academic journals. In general, **academic journals** are considered *more scholarly and credible than magazines because most of the content in them is peer-reviewed*. The peer-review process is the most rigorous form of review, which takes several months to years and ensures that the information that is published has been vetted and approved by numerous experts on the subject. Academic journals are usually affiliated with professional organizations rather than for-profit corporations, and neither authors nor editors are paid for their contributions. For example, the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* is one of the oldest journals in communication studies and is published by the National Communication Association.



Figure **11.1.6**: The National Communication Association publishes several peer-reviewed academic journals. The National Communication Association's office in Washington D.C., courtesy of Wikimedia Commons – CC BY-SA 3.0.

As mentioned earlier, most databases have a filter that lets you limit your results to "peer-reviewed." There are also subject-specific databases you can use to find periodicals. For example, *Communication and Mass Media Complete* is a database that includes articles from hundreds of journals related to communication studies. It may be acceptable for you to include magazine sources in your speech, but you should still consider the credibility of the source. Magazines like *Scientific American* and *Time* are generally more credible and reliable than sources like *People* or *Entertainment Weekly*.

Newspapers and Books

Newspapers and books can be excellent sources but must still be evaluated for relevance and credibility. Newspapers are good for topics that are developing quickly, as they are updated daily. While there are well-known newspapers of record like the *New York Times*, smaller local papers can also be credible and relevant if your speech topic doesn't have national or international reach. You can access local, national, and international newspapers through electronic databases like LexisNexis. If a search result comes up that doesn't have a byline with an author's name or an organization like the Associated Press or Reuters cited, then it might be an editorial. **Editorials** may also have bylines, which make them *look like traditional newspaper articles even though they are opinion-based*. It is important to distinguish between news articles and editorials because editorials are usually not objective and do not go through the same review process that a news story does before it's published. It's also important to know the background of your paper. Some newspapers are more tabloid-focused or may be published by a specific interest group that has an agenda and biases. So it's usually better to go with a newspaper that is recognized as the newspaper of record for a particular area.

Books are good for a variety of subjects and are useful for in-depth research that you can't get as regularly from newspapers or magazines. Edited books with multiple chapters by different authors can be especially good to get a variety of perspectives on a topic.

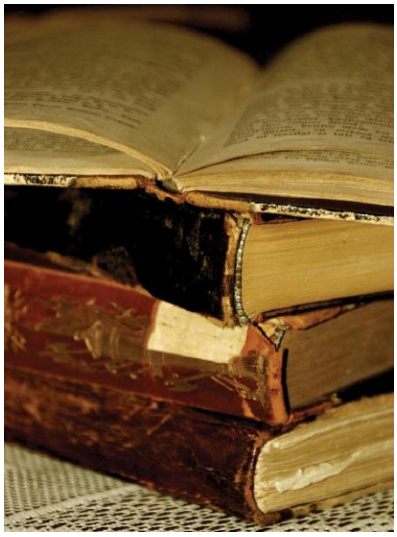


Figure **11.1.7**: Don't assume that you can't find a book relevant to a topic that is fairly recent, since books may be published within a year of a major event. Wikimedia Commons – CC BY 2.0.

To evaluate the credibility of a book, you'll want to know some things about the author. You can usually find this information at the front or back of the book. If an author is a credentialed and recognized expert in his or her area, the book will be more credible. But just because someone wrote a book on a subject doesn't mean he or she is the most credible source. For example, a quick search online brings up many books related to public speaking that are written by people who have no formal training in communication or speech. While they may have the public speaking experience that can help them get a book deal with a certain publisher, that alone wouldn't qualify them to write a textbook, as textbook authors are expected to be credentialed experts—that is, people with experience and advanced training/degrees in their area. The publisher of a book can also be an indicator of credibility. Books published by university/academic presses (University of Chicago Press, Duke University Press) are considered more credible than books published by trade presses (Penguin, Random House) because they are often peer-reviewed and they are not primarily profit-driven.

Reference Tools

Unfortunately, many college students are reluctant to give up their reliance on reference tools like dictionaries and encyclopedias. While reference tools like dictionaries and encyclopedias are excellent for providing a speaker with a background on a topic, they should **not** be the foundation of your research unless they are academic and/or specialized.

Dictionaries are handy tools when we aren't familiar with a particular word. However, citing a dictionary like *Webster's* as a source in your speech is often unnecessary. *Webster's Dictionary* is only useful when you need to do something in passing, like challenge a Scrabble word, but it isn't the best source for college-level research. You will inevitably come upon a word that you don't know while doing research. Most good authors define the terms they use within the content of their writing. In that case, it's better to use the author's definition than a dictionary definition. Also, citing a dictionary doesn't show deep research skills; it only shows an understanding of alphabetical order. So ideally you would quote or paraphrase the author's definition rather than turning to a general dictionary like *Webster's*. If you must turn to a dictionary, you should look for an academic dictionary like *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, which is the most comprehensive dictionary in the English language, with more than twenty volumes. You can't access the *OED* for free online, but most libraries pay for a subscription that you can access as a student or patron. While the *OED* is an academic dictionary, it is not specialized, and you may need a specialized dictionary when dealing with very specific or technical terms. *The Dictionary of Business and Economics* is an example of an academic and specialized dictionary.

Many students have relied on **encyclopedias** for research in high school, but most encyclopedias, like *World Book*, *Encarta*, or *Britannica*, are not primary sources. Instead, they are examples of secondary sources that aggregate, or compile, research done by others in a condensed summary. As noted earlier, reference sources like encyclopedias are excellent resources to get you informed about the basics of a topic, but at the college level, primary sources are expected. Many encyclopedias are Internet-based, which

makes them convenient, but they are still not primary sources, and their credibility should be even more scrutinized. As with dictionaries, there are some encyclopedias that are better suited for college research. The *Encyclopedia of Black America* and the *Encyclopedia of Disaster Relief* are examples of specialized academic reference sources that will often include, in each entry, an author's name and credentials and more primary source information.

Websites

We already know that utilizing library resources can help you automatically filter out content that may not be scholarly or credible since the content in research databases is selected and restricted. However, some information may be better retrieved from websites. Even though both research databases and websites are electronic sources, two key differences between them may impact their credibility. First, most of the content in research databases is or was printed but has been converted to digital formats for easier and broader access. In contrast, most of the content on websites has not been printed. Although not always the case, the exceptions to this are documents in PDF form found on web pages. You may want to do additional research or consult with your instructor to determine if that can count as a printed source. Second, most of the content on research databases has gone through editorial review, which means a professional editor or a peer editor has reviewed the material to make sure it is credible and worthy of publication. Most content on websites is not subjected to the same review process, as just about anyone with Internet access can self-publish information on a personal website, blog, wiki, or social media page. So what sort of information may be better retrieved from websites, and how can we evaluate the credibility of a website?

Most well-known organizations have official websites where they publish information related to their mission. If you know there is an organization related to your topic, you may want to see if they have an official website. It is almost always better to get information from an official website because it is then more likely to be considered primary source information. However, keep in mind that organizations may have a bias or a political agenda that affects the information they put out. If you do get information from an official website, make sure to include that in your verbal citation to help establish your credibility. Official reports are also often best found on websites, as they rarely appear in their full form in periodicals, books, or newspapers. Government agencies, nonprofits, and other public service organizations often compose detailed and credible reports on a wide variety of topics.



Figure 11.1.8: The US Census Bureau's official website is a great place to find current and credible statistics related to population numbers and demographic statistics. U.S. Census Bureau – public domain.

As we mentioned earlier, you must evaluate the credibility of a website by determining the site's accountability. By **accountability**, we mean determining *who is ultimately responsible for the content put out and whose interests the content meets*. The more information that is included on a website, the better able you will be to determine its accountability. Ideally, all or most of the following information would be included: organization/agency name, author's name and contact information, the date the information was posted or published, name and contact information for the person in charge of web content (i.e., web editor or webmaster), and a link to information about the organization/agency/business mission. While all this information doesn't have to be present to warrant the use of the material, the less accountable information is available, the more you should scrutinize the information. You can also begin to judge the credibility of a website by its domain name. Some common domain names are *.com*, *.net*, *.org*, *.edu*, *.mil*, and *.gov*. For each type of domain, there are questions you may ask that will help you evaluate the site's

credibility. You can see a summary of these questions in Figure **11.1.10**: “Website Domain Names and Credibility”. Note that some domain names are marked as “restricted” and others aren’t. When a domain is restricted, *.mil* for example, a person or group wanting to register that domain name has to prove that their content is appropriate for the guidelines of the domain name. Essentially, this limits access to the information published on those domain names, which increases the overall credibility.

Figure 11.1.9: Website Domain Names and Credibility

Domain Name	Purpose	Restricted?	Questions to Ask
.com, .net	Commercial	No	Is the information posted for profit? Is the information posted influenced by advertisers?
.org	Mostly non-commercial organizations	No	What is the mission of the organization? Who is responsible for the content? Is the information published to enhance public knowledge or to solicit donations?
.edu	Higher education	Yes	Who published the information? (the institution or an administrator, faculty member, staff member, or student)
.mil	US military	Yes	Most information on .mil sites will be credible since it is not published for profit and only limited people have access to post information.
.gov	US government	Yes	Most information on .gov sites will be credible since it is not published for profit and only limited people have access to post information.

Conducting Your Own Research

Up to this point, we have discussed finding sources (both primary and secondary) that have been published. It is also possible for you to use some truly firsthand information in your speeches by conducting your own primary research.

Surveys

One type of primary research you can use is **surveys**. Your instructor may ask you to construct a short survey, or *questions used to learn something about your audience before the speech*. A survey can be helpful if the questions are well-written and if the survey is not too long.

For the most part, a survey should use objective questions. That means questions with a few predetermined answers for the survey-takers to choose from, such as **multiple-choice**, **true-false**, **I agree/Neutral/I disagree**, or **yes-no**. If the researcher wants to construct a multiple-choice question, he or she must try to provide all the reasonable options.

For example, if a student wanted to give a speech about why consumers should not buy gas with ethanol and used this question:

> *What grade of gas do you buy for your car? Regular, Medium, High Octane/Premium*

The survey writer left out the option of "diesel" and failed to account for students who don’t own or drive a car, who are unsure what grade of gasoline they buy, or who buy more than one grade of gasoline.

Another misstep to avoid is asking **open-ended questions**. If you wanted to know what grocery store in the area your audience patronized, this question would not be ideal:

> *At which grocery store does your family shop?*
>
> _____

This alternate version would be more useful and easy to interpret:

> *At which of these grocery stores does your family shop?*
>
> - *Food City*
> - *Target*
> - *Publix*
> - *Kroger*
> - *Save-a-Lot*
> - *Walmart*
> - *Shoprite*
> - *Other:* _____

Allowing the people taking your survey to select more than one of the responses is best since few people shop at just one store. Or you could phrase the question, "At which of these grocery stores does your family spend most of its money?" There would only be one answer in that case, and it would tell you more specific information.

The criteria for what constitutes a "short" survey are fluid, but five questions would probably be enough to let you know what you need. A survey taker might become tired of answering a long list of questions. Other things to keep in mind when writing questions are to avoid using too vague or too personal questions, because respondents may not know how or may not want to answer. Furthermore, to get honest responses, it helps to write questions in an unbiased way. "Do you favor raising the minimum wage in our state to $15.00 per hour?" is more balanced than "Do you believe that business owners in our state should be required to treat their employees better by having to raise their minimum wage to a more reasonable and fair $15.00 per hour?" You also would not want to insult your survey takers with questions such as "Do you agree that all math majors are antisocial?"

Finally, you will administer the survey. There are many free online tools for surveys; two popular options are Survey Monkey and Google Forms. These are easy to use and helpful for short surveys (you might need to pay a fee for longer surveys or send surveys to many people). You can also conduct surveys in person, but that takes longer and would not be anonymous, meaning people may be less likely to answer honestly. Finally, your instructor may ask you to make paper copies and pass them around the class.

You can use a variety of means to conduct surveys. Using surveys is valuable because knowing your audience's level of knowledge and their attitudes about your topic ahead of time can help create an audience-centered speech.

Interviews

When interviewing for a speech, you should access a person who has expertise in or direct experience with your speech topic. If you follow the suggestions for choosing a topic that was mentioned earlier, you may already know something about your speech topic and may have connections to people who would be good interview subjects. Previous employers, internship supervisors, teachers, community leaders, or even relatives may be appropriate interviewees, given your topic. If you do not have a connection to someone you can interview, you can often find someone via the Internet who would be willing to answer some questions. Many informative and persuasive speech topics relate to current issues, and most current issues have organizations that represent their needs. For an informative speech on ageism or a persuasive speech on lowering the voting age, a quick Internet search for "youth rights" leads you to the webpage for the National Youth Rights Association. Like most organization web pages, you can click on the "Contact Us" link to get information for leaders in the organization. You could also connect to members of the group through Facebook and interview young people who are active in the organization. For example, if you are going to give a speech about the effects of the No Child Left Behind policy or the Common Core standards, it makes sense to talk to an elementary school principal for their knowledge and expertise on the issue.

Once you have identified a good interviewee, you will want to begin researching and preparing your questions. **Open-ended questions** *cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no" and can provide descriptions and details that will add to your speech*. Quotes

and paraphrases from your interview can add a personal side to a topic or at least convey potentially complicated information in a more conversational and interpersonal way.

Closed questions can be *answered with one or two words and can provide a starting point to get to more detailed information if the interviewer has prepared follow-up questions*. Unless the guidelines or occasion for your speech suggest otherwise, you should balance your interview data with the other sources in your speech. Don't let your references to the interview take over your speech.



Figure **11.1.10**: Even if you record an interview, take some handwritten notes and make regular eye contact with the interviewee to show that you are paying attention. David Davies – Interviews – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Tips for Conducting Interviews

1. **Do preliminary research to answer basic questions.** Many people and organizations have information available publicly. Don't waste interview time asking questions like "What year did your organization start?" when you can find that on the website.
2. **Plan questions ahead of time.** Even if you know the person, treat it as a formal interview so you can be efficient.
3. **Ask open-ended questions that can't be answered with only a yes or no.** Questions that begin with *how* and *why* are generally more open-ended than *doing* and *did* questions. Make sure you have follow-up questions ready.
4. **Use the interview to ask for the personal side of an issue that you may not be able to find in other resources.** Personal narratives about experiences can resonate with an audience.
5. **Make sure you are prepared.** If interviewing in person, have paper, pens, and a recording device if you're using one. Test your recording device ahead of time. If interviewing over the phone, make sure you have good service so you don't drop the call and that you have enough battery power on your phone. When interviewing on the phone or via video chat, make sure distractions (e.g., barking dogs) are minimized.
6. **Whether the interview is conducted face-to-face, over the phone, or via video (e.g., Skype), you must get permission to record.** Recording can be useful, as it increases accuracy and the level of detail taken away from the interview. Most smartphones have free apps now that allow you to record face-to-face or phone conversations.
7. **Whether you record or not, take written notes during the interview.** Aside from writing the interviewee's responses, you can also take note of follow-up questions that come to mind or notes on the nonverbal communication of the interviewee.
8. **Mention ahead of time if you think you'll have follow-up questions, so the interviewee can expect further contact.**
9. **Reflect and expand on your notes soon after the interview.** It's impossible to transcribe everything during the interview, but you will remember much of what you didn't have time to write down and can add it in.
10. **Follow up with a thank-you note.** People are busy, and thanking them for their time and the information they provided will be appreciated.

Definition: Word

- Library resources like databases and reference librarians are more suitable for college-level research than general search engines.
- Primary sources are always preferred over secondary sources
- The credibility of your sources should be evaluated.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: Identify some ways that research skills are helpful in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic.
2. Go to the library webpage for your school. What are some resources that will be helpful for your research? Identify at least two library databases and at least one reference librarian. If you need help with research, what resources are available?
3. What are some websites that you think are credible for doing college-level research? Why? What are some websites that are not credible? Why?

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11.2: What Supporting Materials do I Need?

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the use of supporting materials.
2. Identify various types of supporting materials.

As you are researching for your speeches, we discussed that it is not a totally linear process. It would be nice if the process was like following a recipe, but it loops back and forth as you move toward crafting something that will effectively present your ideas and research. Even as you practice, you will make small changes to your basic outline, since the way something looks on paper and the way it sounds are sometimes different. For example, long sentences may look intelligent on paper, but they are hard to say in one breath and hard for the audience to understand. You will also find it necessary to use more repetition or restatement in oral delivery.

This section is about what you are searching for in your research, supporting materials. We will discuss: what they are, what they do, and how to use them effectively. Hopefully, you have already been thinking about how to support your ideas when you were finding a topic and crafting a central idea. Supporting material also relates directly to the previously mentioned presentation aids. Whereas presentation aids are visual or auditory supporting materials, this chapter will deal with verbal supporting materials.

Using your supporting materials effectively is essential because, as an audience, we crave detail and specifics. Let's say you are discussing going out to eat with a group of friends. You suggest a certain restaurant and your friends make a comment about the restaurant that you have not heard or don't accept at face value, so you ask in some way for an explanation, clarification, or proof. If they say, "Their servers are really rude," you might ask, "What did they do?" If they say, "Their food is delicious," you might ask, "What dish is good?" Likewise, if they say, "The place is nasty," you will want to know what their health rating is or why your friends made this statement. **We want to know specifics and are not satisfied with vagueness.** Thinking about who your audience is and what they know and would like to know will help you tailor your information. Also try to incorporate **proxemic** information, meaning *information that is geographically relevant to your audience*. For example, if delivering a speech about prison reform to an audience made up of Californians, citing statistics from North Carolina prisons would not be as proxemic as citing information from California prisons. The closer you can get the information to the audience, the better.

Supporting material can be thought of as the specifics that make your ideas, arguments, assertions, points, or concepts real and concrete. Sometimes supporting materials are referred to as the "meat" on the bones of the outline, but we also like to think of them as pegs you create in the audience's mind to hang the ideas on. Another even more useful idea is to think of them as pillars or supports for a bridge (Figure 11.2.1). Without these supports, the bridge would just be a piece of concrete that would not hold up once cars start to cross it. Similarly, the points and arguments you are making in your speech may not hold up without the material to "support" what you are saying.



Figure 11.2.1: "Strength" by hernanpba is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Of course, all supporting materials are not considered equal. Some are better at some functions or for some speeches than others. In general, there are two basic ways to think about the role of supporting materials. Either they:

1. **clarify, explain, or provide specifics (and therefore understanding) for the audience**, or
2. **prove and back up arguments and therefore persuade the audience.**

Of course, some can do both.

You might ask, how much supporting material is enough? The time you are allowed or required to speak will largely determine that. As we will discuss in your "Outlining" chapter, the supporting materials are found in the subpoints of your outline (A, B, etc.) and sub-subpoints (1, 2, etc.) You can see clearly on the outline how many you have and can omit one if time constraints demand that. However, in our experience as public speaking instructors, we find that students often struggle with having enough supporting materials. We often comment on a student's speech that we wanted the student to answer more of the "what, where, who, how, why, when," questions and add more description, proof, or evidence because their ideas were vague.

Students often struggle with the difference between the "main idea" and "supporting ideas." For example, in this list, you will quickly recognize a commonality.

- ***Chocolate***
- ***Vanilla***
- ***Strawberry***
- ***Butter Pecan***

Of course, they are popular flavors of ice cream. The main idea is "Popular Flavors of Ice Cream" and the individual flavors are supporting materials to clarify the main idea; they "hold" it up for understanding and clarification. If the list were:

- ***Rocky Road***
- ***Honey Jalapeno Pickle***
- ***Banana Split***
- ***Chocolate***
- ***Wildberry Lavender***

You would recognize two or three as ice cream flavors (not as popular) but #2 and #5 do not seem to fit the list (Covington, 2013). But you still recognize them as types of something and infer from the list that they have to do with ice cream flavors. "Ice cream flavors" is the general subject and the flavors are the particulars.

Those examples were easy. Let's look at this one. One of the words in this list is the general, and the rest are the particulars.

- ***Love***
- ***Emotion***
- ***Sadness***
- ***Disgust***
- ***Tolerance***

Emotion is a general category, and the list here shows specific emotions. Here is another:

- ***Spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast cancer.***
- ***Pets who live in states with high rates of spaying/neutering live longer.***
- ***Your pet's health is positively affected by being spayed or neutered.***
- ***Spaying lessens the increased urge to roam.***
- ***Male pets who are neutered eliminate their chances of getting testicular and prostate cancer.***

Which one is the main point (the general idea), and which are the supporting points that include evidence to prove the main point? You should see that the third bullet point ("Your pet's health is positively affected . . .") would be a main point or argument in a persuasive speech on spaying or neutering your pet. The basic outline for the speech might look something like this:

- **Spaying or neutering your pet is good for public health.**
- **Spaying or neutering your pet is good for your pet's health.**
- **Spaying or neutering your pet is good for your family's life and budget.**

Of course, each of the four supporting points in this example ("helps uterine cancer in female pets, "etc.) cannot just be made up. The speaker would need to refer to or cite reliable statistics or testimony from veterinarians, researchers, public health organizations, and humane societies. For that reason, here is the more specific support, which you would use in a speech to be ethical and credible. Notice that the subpoints and sub-subpoints in this example use statistics and specific details to support the claims being made and provides sources.

---

2. Spaying or neutering your pet is good for your pet's health.

A. Spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast cancer, which is fatal in about 50 percent of dogs and 90 percent of cats, as found in the online article "Top Ten Reasons to Spay or Neuter Your Pet," written in 2015 and posted on the website for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

B. The article also states that pets who live in the states with the highest rates of spaying/neutering also live the longest.

1. **According to Natalie DiBlasio, writing for *USA Today* on May 7 of 2013, in Mississippi, the lowest-ranking state for pet longevity, 44% of the dogs are not neutered or spayed.**
2. **She goes on to say that other issues affecting pet longevity have to do with climate, heartworm, and the income of owners.**

C. The Human Society of America's website features the August 2014 article, "Why You Should Spay/Neuter Your Pet," which states that spaying lessens their urge to roam, exposure to fights with other animals, getting struck by cars, and other mishaps.

D. Also according to the same article, male pets who are neutered eliminate their chances of getting testicular and prostate cancer.

With all the sources available to you through reliable Internet and published sources, finding information is not difficult. Recognizing supporting information from the general idea you are trying to support or prove is more difficult, as is providing an adequate citation.

Along with clarifying and proving, supporting materials, especially narrative ones, also make your speech much more interesting and attention-getting. Ultimately, you will be perceived as a more credible speaker if you provide clarifying, **probative** (*proof-giving and logical*), and interesting supporting materials.

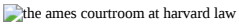


Figure **11.2.2**: "The Ames Courtroom at Harvard Law" by alist is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Types of Supporting Materials

Essentially, there are seven types of supporting materials: examples, narratives, definitions, descriptions, historical and scientific facts, statistics, and testimony. Each provides a different type of support, and you will want to choose the supporting materials that best help you make the point you want to get across to your audience.

Examples

This type of supporting material is the first and easiest to use but also easy to forget. **Examples** are almost always short, but *concrete specific instances to illuminate a concept*. They are designed to give audiences a reference point. If you were describing a type of architecture, you would obviously show visual aids of it and give verbal descriptions of it, but you could say, "You pass an example of this type of architecture every time you go downtown—City Hall." An example is a cited case that is representative of a larger whole. Examples are especially beneficial when presenting information that an audience may not be familiar with. An example must be quickly understandable, something the audience can pull out of their memory or experience quickly.

You may pull examples directly from your research materials, making sure to cite the source. The following is an example used in a speech about the negative effects of standardized testing: "Standardized testing makes many students anxious, and even ill. On March 14, 2002, the *Sacramento Bee* reported that some standardized tests now come with instructions indicating what teachers should do with a test booklet if a student throws up on it."

You may also cite examples from your personal experience, if appropriate: “I remember being sick to my stomach while waiting for my SAT to begin.”

You may also use **hypothetical examples**, which can be useful when you need to *provide an example that is extraordinary or goes beyond most people’s direct experience*. Capitalize on this opportunity by incorporating vivid descriptions into the example that appeal to the audience’s senses. Always make sure to indicate when you are using a hypothetical example, as it would be unethical to present an example as real when it is not. Including the word "imagine" or something similar in the first sentence of the example can easily do this.

Whether real or hypothetical, examples used as supporting material can be brief or extended. Brief examples are usually one or two sentences, as you can see in the following hypothetical example:

> “Imagine that your child, little sister, or nephew has earned good grades for the past few years of elementary school, loves art class, and also plays on the soccer team. You hear the unmistakable sounds of crying when he or she comes home from school and you find out that art and soccer have been eliminated because students did not meet the federal guidelines for performance on standardized tests.”

Brief examples are useful when *the audience is already familiar with a concept or during a review*. **Extended examples**, sometimes called illustrations, are *several sentences long and can be effective in introductions or conclusions to get the audience’s attention or leave a lasting impression*. It is important to think about relevance and time limits when considering using an extended illustration. Since most speeches are given within time constraints, you want to make sure the extended illustration is relevant to your speech purpose and thesis and that it doesn’t take up a disproportionate amount of the speech. If a brief example or series of brief examples would convey the same content and create the same tone as the extended example, then, obviously, go with brevity.

The key to effectively using examples in your speeches is this: what is an example to you may not be an example to your audience if they have a different experience. Experienced speakers cannot use the same examples or pop culture references they used in class twenty years earlier. Television shows from twenty years ago are pretty meaningless to audiences today. Time and age are not the only reasons an example may not work with the audience. If you are a huge soccer fan speaking to a group who barely knows soccer, using a well-known soccer player as an example of perseverance or overcoming discrimination in the sports world may not communicate. It may only leave the audience members scratching their heads.

Additionally, one good, appropriate example is worth several less apt ones. Keep in mind that in the distinction between supporting materials that prove, those that clarify, and those that do both, examples are used to clarify.

Narratives

Narratives are *stories or anecdotes that are useful in speeches to interest the audience and clarify, dramatize, and emphasize ideas*. They have, if done well, strong emotional power. They can be used in the introduction, the body, and the conclusion of the speech. They can be short, as anecdotes usually are. Think of the stories you often see in *Readers’ Digest*, human interest stories on the local news, or what you might post on Facebook about a bad experience you had at the DMV. They could be longer, although they should not take up large portions of the speech.

Narratives can be personal, literary, historical, or hypothetical.

Personal narratives can be helpful in situations where you desire to:

- **Relate to the audience on a human level, especially if they may see you as competent but not really similar or connected to them.**
- **Build your credibility by mentioning your experience with a topic.**

Of course, personal narratives must be true. They must also not portray you as more competent, experienced, brave, intelligent, etc., than you are; in other words, along with being truthful in using personal narratives, you should be reasonably humble.

An example of a **literary narrative** might be one of Aesop’s fables, a short story by O’Henry, or an appropriate tale from another culture. Keep in mind that because of their power, stories tend to be remembered more than other parts of the speech. Do you want the story to overshadow your content? Scenes from films would be another example of a literary narrative, but as with examples, you must consider the audience’s frame of reference and if they will have seen the film.

Historical narratives (sometimes called documented narratives) have power because they can also prove an idea as well as clarify one. In using these, you should treat them as fact and therefore give a citation as to where you found the historical narrative. By "historical" we do not mean the story refers to something that happened many years ago, only that it has happened in the past and there were witnesses to validate the happening.

If you were trying to argue for the end to the death penalty because it leads to unjust executions, one good example of a person who was executed and then found innocent afterward would be both emotional and probative. Here, be careful of using theatrical movies as your source of historical narrative. Hollywood likes to change history to make the story they want. For example, many people think Braveheart is historically accurate, but it is off on many key points—even the kilts, which were not worn by the Scots until the 1600s.



Figure **11.2.3**: "Moving Stories" by Het Nieuwe Instituut is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Hypothetical narratives are ones that could happen but have not yet. To be effective, they should be based on reality. Here are two examples:

> *Picture this incident: You are standing in line at the grocery checkout, reading the headlines on the Star and National Enquirer for a laugh, checking your phone. Then, the middle-aged man in front of you grabs his shoulder and falls to the ground, unconscious. What would you do in a situation like this? While it has probably never happened to you, people have medical emergencies in public many times a day. Would you know how to respond?*

> *Imagine yourself in this situation. It is 3:00 in the morning. You are awakened from a pretty good sleep by a dog barking loudly in the neighborhood. You get up and see green lights coming into your house from the backyard. You go in the direction of the lights and unlock your back door and there, right beside your deck, is an alien spaceship. The door opens and visitors from another planet come out and invite you in, and for the next hour, you tour their ship. You can somehow understand them because their communication abilities are far advanced from ours. Now, back to reality. If you were in a foreign country, you would not be able to understand a foreign language unless you had studied it. That is why you should learn a foreign language in college.*

Obviously, the second is so "off-the-wall" that the audience would be wondering about the connection, although it definitely does attract attention. If using a hypothetical narrative, be sure that it is clear that the narrative is hypothetical, not factual. Because of their attention-getting nature, hypothetical narratives are often used in introductions.

Definitions

When we use the term "definition" here as supporting material, we are not talking about something you can easily find from the dictionary or from the first thing that comes up on Google, such as shown in Figure **11.2.4**.

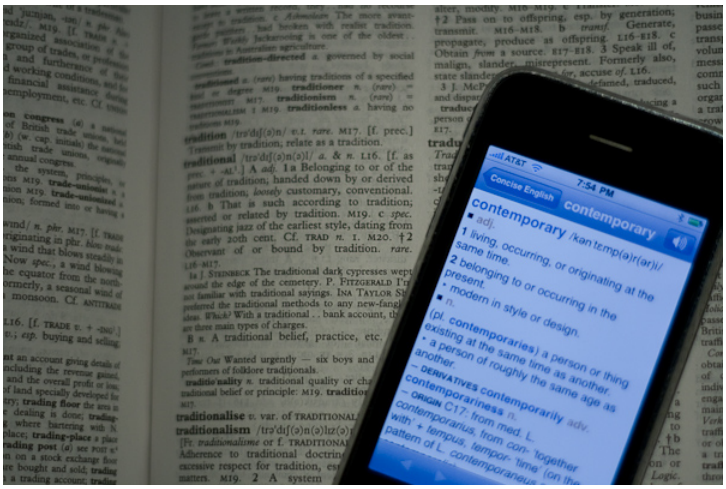


Figure **11.2.4**: Since quoting a dictionary definition during a speech is difficult, it's better to put a definition into your own words based on how it is defined in the original source in which it appeared. Julian Bucknall – Dictionaries – CC BY-NC 2.0.

First, using a dictionary definition does not really show your audience that you have researched a topic (anyone can look up a definition in a few seconds). Secondly, does the audience need a definition of a word like "love," "bravery," or "commitment?" They may consider it insulting for you to provide them the definition of those words.

To **define** means to set limits on something; defining a word is *setting limits on what it means, how the audience should think about the word, and/or how you will use it*. You only need to define words that would be unfamiliar to the audience or words that you want to use in a specialized way.

You need to anticipate audience confusion and define legal, medical, military, technical, or other forms of "jargon" or "slang." Some of these words may be in foreign languages, such as Latin (*habeas corpus, quid pro quo*). Some of them may be acronyms; CBE is a term being used currently in higher education that means "Competency-Based Education." That is part of a definition, but not a full one—what is "competency-based education?" To answer that question, you should do your best to find an officially accepted definition and cite it.

You may want to use a **stipulated definition** early in your speech. In this case, you clearly tell the audience how you are going to use a word or phrase in your speech."*When I use the phrase 'liberal democracy' in this speech, I am using it in the historical sense of a constitution, representative government, and elected officials, not in the sense of any particular issues that are being debated today between progressives and conservatives."*

This is a helpful technique and makes sure your audience understands you, but you would only want to do this for terms that have confusing or controversial meanings for some. Keep in mind that repeating a definition verbatim from a dictionary often leads to fluency hiccups, because definitions are not written to be read aloud. It's a good idea to put the definition into your own words (still remembering to cite the original source) to make it easier for you to deliver.

Classification and Differentiation

> *This is a fancy way of saying "X is a type of Y, but it is different from the other Ys in that . . ." "A bicycle is a type of vehicle that has two wheels, handlebars instead of a steering wheel, and is powered by the feet of the driver." Obviously, you know what a bicycle is and it does not need defining, so here are some better examples:*
>
> *Laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding (LAGB) is a **(type of)** surgical procedure that **(how is it different)** involves the placement of an adjustable silicone belt around the upper portion of the stomach using a laparoscope. The band can be tightened by adding saline to fill the band like blowing air into a doughnut-shaped balloon. The band is connected to a port that is placed under the skin of the abdomen. This port is used to introduce or remove saline into the band.*
>
> *Gestational diabetes is a **(type of)** diabetic condition **(how is it different)** that appears during pregnancy and usually goes away after the birth of the baby.*
>
> *Social publishing platforms are a **(type of)** social medium where **(how is it different)** long and short-form written content can be shared with other users.*

Operational Definitions

Operational definitions give examples of an action or idea to define it. If we were to define “quid pro quo sexual harassment” operationally, we might use a hypothetical narrative of a female employee who is pressured by her supervisor to date him and told she must go out with him socially to get a promotion. Operational definitions do not have to be this dramatic, but they do draw a picture and answer the question, “What does this look like in real life?” rather than using synonyms to define.

Definition by Contrast or Comparison

You can define a term or concept by **comparison** or *telling what it is similar to or different from*. This method requires the audience to have an understanding of whatever you are using as the point of contrast or comparison. When alcoholism or drug addiction is defined as a disease, that is a comparison. Although not caused by a virus or bacteria, addiction disorder has other qualities that are disease-like.

When you are defining, by **contrast**, you are pointing *how a concept or term is distinct from another more familiar one*. For example, “pop culture” is defined as different from “high culture” in that, traditionally, popular culture has been associated with people of lower socioeconomic status (i.e. less wealth or education). High culture, on the other hand, is associated with the “official” culture of the more highly educated within the upper classes. Here, the definition of popular culture is clarified by highlighting the differences between it and high culture.

A similar form of definition by contrast is defining by **negation**, *which is stipulating what something is not*. This famous quotation from Nelson Mandela is an example: “I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.” Here, Mandela is helping us draw limits around a concept by saying what it is not.

Analogies involve *a comparison of ideas, items, or circumstances*. When you compare two things that actually exist, you are using a literal analogy—for example, “Germany and Sweden are both European countries that have had nationalized health care for decades.” Another type of literal comparison is a historical analogy. In Mary Fisher’s now famous 1992 speech to the Republican National Convention, she compared the silence of many US political leaders regarding the HIV/AIDS crisis to that of many European leaders in the years before the Holocaust.

A **figurative analogy** *compares things that are not normally related, often relying on metaphor, simile, or other figurative language devices*. In the following example, wind and revolution are compared: “Just as the wind brings changes in the weather, so does revolution bring change to countries.”

When you compare differences, you are highlighting contrast—for example, “Although the United States is often thought of as the most medically advanced country in the world, other Western countries with nationalized health care have lower infant mortality rates and higher life expectancies.” To use analogies effectively and ethically, you must choose ideas, items, or circumstances to compare that are similar enough to warrant the analogy. The more similar the two things you’re comparing, the stronger your support. If an entire speech on nationalized health care was based on comparing the United States and Sweden, then the analogy isn’t too strong, since Sweden has approximately the same population as the state of North Carolina. Using the analogy without noting this large difference would be misrepresenting your supporting material. You could disclose the discrepancy and use other forms of supporting evidence to show that despite the population difference the two countries are similar in other areas to strengthen your speech.

Descriptions

The key to description is to think in terms of the five senses: sight (visual; how does the thing look in terms of color, size, shape), hearing (auditory; volume, musical qualities), taste (gustatory; sweet, bitter, salty, sour, gritty, smooth, chewy), smell (olfactory; sweet, rancid, fragrant, aromatic, musky), and feel (tactile; rough, silky, nubby, scratchy). The words **kinesthetic** (movement of the body) and **organic** (feelings related to the inner workings of the body) can be added to those senses to describe an internal physical feeling, such as straining muscles or pain **(kinesthetic)** and nausea or the feelings of heightened emotions **(organic)**.

Description as a method of support also depends on details or answering the five questions of what, where, how, who, when. To use description, you must dig deeper into your vocabulary and think concretely. This example shows that progression.

- ***Furniture***

- ***A chair***
- ***A lounge chair***
- ***An Art Deco lounge chair***
- ***An old green velvet upholstered wooden Art Deco lounge chair.***
- ***An old green velvet upholstered wooden Art Deco lounge chair with several scratches on the legs.***

As you add more description, two things happen. The “camera focus” becomes clearer, but you also add tone or attitude. A recliner is one thing, but who buys a lime green velvet recliner? And someone sat in it smoked and was sloppy about it. In this case, the last line is probably too much description unless you want to paint a picture of a careless person with an odd taste in furniture.



Figure 11.2.5: "SOLD: Art Deco chair, paired with settee" by TheLivingRoominKenmore is licensed under CC BY 2.0

A description is useful as supporting material in terms of describing processes. Describing processes requires detail and not taking for granted what the audience already knows. Some instructors use the “peanut butter sandwich” example to make this point: How would you describe making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich to someone who had never seen a sandwich, peanut butter, or jelly? You would need to put yourself in their shoes to describe the process and not assume they know that the peanut butter and jelly go on the inside, facing surfaces of the bread and that two pieces of bread are involved.

Historic and Scientific Fact

This type of supporting material is useful for clarification but is especially useful for proving a point. President John Adams is quoted as saying, “Facts are stubborn things,” but that does not mean everyone accepts every fact as a fact, or that everyone is capable of distinguishing a fact from an opinion. A fact is defined by the Urban Dictionary as “The place most people in the world tend to think their opinions reside.” This is a humorous definition, but often true about how we approach facts. The meaning of “fact” is complicated by the context in which it is being used. The National Center for Science Education (2008) defines fact this way:

> *In science, an observation that has been repeatedly confirmed and for all practical purposes is accepted as ‘true.’ Truth in science, however, is never final and what is accepted as a fact today may be modified or even discarded tomorrow.*

Another source explains fact this way:

> *[Fact is] a truth known by actual experience or observation. The hardness of iron, the number of ribs in a squirrel’s body, the existence of fossil trilobites, and the like are all facts. Is it a fact that electrons orbit around atomic nuclei? Is it a fact that Brutus stabbed Julius Caesar? Is it a fact that the sun will rise tomorrow? None of us has observed any of these things - the first is an inference from a variety of different observations, the second is reported by Plutarch and other historians who lived close enough in time and space to the event that we trust their report, and the third is an inductive inference after repeated observations. (“Scientific Thought: Facts, Hypotheses, Theories, and all that stuff”)*

Without getting into a philosophical dissertation on the meaning of truth, for our purposes facts are pieces of information with established “backup.” You can cite who discovered the fact and how other authorities have supported it. Some facts are so common that most people don’t know where they started—who actually discovered that the water molecule is two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen (H_2O)? But we could find out if we wanted to (it was, by the way, the 18th-century chemist Henry Cavendish). In

using scientific and historical facts in your speech, do not take citations for granted. If it is a fact worth saying and a fact new to the audience, assume you should cite the source of the fact, getting as close to the original as possible.

Also, the difference between a historical narrative (mentioned above) and a historical fact has to do with length. A historical fact might just be a date, place, or action, such as “President Ronald Reagan was shot by John Hinckley on March 30, 1981, in front of Washington, D.C. Hilton Hotel.” A historical narrative would go into much more detail and add dramatic elements, such as this assassination attempt from the point of view of Secret Service agents.

Statistics

Statistics are misunderstood. First, the meaning of the term is misunderstood. **Statistics** are not just numbers or numerical facts. The essence of statistics is *the collection, analysis, comparison, and interpretation of numerical data, understanding its comparison with other numerical data*. For example, it is a numerical fact that the population of the U.S., according to the 2010 census, was 308,700,000. This is a 9.7% increase from the 2000 census; this comparison is a statistic. However, for the purpose of simplicity, we will deal with both numerical facts and real statistics in this section.

Statistics are very credible in our society, as evidenced by their frequent use by news agencies, government offices, politicians, and academics. As a speaker, you can capitalize on the power of statistics if you use them appropriately. Unfortunately, statistics are often misused by speakers who intentionally or unintentionally misconstrue the numbers to support their argument without examining the context from which the statistic emerged. All statistics are contextual, so plucking a number out of a news article or a research study and including it in your speech without taking the time to understand the statistic is unethical.

Although statistics are popular as supporting evidence, they can also be boring. There will inevitably be people in your audience who are not good at processing numbers. Even people who are good with numbers have difficulty processing through a series of statistics presented orally. Remember that we have to adapt our information to listeners who don’t have the luxury of pressing a pause or rewind button. For these reasons, it’s a good idea to avoid using too many statistics and to use startling examples when you do use them. Startling statistics should defy our expectations. When you give the audience a large number that they would expect to be smaller or vice versa, you will be more likely to engage them, as the following example shows: “Did you know that 1.3 billion people in the world do not have access to electricity? That’s about 20 percent of the world’s population according to a 2009 study on the International Energy Agency’s official website.”

You should also repeat key statistics at least once for emphasis. In the previous example, the first time we hear the statistic "1.3 billion," we don’t have any context for the number. Translating that number into a percentage in the next sentence repeats the key statistic, which the audience now has context for, and repackages the information into a percentage, which some people may better understand. You should also round long numbers up or down to make them easier to speak. Make sure that rounding the number doesn’t distort its significance. Rounding 1,298,791,943 to 1.3 billion, for example, makes the statistic more manageable and doesn’t alter the basic meaning. It is also beneficial to translate numbers into something more concrete for visual or experiential learners by saying, for example, “That’s equal to the population of four Unites States of America.” While it may seem easy to throw some numbers in your speech to add to your credibility, it takes more work to make them impactful, memorable, and effective.

Statistics are also misunderstood because the science of statistics is difficult. Even terms like mean, median, and mode often confuse people. Before you can use statistics in a speech, you should have a basic understanding of them.

Mean is the same as *the mathematical average*, something you learned to do early in math classes. Add up the figures and divide by the number of figures.

The **median**, however, is *the middle number in a distribution*. If all salaries of ballplayers in MLB were listed from highest to lowest, the one in the exact middle of the list would be the median. You can tell from this that it probably will not be the same as the average, and it rarely is; however, the terms “median” and “mean” are often interchanged carelessly. **Mode** is the name for the *most frequently occurring number in the list*. As an example, Figure **11.2.6** is a list of grades from highest to lowest that students might make on a midterm in a class. The placement of mean, median, and mode are noted.

Percentages have to do with ratios. There are many other terms you would be introduced to in a statistics class, but the point remains: be careful of using a statistic that sounds impressive unless you know what it represents. There is an old saying about “figures don’t lie, but liars figure” and another, “There are liars, damn liars, and statisticians.” These sayings are exaggerations but

they point out that we are inundated with statistical information and often do not know how to process it. Another thing to watch when using numerical facts is not to confuse your billions and your millions. There is a big difference. If you say that 43 billion people in the US are without adequate health care, you will probably confuse your audience, since the population of the planet is around 7 billion!

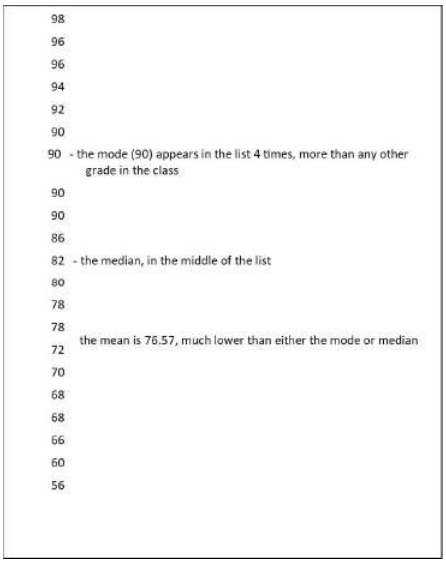


Figure **11.2.6**: Mean, Median, and Mode

In using statistics, you are probably going to use them as proof more than an explanation. Statistics are considered a strong form of proof. Here are some guidelines for using them effectively in a presentation.

1. **Use statistics as support, not as the main point.** The audience may cringe or tune you out for saying, “Now I’d like to give you some statistics about the problem of gangs in our part of the state.” That sounds as exciting as reading the telephone book! Use the statistics to support an argument. “Gang activity is increasing in our region. For example, it is increasing in the three major cities. Mainsville had 450 arrests for gang activity this year alone, up 20% from all of last year.” This example ties the numerical fact (450 arrests) and the statistical comparison (up 20%) to an argument. The goal is to weave or blend the statistics seamlessly into the speech, not have them stand alone as a section of the speech.
2. **Always provide the source of the statistic.** In the previous example, it should read, “According to a report published on the Georgia Bureau of Investigation’s website, Mainsville had 450 arrests . . .” There are a number of “urban myth” statistics floating around that probably have a basis in some research done at some point in time, but that research was outlived by the statistic. An audience would have reason to be skeptical if you cannot provide the name of the researcher or organization that backs up the statistics and numerical data. By the way, it is common for speakers and writers to say “According to research” or “According to studies.” This tag is essentially meaningless and actually a logical fallacy. Give a real source to support your argument.
3. **In regard to sources, depend on the reliable ones.** Figure **11.2.7**, originally published in Wrench, Goding, Johnson, and Attias (2011), lists valid websites providing statistical information.
4. **Do not overuse statistics.** While there is no hard and fast rule on how many to use, there are other good supporting materials and you would not want to depend on statistics alone. You want to choose the statistics and numerical data that will strengthen your argument the most and drive your point home. Statistics can have emotional power as well as probative value if used sparingly.
5. **Use graphs to display the most important statistics.** If you are using presentation software such as PowerPoint, you can create your own basic pie, line, or bar graphs, or you can borrow one and put a correct citation on the slide. However, you do not need to make a graph for every single statistic.
6. **Explain your statistics as needed, but do not make your speech a statistics lesson.** Explain the context of the statistics. If you say, “My blog has 500 subscribers” to a group of people who know little about blogs, that might sound impressive, but is it? You can also provide a story of an individual, and then tie the individual into the statistic. After telling a story of the daily

struggles of a young mother with multiple sclerosis, you could follow up with “This is just one story in the 400,000 people who suffer from MS in the United States today, according to National MS Society.”

7. **If you do your own survey or research and use numerical data from it, explain your methodology.** “In order to understand the attitudes of freshmen at our college about the subject of open-source textbooks, I polled 150 first-year students, only three of whom were close friends, asking them this question: ‘Do you agree that our college should encourage the faculty to use open-source textbooks?’ Seventy-five percent of them indicated that they agreed with the statement.”
8. **It goes without saying that you will use the statistic ethically, that there will be no distortion of what the statistic means.** However, it is acceptable and a good idea to round up numerical data to avoid overwhelming the audience. Earlier we used the example of the U.S. census, stating the population in 2010 was 308.7 million. That is a rounded figure. The actual number was 308,745,538, but saying “almost 309 million” or “308.7 million” will serve your purposes and not be unethical.

Figure **11.2.7**: Statistics-Oriented Website

Website	Type of Information
http://www.bls.gov/bls/other.htm	Bureau of Labor Statistics provides links to a range of websites for labor issues related to a vast range of countries.
http://bjs.gov	Bureau of Justice Statistics provides information on crime statistics in the United States.
http://www.census.gov	US Census Bureau provides a wide range of information about people living in the United States.
https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/	National Center for Health Statistics is a program conducted by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It provides information on a range of health issues in the United States.
http://www.stats.org	STATS is a nonprofit organization that helps people understand quantitative data. It also provides a range of data on its website.
http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/	Roper Center for Public Opinion provides data related to a range of issues in the United States.
http://www.nielsen.com	Nielsen provides data on consumer use of various media forms.
http://www.gallup.com	Gallup provides public opinion data on a range of social and political issues in the United States and around the world.
http://www.adherents.com	Adherents provides both domestic and international data related to religious affiliation.
http://people-press.org	Pew Research Center provides public opinion data on a range of social and political issues in the United States and around the world.

1. **Additionally, do not make statistics mean what they do not mean.** Otherwise, you would be pushing the boundaries on ethics. In the example about your survey of students, if you were to say, “75% of college freshmen support . . . .” That is not what the research said. Seventy-five percent of the students you surveyed indicated agreement, but since your study did not meet scientific standards regarding the size of the sample and how you found the sample, you can only use the information in relation to students in your college, not the whole country. One of the authors had a statistics professor who often liked to say, “Numbers will tell you whatever you want if you torture them long enough,” meaning you can always twist or manipulate statistics to meet your goals if you want to.
2. **An effective technique with numerical data is to use physical comparisons.** “The National Debt is 17 trillion dollars. What does that mean? It means that every American citizen owes $55,100.” “It means that if the money were stacked as hundred dollar bills, it would go to . . .” Or another example, “There are 29 million Americans with diabetes. That is 9.3%. In terms closer to home, of the 32 people in this classroom, 3 of us would have diabetes.” Of course, in this last example, the class may not be made up of those in risk groups for diabetes, so you would not want to say, “Three of us have diabetes.” It is only a comparison for the audience to grasp the significance of the topic.

3. **Finally, because statistics can be confusing, slow down when you say them, give more emphasis, gesture—small ways of helping the audience grasp them.**

Testimony

Testimony is *quoted information from people with direct knowledge about a subject or situation*. Some quotations you just use because they are funny, compelling, or attention-getting. They work well as openings to introductions. Other types of testimony are more useful for proving your arguments. Testimony can also give an audience insight into the feelings or perceptions of others. We normally think in terms of the testimonies of people in courtrooms and other types of hearings. Lawyers know that juries want to hear testimony from experts, eyewitnesses, and friends and family. Speech audiences are similar.



Figure **11.2.8**: Congressional hearings often draw on expert and lay testimony to provide a detailed understanding of an event or issue. Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

When Toyota cars were malfunctioning and being recalled in 2010, mechanics and engineers were called to testify about the technical specifications of the car (expert testimony), and car drivers like the soccer mom who recounted the brakes on her Prius suddenly failing while she was driving her kids to practice were also called (peer testimony). When using testimony, make sure you indicate whether it is expert or peer by sharing with the audience the context of the quote. Share the credentials of experts (education background, job title, years of experience, etc.) to add to your credibility or give some personal context for the peer testimony (eyewitness, personal knowledge, etc.).

Testimony is the words of others. You might think of them as quoted material. Obviously, all quoted material or testimony is not the same. Some quotations you just use because they are funny, compelling, or attention-getting. They work well as openings to introductions. Other types of testimony are more useful for proving your arguments. Testimony can also give an audience insight into the feelings or perceptions of others. Testimony is basically divided into two categories: expert and peer.

Expert Testimony

Expert testimony is from people who are credentialed or recognized experts in a given subject. What is an expert? Here is a quotation of the humorous kind: An expert is “one who knows more and more about less and less” (Nicholas Butler). Actually, an **expert** for our purposes is *someone with recognized credentials, knowledge, education, and/or experience in a subject*. Experts spend time studying the facts and putting the facts together. They may not be scholars who publish original research but they have in-depth knowledge. They may have certain levels of education, or they have real-world experience in the topic.

For example, one of the authors is attending a quilt show this week to talk to experts in quilting. This expertise was gained through years of making, preserving, reading about, and showing quilts, even if they never took Quilting 101 in college. To quote an expert on expertise, “To be an expert, someone needs to have considerable knowledge on a topic or considerable skill in accomplishing something” (Weinstein, 1993). In using expert testimony, you should follow these guidelines:

- **Use the expert’s testimony in his or her relevant field, not outside of it.** A person may have a Nobel Prize in economics, but that does not make him or her an expert in biology.

- **Provide at least some of the expert's relevant credentials.**
- **Choose experts to quote whom your audience will respect and/or whose name or affiliations they will recognize as credible.**
- **Make it clear that you are quoting the expert testimony verbatim or paraphrasing it.** If verbatim, say "Quote . . . end of quote" (not unquote—you cannot unquote someone).
- **If you interviewed the expert yourself, make that clear in the speech also.** "When I spoke with Dr. Mary Thompson, principal of Park Lake High School, on October 12, she informed me that . . ."

Expert testimony is one of your strongest supporting materials to prove your arguments, but in a sense, by clearly citing the source's credentials, you are arguing that your source is truly an expert (if the audience is unfamiliar with him or her) in order to validate his or her information.

Peer Testimony

Peer testimony is often a recounting of a person's experiences, which is more subjective. Any quotation from a friend, family member, or classmate about an incident or topic would be peer testimony. It is useful in helping the audience understand a topic from a personal point of view. For example, in the spring of 2011, a devastating tornado came through the town where one of the authors and many of their students live. One of those students gave a dramatic personal experience speech in class about surviving the tornado in a building that was destroyed and literally disappeared. They survived because she and her coworkers at their chain restaurant were able to get to safety in the freezer. While she may not have had an advanced degree in a field related to tornadoes or the destruction they can cause, this student certainly had a good deal of knowledge on the subject based on her experience of surviving a tornado. However, do not present any old testimony of a peer or friend as if it were expert or credentialed.

"Getting Competent": Choosing the Right Supporting Material

As you sift through your research materials to find supporting material to incorporate into your speech, you will want to include a variety of information types. Choosing supporting material that is relevant to your audience will help make your speech more engaging. As was noted earlier, a speaker should consider the audience throughout the speech-making process. Imagine you were asked to deliver a speech about your college or university. To get some practice adapting supporting material to various audiences, provide an example of each type of supporting material that is tailored to the following specific audiences. Include an example, a narrative, a definition, a description, a historical or scientific fact, a statistic, and a testimony.

1. Incoming first-year students
2. Parents of incoming first-year students
3. Alumni of the college or university
4. Community members that live close to the school

Key Takeaways

- Supporting material can be thought of as the specifics that make your ideas, arguments, assertions, points, or concepts real and concrete.
- Speakers should include a variety of supporting material from their research sources in their speeches. These types of supporting material include examples, narratives, definitions, descriptions, historical and scientific facts, statistics, and testimony.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: Identify some ways that research skills are helpful in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic.
2. Go to the library webpage for your school. What are some resources that will be helpful for your research? Identify at least two library databases and at least one reference librarian. If you need help with research, what resources are available?
3. What are some websites that you think are credible for doing college-level research? Why? What are some websites that are not credible? Why?

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11.3: How do I Cite my Sources?

Learning Objectives

1. Understand what style is.
2. Explain the steps for citing sources within a speech.
3. Differentiate between direct quotations and paraphrases of information within a speech.
4. Understand how to use sources ethically in a speech.
5. Explain twelve strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

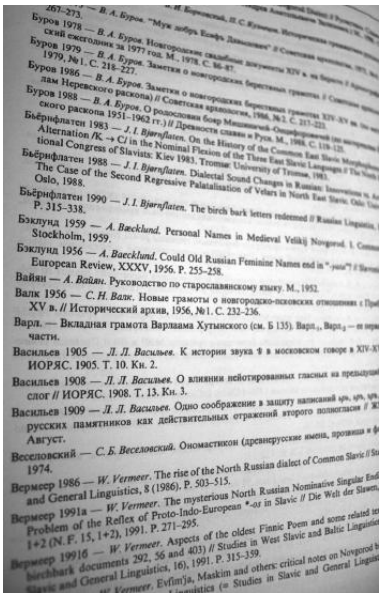


Figure **11.3.1**: Quinn Dombrowski – Bilbiography – CC BY-SA 2.0.

What to Do With All These Sources

Once you have found your sources, you will start by reading them. Taking notes as you work will help you identify notable themes and make connections between your sources. **Be sure to keep good track of where you get information as you work so you can cite it!**

Citation is an integral part of academic work. Since research builds on the work of others, acknowledging those who contributed is essential to academic integrity. The format of your citations will depend on the disciplinary context because there are many styles. Students should check which citation style their instructor requires, and find out if there are requirements for the type and/or several sources as well.

You might wonder if you should cite every piece of information you find and use in your work. Some information is considered "common knowledge," and if it is, it usually does not have to be cited. Usually, we think of this as the general kind of historical or scientific information found in encyclopedias, such as that water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. But common knowledge goes a little further. Generally, if over half of the sources you're using have the same piece of information, you can consider that common knowledge. What you should cite is unique knowledge, the information you find in one source.

A better approach, however, is to find out the source of the "common knowledge." For example, if you were researching "sexual harassment" and found the common legal definition in all your sources, you should find out the source of that legal definition rather than considering it "common knowledge." Citing its source is important both for ethical reasons and credibility reasons.

By this point, you're probably exhausted after looking at countless sources, but there's still a lot of work that needs to be done. Most public speaking teachers will require you to turn in either a bibliography or a "Works Cited" page with your speeches. Most students are familiar with this sort of citation, but in this section, we're going to focus on "oral citations" (also known as, "verbal citations" or "internal citations" in your English class.) We're also going to discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Citing Sources in a Speech

Once you have decided what sources best help you explain important terms and ideas in your speech or help you build your arguments, it's time to place them into your speech. In this section, we're going to quickly talk about using your research effectively within your speeches. Citing sources within a speech is a three-step process: set up the citation, give the citation, and explain the citation.

First, you want to set up your audience for the citation. The setup is one or two sentences that are general statements that lead to the specific information you are going to discuss from your source. Here's an example: "Workplace bullying is becoming an increasing problem for US organizations." Notice that this statement doesn't provide a specific citation yet, but the statement introduces the basic topic.

Second, you want to deliver the source; whether it is a direct quotation or a paraphrase of information from a source doesn't matter at this point. A direct quotation is when you cite the actual words from a source with no changes. To paraphrase is to take a source's basic idea and condense it using your own words. Here's an example of both:

Direct Quotation	In a 2009 report titled *Bullying: Getting Away With It*, the Workplace Bullying Institute wrote, "Doing nothing to the bully (ensuring impunity) was the most common employer tactic (54%)."
Paraphrase	According to a 2009 study by the Workplace Bullying Institute titled *Bullying: Getting Away With It*, when employees reported bullying, 54 percent of employers did nothing at all.

You'll notice that in both of these cases, we started by citing the author of the study—in this case, the Workplace Bullying Institute. We then provided the title of the study. You could also provide the name of the article, book, podcast, movie, or other sources. In the direct quotation example, we took information right from the report. In the second example, we summarized the same information (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2009).

Let's look at another example of direct quotations and paraphrases, this time using a person, rather than an institution, as the author.

Direct Quotation	In her book *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*, Mary George, senior reference librarian at Princeton University's library, defines insight as something that "occurs at an unpredictable point in the research process and leads to the formulation of a thesis statement and argument. Also called an 'Aha' moment or focus."
Paraphrase	In her book *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*, Mary George, senior reference librarian at Princeton University's library, tells us that insight is likely to come unexpectedly during the research process; it will be an "aha!" moment when we suddenly have a clear vision of the point we want to make.

Notice that the same basic pattern for citing sources was followed in both cases.

The final step in correct source citation within a speech is the explanation. One of the biggest mistakes of novice public speakers (and research writers) is that they include a source citation and then do nothing with the citation at all. Instead, take the time to explain the quotation or paraphrase to put it into the context of your speech. Do not let your audience draw their own

conclusions about the quotation or paraphrase. Instead, help them make the connections you want them to make. Here are two examples using the examples above:

Bullying Example	Clearly, organizations need to be held accountable for investigating bullying allegations. If organizations will not voluntarily improve their handling of this problem, the legal system may be required to step in and enforce sanctions for bullying, much as it has done with sexual harassment.
Aha! Example	As many of us know, reaching that “aha!” moment does not always come quickly, but there are definitely some strategies one can take to help speed up this process.

Notice how in both of our explanations we took the source’s information and then added to the information to direct it for our specific purpose. In the case of the bullying citation, we then propose that businesses should either adopt workplace bullying guidelines or face legal intervention. In the case of the “aha!” example, we turn the quotation into a section on helping people find their thesis or topic. In both cases, we were able to use the information to further our speech.

In Figure**11.3.1**, you will see examples of how to take what you might use in your written, "verbal citation," and change it to a properly spoken, "oral citation."

Figure**11.3.2** Verbal Source Citations

Proper Written Source Citation	Proper Oral Attribution
“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life” (Jobs, 2005).	In his 2005 commencement address at Stanford University, Steve Jobs said, “Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life.”
“Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants”(Pollan, 2009, p.1).	Michael Pollan offers three basics guidelines for healthy eating in his book, In Defense of Food. He advises readers to, “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”
“The Assad regime’s escalating violence in Syria is an affront to the international community, a threat to regional security, and a grave violation of human rights. . . . this group should take concrete action along three lines: provide emergency humanitarian relief, ratchet up pressure on the regime, and prepare for a democratic transition”(Clinton, 2012).	In her February 24 speech to the Friends of Syria People meeting, U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, warned that Assad was increasing violence against the Syrian people and violating human rights. She called for international action to help the Syrian people through humanitarian assistance, political pressure, and support for a future democratic government.
“Maybe you could be a mayor or a senator or a Supreme Court Justice, but you might not know that until you join student government or the debate team” (Obama, 2009).	In his 2009 “Back to School” speech President Obama encouraged students to participate in school activities like student government and debate in order to try out the skills necessary for a leadership position in the government.

"Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism" by Sarah Stone Watt, *The Public Speaking Project* is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0.

Using Sources Ethically

The last section of this chapter is about using sources in an ethical manner. Whether you are using primary or secondary research, there are five basic ethical issues you need to consider.

Avoid Plagiarism

First, and foremost, if the idea isn’t yours, you need to cite where the information came from during your speech. Having the citation listed on a bibliography or reference page is only half of the correct citation. You must provide correct citations for all your sources within the speech as well. In a very helpful book called *Avoiding Plagiarism: A Student Guide to Writing Your Own Work*, Menager-Beeley and Paulos provide a list of twelve strategies for avoiding plagiarism (Menager-Beeley & Paulos, 2009):

1. ***Do your own work, and use your own words.*** One of the goals of a public speaking class is to develop skills that you'll use in the world outside academia. When you are in the workplace and the "real world," you'll be expected to think for yourself, so you might as well start learning this skill now.
2. ***Allow yourself enough time to research the assignment.*** One of the most commonly cited excuses students give for plagiarism is that they didn't have enough time to do the research. In this chapter, we've stressed the necessity of giving yourself plenty of time. The more complete your research strategy is from the very beginning, the more successful your research endeavors will be in the long run. Remember, not having adequate time to prepare is no excuse for plagiarism.
3. ***Keep careful track of your sources.*** A common mistake that people can make is that they forget where the information came from when they start creating the speech itself. Chances are you're going to look at dozens of sources when preparing your speech, and it is very easy to suddenly find yourself believing that a piece of information is "common knowledge" and not citing that information within a speech. When you keep track of your sources, you're less likely to inadvertently lose sources and not cite them correctly.
4. ***Take careful notes.*** However you decide to keep track of the information you collect (old-fashioned pen and notebook or a computer software program), the more careful your note-taking is, the less likely you'll find yourself inadvertently not citing information or citing the information incorrectly. It doesn't matter what method you choose for taking research notes, but whatever you do, you need to be systematic to avoid plagiarizing.
5. ***Assemble your thoughts, and make it clear who is speaking.*** When creating your speech, you need to make sure that you clearly differentiate your voice in the speech from the voice of specific authors of the sources you quote. The easiest way to do this is to set up a direct quotation or a paraphrase, as we've described in the preceding sections. Remember, audience members cannot see where the quotation marks are located within your speech text, so you need to clearly articulate with words and vocal tone when you are using someone else's ideas within your speech.
6. ***If you use an idea, a quotation, paraphrase, or summary, then credit the source.*** We can't reiterate it enough: if it is not your idea, you need to tell your audience where the information came from. Giving credit is especially important when your speech includes a statistic, an original theory, or a fact that is not common knowledge.
7. ***Learn how to cite sources correctly both in the body of your paper and in your List of Works Cited (Reference or Bibliography Page).*** Most public speaking teachers will require that you turn in either a bibliography or reference page on the day you deliver a speech. Many students make the mistake of thinking that the bibliography or reference page is all they need to cite information, and then they don't cite any of the material within the speech itself. A bibliography or reference page enables a reader or listener to find those sources after the fact, but you must also correctly cite those sources within the speech itself; otherwise, you are plagiarizing.
8. ***Quote accurately and sparingly.*** A public speech should be based on factual information and references, but it shouldn't be a string of direct quotations strung together. Experts recommend that no more than 10 percent of a paper or speech be direct quotations (Menager-Beeley & Paulos, 2009). When selecting direct quotations, always ask yourself if the material could be paraphrased in a manner that would make it clearer for your audience. If the author wrote a sentence in a way that is just perfect, and you don't want to tamper with it, then by all means directly quote the sentence. But if you're just quoting because it's easier than putting the ideas into your own words, this is not a legitimate reason for including direct quotations.
9. ***Paraphrase carefully.*** Modifying an author's words in this way is not simply a matter of replacing some of the words with synonyms. Instead, as Howard and Taggart explain in *Research Matters*, "paraphrasing force[s] you to understand your sources and to capture their meaning accurately in original words and sentences" (Howard & Taggart, 2010). Incorrect paraphrasing is one of the most common forms of inadvertent plagiarism by students. First and foremost, paraphrasing is putting the author's argument, intent, or ideas into *your* own words.
10. ***Do not patchwrite (patchspeak).*** Menager-Beeley and Paulos define **patchwriting** as consisting "of mixing several references together and arranging paraphrases and quotations to constitute much of the paper. In essence, the student has assembled others' work with a bit of embroidery here and there but with little original thinking or expression" (Menager-Beeley & Paulos, 2009). Just as students can patchwrite, they can also engage in patchspeaking. In **patchspeaking**, students rely completely on *taking quotations and paraphrases and weaving them together in a manner that is devoid of the student's original thinking.*
11. ***Summarize, don't auto-summarize.*** Some students have learned that most word processing features have an auto-summary function. The auto-summary function will take a ten-page document and summarize the information into a short paragraph. When someone uses the auto-summary function, the words that remain in the summary are still those of the original author, so this is not an ethical form of paraphrasing.

12. ***Do not rework another student's paper (speech) or buy paper mill papers (speech mill speeches).*** In today's Internet environment, there are a number of storehouses of student speeches on the Internet. Some of these speeches are freely available, while other websites charge money for getting access to one of their canned speeches. Whether you use a speech that is freely available or pay money for a speech, you are engaging in plagiarism. This is also true if the main substance of your speech was copied from a web page. Any time you try to present someone else's ideas as your own during a speech, you are plagiarizing.

Avoid Academic Fraud

While there are numerous websites where you can download free speeches for your class, this is tantamount to fraud. If you didn't do the research and write your own speech, then you are fraudulently trying to pass off someone else's work as your own. In addition to being unethical, many institutions have student codes that forbid such activity. Penalties for academic fraud can be as severe as suspension or expulsion from your institution.

Don't Mislead Your Audience

If you know a source is clearly biased, and you don't spell this out for your audience, then you are purposefully trying to mislead or manipulate your audience. Instead, if the information may be biased, tell your audience that the information may be biased and allow your audience to decide whether to accept or disregard the information.

Give Author Credentials

You should always provide the author's credentials. In a world where anyone can say anything and have it published on the Internet or even publish it in a book, we have to be skeptical of the information we see and hear. For this reason, it's very important to provide your audience with background about the credentials of the authors you cite.

Use Primary Research Ethically

Lastly, if you are using primary research within your speech, you need to use it ethically as well. For example, if you tell your survey participants that the research is anonymous or confidential, then you need to make sure that you maintain their anonymity or confidentiality when you present those results. Furthermore, you also need to be respectful if someone says something is "off the record" during an interview. We must always maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants during primary research, unless we have their express permission to reveal their names or other identifying information.

Key Takeaways

- Style focuses on the components of your speech that make up the form of your expression rather than your content.
- Citing sources within your speech is a three-step process: set up the citation, provide the cited information, and interpret the information within the context of your speech.
- A direct quotation is any time you utilize another individual's words in a format that resembles the way they were originally said or written. On the other hand, a paraphrase is when you take someone's ideas and restate them using your own words to convey the intended meaning.
- Ethically using sources means avoiding plagiarism, not engaging in academic fraud, making sure not to mislead your audience, providing credentials for your sources so the audience can make judgments about the material, and using primary research in ways that protect the identity of participants.
- Plagiarism is a huge problem and creeps its way into student writing and oral presentations. As ethical communicators, we must always give credit for the information we convey in our writing and our speeches.

Exercises

1. Find a direct quotation within a magazine article. Paraphrase that direct quotation. Then attempt to paraphrase the entire article as well. How would you cite each of these orally within the body of your speech?
2. Which of Menager-Beeley and Paulos (2009) twelve strategies for avoiding plagiarism do you think you need the most help with right now? Why? What can you do to overcome and avoid that pitfall?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Language -- Speaking versus Writing

Language Matters

Ask any professional speaker or speechwriter, and they will tell you that language matters. In fact, some of the most important and memorable lines in American history came from speeches given by American presidents:

- **It is true that you may fool all the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all the time; but you can't fool all of the people all the time. [1]**
  - *Abraham Lincoln*
- **Speak softly and carry a big stick. [2]**
  - *Theodore Roosevelt*
- **The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. [3]**
  - *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*
- **Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. [4]**
  - *John F. Kennedy*
- **We lose ourselves when we compromise the very ideals that we fight to defend. And we honor those ideals by upholding them not when it's easy, but when it is hard. [5]**
  - *Barack Obama*

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

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12.1: Oral versus Written Language
12.2: Using Language Effectively
12.3: Six Elements of Language

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12.1: Oral versus Written Language

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the importance of language.
2. Explain the difference between denotative and connotative definitions.
3. Understand how denotative and connotative definitions can lead to misunderstandings.
4. Differentiate between oral and written language.

When we use the word “language,” we are referring to the words you choose to use in your speech—so by definition, our focus is on spoken language. Spoken language has always existed prior to written language. Wrench, McCroskey, and Richmond suggested that if you think about the human history of language as a twelve-inch ruler, written language or recorded language has only existed for the “last quarter of an inch.” [1] Furthermore, of the more than six thousand languages that are spoken around the world today, only a minority of them actually use a written alphabet. [2] To help us understand the importance of language, we will first look at the basic functions of language and then delve into the differences between oral and written language.

Basic Functions of Language

Language is any formal system of gestures, signs, sounds, and symbols used or conceived as a means of communicating thought. As mentioned above, there are over six thousand language schemes currently in use around the world. The language spoken by the greatest number of people on the planet is Mandarin; other widely spoken languages are English, Spanish, and

Arabic. [3] Language is ultimately important because it is the primary means through which humans have the ability to communicate and interact with one another. Some linguists go so far as to suggest that the acquisition of language skills is the primary advancement that enabled our prehistoric ancestors to flourish and succeed over other hominid species. [4]

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

One of the first components necessary for understanding language is to understand how we assign meaning to words. Words consist of sounds (oral) and shapes (written) that have agreed-upon meanings based on concepts, ideas, and memories. When we write the word “blue,” we may be referring to a portion of the visual spectrum dominated by energy with a wavelength of roughly 440–490 nanometers. You could also say that the color in question is an equal mixture of both red and green light. While both of these are technically correct ways to interpret the word “blue,” we’re pretty sure that neither of these definitions is how you thought about the word. When hearing the word “blue,” you may have thought of your favorite color, the color of the sky on a spring day, or the color of a really ugly car you saw in the parking lot. When people think about language, there are two different types of meanings that people must be aware of: denotative and connotative.

Denotative Meaning

Denotative meaning is the specific meaning associated with a word. We sometimes refer to denotative meanings as dictionary definitions. The definitions provided above for the word “blue” are examples of definitions that might be found in a dictionary. The first dictionary was written by Robert Cawdry in 1604 and was called *Table Alphabeticall*. This dictionary of the English language consisted of three thousand commonly spoken English words. Today, the *Oxford English Dictionary* contains more than 200,000 words. [5]

Connotative Meaning

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

- State of depression (feeling blue)
- Indication of winning (a blue ribbon)
- Side during the Civil War (blues vs. grays)

- Sudden event (out of the blue)

We also associate the color blue with the sky and the ocean. Maybe your school's colors or those of your archrival include blue. There are also various forms of blue: aquamarine, baby blue, navy blue, royal blue, and so on.
Some miscommunication can occur over denotative meanings of words. For example, one of the authors of this book recently received a flyer for a tennis center open house. The expressed goal was to introduce children to the game of tennis. At the bottom of the flyer, people were encouraged to bring their own racquets if they had them but that "a limited number of racquets will be available." It turned out that the denotative meaning of the final phrase was interpreted in multiple ways: some parents attending the event perceived it to mean that loaner racquets would be available for use during the open house event, but the people running the open house intended it to mean that parents could purchase racquets onsite. The confusion over denotative meaning probably hurt the tennis center, as some parents left the event feeling they had been misled by the flyer.

Although denotatively based misunderstandings, such as this one, do happen, the majority of communication problems involving language occur because of differing connotative meanings. You may be trying to persuade your audience to support public funding for a new professional football stadium in your city, but if mentioning the team's or owner's name creates negative connotations in the minds of audience members, you will not be very persuasive. The potential for misunderstandings based on connotative meaning is an additional reason why audience analysis, discussed earlier in this book, is critically important. By conducting effective audience analysis, you can know in advance how your audience might respond to the connotations of the words and ideas you present. Connotative meanings can not only differ between individuals interacting at the same time but also differ greatly across time periods and cultures. Ultimately, speakers should attempt to have a working knowledge of how their audiences could potentially interpret words and ideas to minimize the chance of miscommunication.

Twelve Ways Oral and Written Language Differ

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

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

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

Definition: Word

- Language is important in every aspect of our lives because it allows people to communicate in a manner that enables the sharing of common ideas.
- Denotative definitions are the agreed-upon meanings of words that are often found in dictionaries, whereas connotative definitions involve individual perceptions of words.
- Misunderstandings commonly occur when the source of a message intends one denotative or connotative meaning and the receiver of the message applies a different denotative or connotative meaning to the same word or words.
- Oral language is designed to be listened to and to sound conversational, which means that word choice must be simpler, more informal, and more repetitive. Written language uses a larger vocabulary and is more formal.

Exercises

1. Find a magazine article and examine its language choices. Which uses of language could be misunderstood as a result of a reader's connotative application of meaning?
2. Think of a situation in your own life where denotative or connotative meanings led to a conflict. Why do you think you and the other person had different associations of meaning?
3. Read a short newspaper article. Take that written article and translate it into language that would be orally appropriate. What changes did you make to adjust the newspaper article from written to oral language? Orally present the revised article to a classmate or friend. Were you successful in adapting your language to oral style?

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12.2: Using Language Effectively

Learning Objectives

1. Explain what it means to use appropriate language.
2. Explain what is meant by vivid language.
3. Define inclusive language and explain why using it is important for public speakers.
4. Explain the importance of using familiar language in public speaking.

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

Use Appropriate Language

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

Appropriate for the Speaker

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

Appropriate for the Audience

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

Appropriate for the Context

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

Appropriate for the Topic

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

makes sense to expect that you will use more sophisticated language than if your topic was a basic introduction to the physics of, say, sound or light waves.

Use Vivid Language

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

Imagery

Imagery is the use of language to represent objects, actions, or ideas. The goal of imagery is to help an audience member create a mental picture of what a speaker is saying. A speaker who uses imagery successfully will tap into one or more of the audience's five basic senses (hearing, taste, touch, smell, and sight). Three common tools of imagery are concreteness, simile, and metaphor.

Concreteness

When we use language that is concrete, we attempt to help our audiences see specific realities or actual instances instead of abstract theories and ideas. The goal of concreteness is to help you, as a speaker, show your audience something instead of just telling them. Imagine you've decided to give a speech on the importance of freedom. You could easily stand up and talk about the philosophical work of Rudolf Steiner, who divided the ideas of freedom into freedom of thought and freedom of action. If you're like us, even reading that sentence can make you want to go to sleep. Instead of defining what those terms mean and discussing the philosophical merits of Steiner, you could use real examples where people's freedom to think or freedom to behave has been stifled. For example, you could talk about how Afghani women under Taliban rule have been denied access to education, and how those seeking education have risked public flogging and even execution. [1] You could further illustrate how Afghani women under the Taliban are forced to adhere to rigid interpretations of Islamic law that functionally limit their behavior. As illustrations of the two freedoms discussed by Steiner, these examples make things more concrete for audience members and thus easier to remember. Ultimately, the goal of concreteness is to show an audience something instead of talking about it abstractly.

Simile

The second form of imagery is simile. As you probably learned in English courses, a simile is a figure of speech in which two, unlike things, are explicitly compared. Both aspects being compared within a simile are able to remain separate within the comparison. The following are some examples:

- The thunderous applause was *like* a party among the gods.
- After the revelation, she was as angry *as* a raccoon caught in a cage.
- Love is *like* a battlefield.

When we look at these two examples, you'll see that two words have been italicized: "like" and "as." All similes contain either "like" or "as" within the comparison. Speakers use similes to help an audience understand a specific characteristic being described within the speech. In the first example, we are connecting the type of applause being heard to something supernatural, so we can imagine that the applause was huge and enormous. Now think how you would envision the event if the simile likened the applause to a mime convention—your mental picture changes dramatically, doesn't it?

To effectively use similes within your speech, first look for instances where you may already be finding yourself using the words "like" or "as"—for example, "his breath smelled like a fishing boat on a hot summer day." Second, when you find situations where you are comparing two things using "like" or "as," examine what it is that you are actually comparing. For example, maybe you're comparing someone's breath to the odor of a fishing vessel. Lastly, once you see what two ideas you are comparing, check the mental picture for yourself. Are you getting the kind of mental image you desire? Is the image too strong?

Is the image too weak? You can always alter the image to make it stronger or weaker depending on what your aim is.

Metaphor

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

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

In these examples, the comparison word has been italicized. Let's think through each of these examples. In the first one, the comparison is the same as one of our simile examples except that the word "like" is omitted—instead of being *like* a battlefield, the metaphor states that love *is* a battlefield, and it is understood that the speaker does not mean the comparison literally. In the second example, the accused "clams up," which means that the accused refused to talk in the same way a clam's shell is closed. In the third example, we refer to activists as "crops" that arise anew with each growing season, and we use "born" figuratively to indicate that they come into being—even though it is understood that they are not newborn infants at the time when they become activists.

To use a metaphor effectively, first determine what you are trying to describe. For example, maybe you are talking about a college catalog that offers a wide variety of courses. Second, identify what it is that you want to say about the object you are trying to describe. Depending on whether you want your audience to think of the catalog as good or bad, you'll use different words to describe it. Lastly, identify the other object you want to compare the first one to, which should mirror the intentions in the second step. Let's look at two possible metaphors:

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

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

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

- "That's awfully thin gruel for the right wing to hang their hats on." [2]

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

Rhythm

Our second guideline for effective language in a speech is to use rhythm. When most people think of rhythm, they immediately think about music. What they may not realize is that language is inherently musical; at least it can be. Rhythm refers to the patterned, recurring variance of elements of sound or speech. Whether someone is striking a drum with a stick or standing in front of a group speaking, rhythm is an important aspect of human communication. Think about your favorite public speaker. If you analyze his or her speaking pattern, you'll notice that there is a certain cadence to the speech. While much of this cadence is a result of the nonverbal components of speaking, some of this cadence comes from the language that is chosen as well. Let's examine four types of rhythmic language: parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and assonance.

Parallelism

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

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

Technically, you're saying the same thing in both, but the second one has a better rhythm, and this rhythm comes from the parallel construction of "give me." The lack of parallelism in the first example makes the sentence sound disjointed and ineffective.

Repetition

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

Alliteration

Another type of rhythmic language is alliteration or repeating two or more words in a series that begin with the same consonant. In the *Harry Potter* novel series, the author uses alliteration to name the four wizards who founded Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Salazar Slytherin. There are two basic types of alliteration: immediate juxtaposition and nonimmediate juxtaposition. *Immediate juxtaposition* occurs when the consonants clearly follow one after the other—as we see in the *Harry Potter* example. *Nonimmediate juxtaposition* occurs when the consonants are repeated in nonadjacent words (e.g., "It is the **p**oison that we must **p**urge from our **p**olitics, the wall that we must tear down before the hour grows too late"). [3] Sometimes you can actually use examples of both immediate and nonimmediate juxtaposition within a single speech. The following example is from Bill Clinton's acceptance speech at the 1992 Democratic National Convention: "Somewhere at this very moment, a child is **b**eing **b**orn in America. Let it be our cause to give that child a **h**appy **h**ome, a **h**ealthy family, and a **h**opeful future." [4]

Assonance

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

Use Inclusive Language

Language can either inspire your listeners or turn them off very quickly. One of the fastest ways to alienate an audience is through the use of noninclusive language. Inclusive language is language that avoids placing any one group of people above or below other groups while speaking. Let's look at some common problem areas related to language about gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disabilities.

Gender-Specific Language

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

Generic "He"

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

Use of “Man”

Traditionally, speakers of English have used terms like “man,” “mankind,” and (in casual contexts) “guys” when referring to both females and males. In the second half of the twentieth century, as society became more aware of gender bias in language, organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English developed guidelines for nonsexist language. [5] For example, instead of using the word “man,” you could refer to the “human race.” Instead of saying, “hey, guys,” you could say, “OK, everyone.” By using gender-fair language you will be able to convey your meaning just as well, and you won’t risk alienating half of your audience.

Gender-Typed Jobs

The last common area where speakers get into trouble with gender and language has to do with job titles. It is not unusual for people to assume, for example, that doctors are male and nurses are female. As a result, they may say “she is a woman doctor” or “he is a male nurse” when mentioning someone’s occupation, perhaps not realizing that the statements “she is a doctor” and “he is a nurse” already inform the listener as to the sex of the person holding that job. Speakers sometimes also use a gender-specific pronoun to refer to an occupation that has both males and females. Figure **12.2.1**: "Gender Type Jobs" lists some common gender-specific jobs titles along with more inclusive versions of those job titles.

Figure **12.2.1**: *Gender Type Jobs*

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

Ethnic Identity

Another type of inclusive language relates to the categories used to highlight an individual’s ethnic identity. Ethnic identity refers to a group an individual identifies with based on a common culture. For example, within the United States, we have numerous ethnic groups, including Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Japanese Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Cuban Americans, and Mexican Americans. As with the earlier example of “male nurse,” avoid statements such as “The committee is made up of four women and a Vietnamese man.” Instead, say, “The committee is made up of four women and a man” or, if race and ethnicity are central to the discussion, “The committee is made up of three European American women, an Israeli American woman, a Brazilian American woman, and a Vietnamese American man.” In recent years, there has been a trend toward steering inclusive language away from broad terms like “Asians” and “Hispanics” because these terms are not considered precise labels for the groups they actually represent. If you want to be safe, the best thing you can do is ask a couple of people who belong to an ethnic group how they prefer to label themselves.

Sexual Orientation

Another area that can cause some problems is referred to as heterosexism. Heterosexism occurs when a speaker presumes that everyone in an audience is heterosexual or that opposite-sex relationships are the only norm. For example, a speaker might begin a speech by saying, “I am going to talk about the legal obligations you will have with your future husband or wife.” While this speech starts with the notion that everyone plans on getting married, which isn’t the case, it also assumes that everyone will label their significant others as either “husbands” or “wives.” Although some members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender/transexual community will use these terms, others prefer more gender-neutral terms like “spouse” and “partner.” Moreover, legal obligations for same-sex couples may be very different from those for heterosexual couples. Notice also that we have used the phrase “members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender/transexual community” instead of the more clinical-sounding term “homosexual.”

Disability

The last category of exclusive versus inclusive language that causes problems for some speakers relates to individuals with physical or mental disabilities. Figure **12.2.2**: "Inclusive Language for Disabilities" provides some other examples of exclusive versus inclusive language.

Figure **12.2.2**: *Inclusive Language for Disabilities*

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

Use Familiar Language

The last category related to using language appropriately simply asks you to use language that is familiar both to yourself and to your audience. If you are not comfortable with the language you are using, then you are going to be more nervous speaking, which will definitely have an impact on how your audience receives your speech. You may have a hard time speaking genuinely and sincerely if you use unfamiliar language, and this can impair your credibility. Furthermore, you want to make sure that the language you are using is familiar to your audience. If your audience cannot understand what you are saying, you will not have an effective speech.

Key Takeaways

- Using appropriate language means that a speaker’s language is suitable or fitting for themselves, as the speaker; our audience; the speaking context; and the speech itself.
- Vivid language helps listeners create mental images. It involves both imagery (e.g., concreteness, simile, and metaphor) and rhythm (e.g., parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and assonance).
- Inclusive language avoids placing any one group of people above or below other groups while speaking. As such, speakers need to think about how they refer to various groups within society.
- Using familiar language is important for a speaker because the familiar language will make a speaker more comfortable, which will improve the audience's perceptions of the speech.

Exercises

1. Watch the news and find an example of someone using inappropriate language. Why did the speaker use inappropriate language? How could the speaker have prevented the use of inappropriate language?

2. Watch a presidential press conference or a political speech. Identify the uses of imagery and rhythm. How did the imagery and rhythm help the speech? Can you think of other ways the speaker could have used imagery and rhythm?
3. Why is inclusive language important? Write down the various groups you belong to in life; how would you want these groups to be referred to by a speaker? Share your list with a friend or classmate and see if that person reaches the same conclusions you do. If there are differences in your perceptions, why do you think those differences are present?

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12.3: Six Elements of Language

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the six elements of language important for public speakers.
2. Utilize the six elements of language in your own public speeches.

Language is a very important aspect of anyone's public speaking performance. Whether a speaker uses lots of complicated words or words most people have in their vocabularies, language will determine how an audience experiences the speech. To help you think through your language choices, we are going to talk about six important elements of language and how they affect audience perceptions.

Clarity

The first important element of language is clarity, or the use of language to make sure the audience understands a speaker's ideas in the way the speaker intended. While language, or verbal communication, is only one channel we can use to transmit information, it is a channel that can lend itself to numerous problems. For example, as discussed earlier, if people have different connotative definitions for words, the audience can miss the intended meaning of a message.

Imagine you're listening to a speaker talking and he or she uses the phrase, "Older female relative who became aerodynamic venison roadkill," or "Obese personification fabricated of compressed mounds of minute crystals." If you're like most people, these two phrases just went right over your head. We'll give you a hint, these are two common Christmas songs. The first phrase refers to "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," and the second one is "Frosty the Snowman." Notice that in both of these cases, the made-up title with all the polysyllabic words is far less clear than the commonly known one. While you are probably unlikely to deliberately distort the clarity of your speech by choosing such outlandish words to express simple thoughts, the point we are illustrating is that clear language makes a big difference in how well a message can be understood.

Economy

Another common mistake among new public speakers is thinking that more words are more impressive. In fact, the opposite is true. When people ramble on and on without actually making a point, audiences become bored and distracted. To avoid this problem, we recommend word economy, or the use of only those words necessary to accurately express your idea. If the fundamental idea you are trying to say is, "that stinks," then saying something like "while the overall outcome may be undesirable and definitely not recommended" becomes overkill. We do have one caveat here: you want to make sure that your language isn't so basic that it turns off your audience. If you are speaking to adults and use vocabulary appropriate for school children, you'll end up offending your audience. So while economy is definitely important, you don't want to become so overly basic that you are perceived as "talking down" to your audience.

Obscenity

Obscenity, or indecent language, consists of curse words or pornographic references. While it may be fun to use obscene language in casual conversations with your friends, we cannot recommend using obscene language while delivering a speech. Even if you're giving a speech related to an obscene word, you must be careful with your use of the word itself. Whether we agree with societal perceptions of obscenity, going out of our way to use obscenity will end up focusing the audience on the obscenity and not on our message.

Obscure Language/Jargon

Obscure language and jargon are two terms that closely relate to each other. Obscure language refers to language choices that are not typically understood or known by most of your audience. Imagine you're listening to a speech and the speaker says, "Today I've given you a plethora of ideas for greening your workplace." While you may think the word "plethora" is commonly known, we can assure you that many people have no idea that plethora means many or an abundance of something. Similarly, you may think most people know what it means to "green" a workplace, but in fact, many people do not know that it means to make the workplace more environmentally friendly or to reduce its impact on the environment. In the case of this example, plethora simply

means the speaker has given many ideas for greening the workplace. You can still use the word “plethora,” but you should include a definition so that you’re sure all of your audience will understand.

Jargon, on the other hand, refers to language that is commonly used by a highly specialized group, trade, or profession. For example, there is legal jargon, or the language commonly used by and understood by lawyers. There is also medical jargon, or the language commonly used by and understood by health care practitioners. Every group, trade, or profession will have its own specific jargon. The problem that occurs for many speakers is not realizing that jargon is group, trade, or profession-specific and not universal. One common form of jargon is the acronym, a word formed by taking the first letters or groups of letters of words, such as NASDAQ (National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations), PET (positron emission tomography) scan, or IHOP (International House of Pancakes). Another form of jargon is an initialism, formed by pronouncing the initials rather than the name of an organization or other entity. For example, CDC stands for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fMRI stands for Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging and B of A stands for Bank of America. In political discussions, you may come across various CFRs, or Codes of Federal Regulations. If you are going to use a specific acronym or initialism within your speech, you need to explain it the first time you use it. For example, you could say,

According to the United States Code of Federal Regulations, or CFR, employment discrimination in the Department of Homeland Security is not allowed based on biological sex, religion, sexual orientation, or race. Furthermore, the US CFR does not permit discrimination in receiving contracts based on biological sex, religion, sexual orientation, or race.
By defining the jargon upon first mention, we are subsequently able to use the jargon because we can be certain the audience now understands the term.

Power

Power is an individual’s ability to influence another person to think or behave in a manner the other person would not have otherwise done. DeVito examined how language can be used to help people gain power over others or lose power over others [1]. Figure 12.3.1: "Powerful and Powerless Language" provides examples of both powerful language and powerless language a speaker can use during a speech. Powerless language should generally be avoided in public speaking because it can damage audience perceptions of the speaker’s credibility.

Figure 12.3.1: Powerful and Powerless Language

Language Strategy	Definition	Example
Powerful Language		
Direct Requests	Asking the audience to engage in a specific behavior.	"At the conclusion of today's speech, I want you to go out and buy a bottle of hand sanitizer and start using it to protect your life."
Bargaining	An agreement that affects both parties of a situation.	"If you vote for me, I promise to make sure that our schools get the funding they so desperately need."
Ingratiation	Attempting to bring oneself into the favor or good graces of an audience.	"Because you are all smart and talented people, I know that you will see why we need to cut government spending."
Powerless Language		
Hesitations	Language that makes the speaker sound unprepared or uncertain.	"Well, as best I was able to find out, or I should say, from what little material I was able to dig up, I kind of think that this is a pretty interesting topic."
Intensifiers	Overemphasizing all aspects of the speech.	"Great! Fantastic! This topic is absolutely amazing and fabulous!"
Disqualifiers	Attempts to downplay one's qualifications and competence about a specific topic.	"I'm not really an expert on this topic, and I'm not very good at doing research, but here goes nothing."
Tag Questions	A question added to the end of a phrase seeking the audience's consent for what was said.	"This is a very important behavior, isn't it?" or "You really should do this, don't you think?"
Self-Critical Statements	Downplaying one's own abilities and making one's lack of confidence public.	"I have to tell you that I'm not a great public speaker, but I'll go ahead and give it a try."
Hedges	Modifiers are used to indicate that one isn't completely sure of the statement just made.	"I really believe this may be true, sort of." "Maybe my conclusion is a good idea. Possibly not."
Verbal Surrogates	Utterances used to fill space while speaking; filler words.	"I was, like, err, going to, uhhh, say something, um, important, like, about this."

Variety

The last important aspect of language is variety, or a speaker's ability to use and implement a range of different language choices. In many ways, variety encompasses all the characteristics of language previously discussed in this chapter. Often speakers find one language device and then beat it into the ground like a railroad spike. Unfortunately, when a speaker starts using the same language device too often, the language device will start to lose the power that it may have had. For this reason, we recommend that you always think about the language you plan on using in a speech and make sure that you use a range of language choices.

Key Takeaways

- Public speakers need to make sure that they are very aware of their language. Six common language issues that impact public speakers are clarity, economy, obscenity, obscure language/jargon, power, and variety.
- When public speakers prepare their speeches, they need to make sure that their speeches contain clear language, use as few words as possible to get their point across, avoid obscenity, be careful with obscure language/jargon, use powerful language, and include variety.

Exercises

1. Find a passage in a specialized book or upper-level textbook that expresses a complex idea. Rewrite the passage so that it is clear and avoids jargon. Test out your explanation by seeing if the message is clear to someone unfamiliar with the topic and by seeing if it is an accurate revision to someone who is very familiar with the topic.
2. Find a written copy of a speech at least one page in length (Vital Speeches of the Day is an excellent source for this exercise). Summarize the speech accurately and completely in one paragraph. Then reduce your summary to twenty words. How did you go about changing your language for a greater economy of word use?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Creating Your Speech Outlines

The Fun of Outlining

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Differentiate the different types of organizational patterns;
- Choose an organizational pattern that is most logical to the speech's specific purpose;
- Use connective statements that will help the audience understand the logic and structure of a speech;
- Construct an outline for an extemporaneous speech following the introduction, body, and conclusion format.

When you are talking informally with friends, family, or colleagues your conversation might follow a haphazard course. You can jump from topic to topic or omit certain information and your audience will probably understand you. But a public speech must not do so. Even in conversations with your friends, you might believe they understand what you mean, but they might not. In a prepared speech, you must be attentive to reasoning in logical steps so that your audience understands the meaning you intend to convey. This is where your outline helps. It is a simple guide that can lead to great success.

Think of an outline as a skeleton you must assemble bone by bone, gradually making it take form into a coherent whole. Or think of it as a puzzle in which you must put all the pieces in their correct places in order to see the full picture. Or think of it as a game of solitaire in which the right cards must follow a legitimate sequence in order for you to win. Or a blueprint used to create the tallest skyscraper.

This means, of course, that there are no shortcuts, but there are helpful strategies. If you leave a bone out of a skeleton, something will fall apart. By the same token, if you omit a step in reasoning, your speech will be vulnerable to lapses in logic, lapses in the evidence you need to make your case, and the risk of becoming a disjointed, disorienting message.

The more fully you appreciate the outline as both rule-bound and creative, the more fully you will experience its usefulness and its power to deliver your message in a unified, coherent way.

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13.1: Front Matter

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Southwest Tennessee Community College

13: Creating Your Speech Outlines

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This text was compiled on 04/16/2026

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13.2: The Freedom of Organization

Have you had this experience? You have an instructor who is easy to take notes from because he or she helps you know the main ideas and gives you cues as to what is most important to write down and study for the test. And then you might have an instructor who tells interesting stories, says provocative things, and leads engaging discussions, but you have a really hard time following where the instruction is going. If so, you already know that structure makes a difference for your own listening. In this chapter we will examine why that is true and how you can translate that type of structure to your own speeches.

Significant psychological and communication research has been done about how an audience needs and desires clear organization in a speech as they listen:

First, as we listen, we have limits as to how many categories of information we can keep in mind. You should avoid having more than five main points in a speech, and that would only be for a speech of some length where you could actually support, explain, or provide sufficient evidence for five points.

For most speeches that you would give in class, where you have about 5-7 minutes, three points are sufficient, although there could be exceptions, of course. It is also acceptable for short speeches to just have two main points **if doing so supports your specific purpose**. That last phrase is bolded for emphasis because ultimately, your organization is going to depend on your specific purpose.

Secondly, the categories of information should be distinct, different, and clear. You might think about organization in public speaking as having three steps. These steps are grouping, labeling, and ordering (putting into a good order). Before you can label your main points clearly or put them in the right order, you have to group your information.

Researchers have found that “chunking” information--the way it is grouped--is vital to audience understanding, learning, and retention of information (Beighly, 1954; Bodeia, Powers, & Fitch-Hauser, 2006; Whitman & Timmis, 1975; Daniels & Whitman, 1981). How does this work in practice? When you are doing your research, you look at the articles and websites you read and say, “That information relates to what I read over here” and “That statistic fits under the idea of . . .” You are looking for similarities and patterns. That is exactly what you do when you group anything, such as the items at a yard sale, where you group according to customer interest and purpose of the items. Finally, if a piece of information you found doesn’t fit into a group as you do your research, it may just not belong in the speech. It’s what we would call “extraneous.”

A good example of this principle is if you are doing a demonstration speech: a nurse may be teaching patients how to do self-care for diabetes, or a culinary student may be showing how to cook pad thai. The temptation is to treat the procedure as a list of steps, which may number as many as twenty or thirty steps. There are very few times we can remember a list of twenty or thirty items.

Adult learning and listening needs information “chunked” or grouped into manageable categories. So, instead of listing twenty or thirty discrete steps in the process you are demonstrating or explaining, you would want to group the steps into three to five logical categories to help the audience’s reception and retention of the message, using the separate minor steps as “subpoints.”

Finally, because your audience will understand you better and perceive you as organized, you will gain more credibility as a speaker if you are organized, assuming you also have credible information and acceptable delivery (Slagell, 2013; Sharp & McClung, 1966). Yun, Costantini, and Billingsley (2012) also found a side benefit to learning to be an organized public speaker: your writing skills will improve, specifically your organization and sentence structure.

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13.3: Benefits of Outlining

Learning Objectives

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

Golden Takeaway:

> *A solid full-sentence preparation outline helps your audience understand your message because they will be able to follow your reasoning. Remember that live audiences for oral communications lack the ability to "rewind" your message to figure out what you said, so it is critically important to help the audience follow your reasoning as it reaches their ears.*

In order for your speech to be as effective as possible, it needs to be organized into logical patterns. Information will need to be presented in a way your audience can understand. This is especially true if you already know a great deal about your topic. You will need to take careful steps to include pertinent information your audience might not know and to explain relationships that might not be evident to them. Using a standard outline format, you can make decisions about your main points, the specific information you will use to support those points, and the language you will use. Without an outline, your message is liable to lose logical integrity. It might even deteriorate into a list of bullet points with no apparent connection to each other except the topic, leaving your audience relieved when your speech is finally over.

A full-sentence outline lays a strong foundation for your message. This is called a **PREPARATION OUTLINE**. It will call on you to have one clear and specific purpose for your message. Writing your specific purpose in clear language serves you well. It helps you frame a clear, concrete central idea. It helps you exclude irrelevant information. It helps you focus only on information that directly bears on your thesis. It reduces the amount of research you must do. It suggests what kind of supporting evidence is needed, so less effort is expended in trying to figure out what to do next. It helps both you and your audience remember the central message of your speech.

The benefits of creating the Preparation Outline are as follows:

- Test the scope of content
- Assess logical ordering of information
- Evaluate the relevance of supporting ideas.
- Shows the balance and proportion of a speech
- Serves as Notes during the Speech

Tests the Scope of Content

When you begin with a clear, concrete central idea, it acts as a kind of a compass for your outline. Each of the main points should directly relate to the central idea. The test of the scope will be a comparison of each main point to the central idea. If you find a poor match, you will know you've wandered outside the scope of the thesis.

Let's say the general purpose of your speech is to inform, and your broad topic area is wind-generated energy. Now you must narrow this to a specific purpose. You have many choices, but let's say your specific purpose is to inform a group of property owners about the economics of wind farms where electrical energy is generated.

Your first main point could be that modern windmills require a very small land base, making the cost of real estate low. This is directly related to economics. All you need is information to support your claim that only a small land base is needed.

In your second main point, you might be tempted to claim that windmills don't pollute in the ways other sources do. However, you will quickly note that this claim is unrelated to the thesis. You must resist the temptation to add it. Perhaps in another speech, your central idea will address environmental impact, but in this speech, you must stay within the economic scope. Perhaps you will say that once windmills are in place, they require virtually no maintenance. This claim is related to the thesis. Now all you need is supporting information to support this second claim.

Your third point, the point some audience members will want to hear, is the cost of generating electrical energy with windmills compared with other sources. This is clearly within the scope of energy economics. You should have no difficulty finding authoritative sources of information to support that claim. When you write in outline form, it is much easier to test the scope of your content because you can visually locate specific information very easily and then check it against your central idea.

Tests Logical Ordering of Information

You have many choices for your topic, and therefore, there are many ways your content can be logically organized. In the example above, we simply listed three main points that were important economic considerations about wind farms. Often the main points of a speech can be arranged into a logical pattern; let's take a look at some such patterns.

- A **chronological pattern** arranges main ideas in the order events occur. In some instances, reverse order might make sense. For instance, if your topic is archaeology, you might use the reverse order, describing the newest artifacts first.
- A **cause-and-effect pattern** calls on you to describe a specific situation and explain what the effect is. However, most effects have more than one cause. Even dental cavities have multiple causes: genetics, poor nutrition, teeth too tightly spaced, sugar, ineffective brushing, and so on. If you choose a cause-and-effect pattern, make sure you have enough reliable support to do the topic justice.
- A **biographical pattern** is usually chronological. In describing the events of an individual's life, you will want to choose the three most significant events. Otherwise, the speech will end up as a very lengthy and often pointless timeline or bullet point list. For example, Mark Twain had several clear phases in his life. They include his life as a Mississippi riverboat captain, his success as a world-renowned writer and speaker, and his family life. A simple timeline would present great difficulty in highlighting the relationships between important events. An outline, however, would help you emphasize the key events that contributed to Mark Twain's extraordinary life.
- Although a **compare-contrast pattern** appears to dictate just two main points, McCroskey, Wrench, and Richmond explain how such can be structured as a speech with three main points. They say that "you can easily create a third point by giving basic information about what is being compared and what is being contrasted. For example, if you are giving a speech about two different medications, you could start by discussing what the medications' basic purposes are. Then you could talk about the similarities, and then the differences, between the two medications." [1]

Whatever logical pattern you use, if you examine your central idea and then look at the three main points in your outline, you should easily be able to see the logical way in which they relate.

Tests Relevance of Supporting Ideas

When you create an outline, you can clearly see that you need **supporting evidence** for each of your main points. For instance, using the example above, your first main point claims that less land is needed for windmills than for other utilities. Your supporting evidence should be about the amount of acreage required for a windmill and the amount of acreage required for other energy generation sites, such as nuclear power plants or hydroelectric generators. Your sources should come from experts in economics, economic development, or engineering. The evidence might even be expert opinions but not the opinions of ordinary people. The expert opinion will provide stronger support for your point.

Similarly, your second point claims that once a wind turbine is in place, there is virtually no maintenance cost. Your supporting evidence should show how much annual maintenance for a windmill costs and what the costs are for other energy plants. If you used a comparison with nuclear plants to support your first main point, you should do so again for the sake of consistency. It becomes very clear, then, that the third main point about the amount of electricity and its profitability needs authoritative references to compare it to the profit from energy generated at a nuclear power plant. In this third main point, you should make use of just a

few well-selected statistics from authoritative sources to show the effectiveness of wind farms compared to the other energy sources you've cited.

Where do you find the kind of information you would need to support these main points? A **reference librarian** can quickly guide you to authoritative statistics manuals and help you make use of them. An important step you will notice is that the preparation outline includes its authoritative sources within the text. This is a major departure from the way you've learned to write a research paper. In the research paper, you can add that information to the end of a sentence, leaving the reader to turn to the last page for a fuller citation. In a speech, however, your listeners can't do that. Whenever you use supporting information and sub-points, you need to fully cite your source so your audience can assess its importance. This is called an **oral citation.**

Because this is such a profound change from the academic habits that you're probably used to, you will have to make a concerted effort to overcome the habits of the past and provide the information your listeners need when they need it.

Test the Balance and Proportion of the Speech

Part of the value of writing a full-sentence preparation outline is the visual space you use for each of your main points. Is each main point of approximately the same importance? Does each main point have the same number of supporting points? If you find that one of your main points has eight supporting points while the others only have three each, you have two choices: either choose the best three from the eight supporting points or strengthen the authoritative support for your other two main points.

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

Serves as Notes during the Speech

Although we recommend writing a full-sentence outline during the speech preparation phase, you should also create a shortened outline that you can use as notes allowing for a strong delivery. This is called a **SPEAKING OUTLINE**. If you were to use the full-sentence outline when delivering your speech, you would do a great deal of reading, which would limit your ability to give eye contact and use gestures, hurting your connection with your audience. For this reason, we recommend writing a short-phrases and keywords on 4 × 6 notecards or a sheet of paper or two to use when you deliver your speech. The good news is that your three main points suggest how you should prepare your notecards.

Your first 4 × 6 notecard can contain your central idea and other keywords and phrases that will help you present your introduction. Your second card can contain your first main point, together with keywords and phrases to act as a map to follow as you present. If your first main point has an exact quotation you plan to present, you can include that on your card. Your third notecard should be related to your second main point, your fourth card should be about your third main point, and your fifth card should be related to your conclusion. In this way, your five notecards follow the very same organizational pattern as your full outline. In the next section, we will explore more fully how to create a speaking outline.

Key Takeaways

- Your outline can help you stay focused on the central idea (thesis) of your presentation as you prepare your presentation by testing the scope of your content, examining logical relationships between topics, and checking the relevance of supporting ideas.
- Your outline can help you organize your message by making sure that all of your main points are well developed.
- Your outline can help you stay focused during your presentation by forming the foundation for your speaking outline, which lets you connect to your audience and be clear in the message you're presenting.
- You should write a full-sentence PREPARATION outline and a keyword SPEAKING outline for your topic.

Exercises

1. In one sentence, write a clear, compelling central idea about each of the following topics: the effects of schoolyard bullying, the impact of alcohol on brain development, and the impact of the most recent volcano eruption in Iceland. Fully cite the sources where you verify that your central ideas are actually true.

2. Prepare a full-sentence outline for your next speech assignment. Trade outlines with a classmate and check through the outline for a logical sequence of ideas, presence of credible support, proper citation, and clear organization. Give feedback to your partner on areas where he or she has done well and where the outline might be improved.
3. Transfer information from your speech outline to notecards using the guidelines described above. Practice delivering your speech for a small audience (e.g., family members, groups of friends, or classmates) using first the outline and then the notecards. Ask the audience for feedback comparing your delivery using the two formats.

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13.4: Five Outline Principles

Learning Objective

1. Understand five basic principles of outline creation.

As with any part of the speech process, there are some pretty commonly agreed-upon principles for creating an outline. Now that we've examined the basics of outline creation, there are some important factors to consider when creating a logical and coherent outline: singularity, consistency, adequacy, uniformity, and parallelism.

Singularity

For the sake of clarity, make sure your central idea expresses one idea only. Only in this way will it be optimally useful to you as you build your outline. If you have narrowed your topic skillfully, you can readily focus your thesis as one central point. For instance, if you have a central idea that says the Second Amendment protects gun ownership rights but most people are unaware of the responsibility involved, you have a central idea focusing on two different issues. Which focus will you follow? It's crucial to choose just one, saving the other perhaps for a different speech.

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

Consistency

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

Similarly, define your terms and use those terms only to designate the meanings in your definition. To do otherwise could result in confusion. For instance, if you use the word "right" in two or three different senses, you should change your language. The word "right" can be applicable to your *right* to a good education; the ethical difference between *right* and wrong; and the status of a statement as *right*, or accurate and correct. By the same token, in a health care setting, saying that a medical test had a positive outcome can be confusing. Does the patient test positive for the presence of disease, or does the test reveal some good news? If you find yourself using the same word to mean different things, you will need to spend extra time in your speech explaining these meanings very clearly—or avoid the problem by making other word choices.

Adequacy

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

You should use concrete language as much as you can. For instance, if you use the word "community," you're using an abstract term that can mean many things. You might be referring to a suburban neighborhood; to a cultural group, such as the Jewish community; to an institutional setting that includes an academic community; or to a general sense of overarching mainstream community standards for what materials should or should not be broadcast on television, for instance. You may not find any definition of "community" that conveys your meaning. Therefore, you will need to define for your audience what *you mean* by "community."

Adequacy is also a concern when you use evidence to support your main points. Evidence of the right kind and the right weight is needed. For instance, if you make a substantial claim, such as a claim that all printed news sources will be obsolete within ten years, you need expert sources. This means you need at least three well-known experts from the institutions that provide news

(newspapers, television news, or news radio). They should be credible sources, not sources with extreme views whose contact with reality is questioned. This will give you the right kind of evidence, and a large enough amount of evidence.

Uniformity

A preparation outline readily shows whether you are giving “equal time” to each of your three main points. For example, are you providing three pieces of evidence to support each main point? It should also show whether each main point is directly related to the central idea.

Parallelism

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

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

Finally, your conclusion should do two things. First, it should come “full circle” in order to show the audience that you have covered all the territory you laid out in your preview. Second, it should provide satisfying, decisive, psychological closure. In other words, your audience should know when your speech is over. You should not trail off. You should not have to say, “That’s it.” Your audience should not have to wait to see whether you’re going to say anything else. At the right time, they should feel certain that the speech is over and that they can clap.

Key Takeaways

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

Exercises

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

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13.5: Patterns of Organization

At this point, then, you should see how much your audience needs organization. You also know that as you do research, you will group together similar pieces of information from different sources in your research. As you group your research information, you will want to make sure that your content is adhering to your specific purpose statement and will look for ways that your information can be grouped together into categories.

Interestingly, there are some standard ways of organizing these categories, which are called “patterns of organization.” In each of the examples below, you will see how the specific purpose gives shape to the organization of the speech and how each one exemplifies one of the six main organizational patterns. In each example, only the three to five main sections or “points” (Roman numerals) are given, without the other essential parts of the outline. Please note that these are simple, basic outlines for example purposes, and your instructor will of course expect much more content from the outline you submit for class.

Chronological

Specific Purpose: To describe to my classmates the four stages of rehabilitation in addiction recovery.

1. The first stage is acknowledging the problem and entering treatment.
2. The second stage is early abstinence, a difficult period in the rehabilitation facility.
3. The third stage is maintaining abstinence after release from the rehab facility.
4. The fourth stage is advanced recovery after a period of several years.

The example above uses what is termed the **chronological pattern of organization**. Chronological always refers to time order. Since the specific purpose is about stages, it is necessary to put the four stages in the right order. It would make no sense to put the fourth stage second and the third stage first. However, chronological time can be long or short. If you were giving a speech about the history of the Civil Rights Movement, that period would cover several decades; if you were giving a speech about the process to change the oil in your car, that process takes less than an hour. The process described in the speech example above would also be long-term, that is, one taking several years. The commonality is the order of the information.

In addition, chronological speeches that refer to processes can be given for two reasons. First, they can be for understanding. The speech about recovery is to explain what happens in the addiction recovery process, but the actual process may never really happen to the audience members. That understanding may also lead them to more empathy for someone in recovery. Second, chronological or process speeches can be for action and instruction. For a speech about changing the oil in a car, your purpose is that the audience could actually change the oil in their cars after listening to the speech.

One of the problems with chronological speeches is, as mentioned before, that you would not want just a list of activities. It is important to chunk the information into three to five groups so that the audience has a framework. For example, in a speech about the history of the Civil Rights Movement, your “grouping” or “chunking” might be:

1. The movement saw African-Americans struggling for legal recognition before the Brown v. Board of Education decision.
2. The movement was galvanized and motivated by the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
3. The movement saw its goals met in the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

It would be easy in the case of the Civil Rights Movement to list the many events that happened over more than two decades, but that could be overwhelming for the audience. In this outline, the audience is focused on the three events that pushed it forward, rather than the persons involved in the movement. You could give a speech with a focus on people, but it would be different and probably less chronological and more topical (see below).

We should say here that, realistically, the example given above is still too broad. It would be useful, perhaps, for an audience with almost no knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement, but too basic and not really informative for other audiences. One of the Roman numeral points would probably be a more specific focus.

Spatial

You can see that chronological is a highly-used organizational structure, since one of the ways our minds work is through time-orientation—past, present, future. Another common thought process is movement in space or direction, which is called the **spatial pattern**. For example:

Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the three regional cooking styles of Italy.

1. In the mountainous region of the North, the food emphasizes cheese and meat.
2. In the middle region of Tuscany, the cuisine emphasizes grains and olives.
3. In the southern region and Sicily, the diet is based on fish and seafood. In this example, the content is moving from northern to southern Italy, as the word “regional” would indicate.

Here is a good place to note that grouping or “chunking” in a speech helps simplicity, and to meet the principle of KISS (Keep It Simple, Speaker). If you were to actually study Italian cooking in-depth, sources will say there are twenty regions. But “covering” twenty regions in a speech is not practical, and while the regions would be distinct for a “foodie” or connoisseur of Italian cooking, for a beginner or general audience, three is a good place to start. You could at the end of the speech note that a more in-depth study would show the twenty regions, but that in your speech you have used three regions to show the similarities of the twenty regions rather than the small differences.

For a more localized example:

Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the layout of King Tut’s pyramid.

1. The first chamber of the tomb was an antechamber.
2. The second chamber of the tomb was the annex.
3. The third chamber of the tomb was the burial chamber.
4. The last chamber of the tomb was the treasury. (Lucas, 2012)

For an even more localized example:

Specific Purpose: To describe to my Anatomy and Physiology class the three layers of the human skin.

1. The outer layer is the epidermis, which is the outermost barrier of protection.
2. The second layer beneath is the dermis.
3. The third layer closest to the bone is the hypodermis, made of fat and connective tissue.

The key to spatial organization is to be logical in progression rather than jumping around, as in this example:

1. The Native Americans of Middle Georgia were primarily the Creek nation.
2. The Native Americans of North Georgia were of the Cherokee tribe nation.
3. The Native Americans of South Georgia were mostly of the Hitchiti and Oconee tribes.

It makes more sense to start at the top (north) of the state and move down (south) or start at the bottom and move up rather than randomly discuss unconnected areas.

Topical/Parts of the Whole

The topical organizational pattern is probably the most all-purpose in that many speech topics could use it. Many subjects will have main points that naturally divide into “types of,” “kinds of,” “sorts of,” or “categories of.” Other subjects naturally divide into “parts of the whole.” However, as mentioned previously, you want to keep your categories simple, clear, distinct, and at five or fewer.

Specific Purpose: To explain to my freshmen students the concept of SMART goals.

1. SMART goals are specific and clear.
2. SMART goals are measurable.
3. SMART goals are attainable or achievable.
4. SMART goals are relevant and worth doing.
5. SMART goals are time-bound and doable within a time period.



Figure 13.5.1: "Diamond Macro 1" by stephend9 is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Specific Purpose: To explain the four characteristics of quality diamonds.

1. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of cut.
2. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of carat.
3. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of color.
4. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of clarity

Specific Purpose: To describe to my audience the four main chambers of a human heart.

1. The first chamber in the blood flow is the right atrium.
2. The second chamber in the blood flow is the right ventricle.
3. The third chamber in the blood flow is the left atrium.
4. The fourth chamber in the blood flow and then out to the body is the left ventricle.

At this point in discussing organizational patterns and looking at these examples, two points should be made about them and about speech organization in general.

First, you might look at the example about the chambers of the heart and say, “But couldn’t that be chronological, too, since that’s the order of the blood flow procedure?” Yes, it could. There will be times when a specific purpose could work with two different organizational patterns. In this case, it’s just a matter of emphasis. This speech is emphasizing the anatomy of the heart; if the speech’s specific purpose were “To explain to my classmates the flow of blood through the chambers of the heart,” the organizational pattern would be chronological but very similar (However, since the blood goes to the lungs to be oxygenated before coming back to the left atrium, that might alter the pattern some).

Another principle of organization to think about when using topical organization is “climax” organization. That means putting your strongest argument or most important point last when applicable. For example:

Specific purpose: To defend before my classmates the proposition that capital punishment should be abolished in the United States.

1. Capital punishment does not save money for the justice system.
2. Capital punishment does not deter crime in the United States historically.
3. Capital punishment has resulted in many unjust executions.

In most people’s minds, “unjust executions” is a bigger reason to end a practice than the cost, since an unjust execution means the loss of an innocent life and a violation of our principles. If you believe Main Point 3 is the strongest argument of the three, putting it last builds up to a climax.

Cause/Effect Pattern

If the specific purpose mentions words such as “causes,” “origins,” “roots of,” “foundations,” “basis,” “grounds,” or “source,” it is a causal order; if it mentions words such as “effects,” “results,” “outcomes,” “consequences,” or “products,” it is effect order. If it mentions both, it would of course be cause/effect order. This example shows a cause/effect pattern:

Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the causes and effects of schizophrenia.

1. Schizophrenia has genetic, social, and environmental causes.

2. Schizophrenia has educational, relational, and medical effects.

It should be noted, however, that a specific purpose like this example is very broad and probably not practical for your class speeches; it would be better to focus on just causes or effects, or even just one type of cause (such as genetic causes of schizophrenia) or one type of effect (relational or social). These two examples show a speech that deals with causes only and effects only, respectively.

Specific Purpose: To explain to my fellow Biology 1107 students the origin of the West Nile Virus epidemic in the U.S.

1. The West Nile Virus came from a strain in a certain part of Africa.
2. The West Nile Virus resulted from mosquitoes being imported through fruits.
3. The West Nile Virus became more prominent due to floods in the Southeast.

Specific Purpose: To describe to my classmates the effects of a diagnosis of autism on a child's life.

1. An autism diagnosis will affect the child's educational plan.
2. An autism diagnosis will affect the child's social existence.
3. An autism diagnosis will affect the child's family relationships.

Problem-Solution Pattern

The problem-solution pattern will be explored in more depth in the chapter on Persuasive Speaking because that is where it is used the most. Then, we will see that there are variations on it. The principle behind the problem-solution pattern is that if you explain a problem to an audience, you should not leave them hanging without solutions. Problems are discussed for understanding and to do something about them.

Additionally, when you want to persuade someone to act, the first reason is usually that something is wrong! Even if you wanted your friends to go out to get some dinner, and they have recently eaten, you will probably be less successful because there is no problem for them—they are not hungry. Then you would have to come up with a new problem, such as you will miss their presence, which they may or may not see as a problem for them.



Figure **13.5.2**: "Students' Achievements Inspire U.S. Ambassador" by U.S. Embassy Jerusalem is licensed under CC BY 2.0

In another real-life example, let's say you want the members of the school board to provide more funds for music at the three local high schools in your county. What is missing because music or arts are not funded? What is the problem?

Specific Purpose: To persuade the members of the school board to take action to support the music program at the school.

1. There is a problem with eliminating extracurricular music programs in high schools.

   A. Students who do not have extracurricular music in their lives have lower SAT scores.

   B. Schools that do not have extracurricular music programs have more gang violence and juvenile delinquency.

2. The solution is to provide $200,000 in the budget to sustain extracurricular music in our high schools.

   A. $120,000 would go to bands.

   B. $80,000 would go to choral programs.

Of course, this is a simple outline and you would need to provide evidence to support the arguments, but it shows how problem-solution works. Psychologically, it makes more sense to use problem-solution rather than solution-problem. The audience will be

more motivated to listen if you address needs, deficiencies, or problems in their lives rather than giving them solutions first.

Problem-Cause-Solution Pattern

A variation of the problem-solution pattern, and one that sometimes requires more in-depth exploration of an issue, is the "problem-cause-solution" pattern. If you were giving a speech on the future extinction of certain animal species, it would be insufficient to just explain that numbers of species are about to become extinct. Your second point would logically have to explain the cause behind this happening. Is it due to climate change, some type of pollution, encroachment on habitats, disease, or some other reason? In many cases, you can't really solve a problem without first identifying what caused the problem. This is similar to the organizational pattern called Monroe's Motivated Sequence (German, Gronbeck, Ehninger & Monroe, 2012), which will be fully explained in Chapter 13. Monroe's Motivated Sequence requires a discussion of cause to create a logical speech.

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that the age to obtain a driver's license in the state of Georgia should be raised to 18.

1. There is a problem in this country with young drivers getting into serious automobile accidents leading to many preventable deaths.
2. One of the primary causes of this is younger drivers' inability to remain focused and make good decisions due to incomplete brain development.
3. One solution that will help reduce the number of young drivers involved in accidents would be to raise the age for obtaining a diver's license to 18.

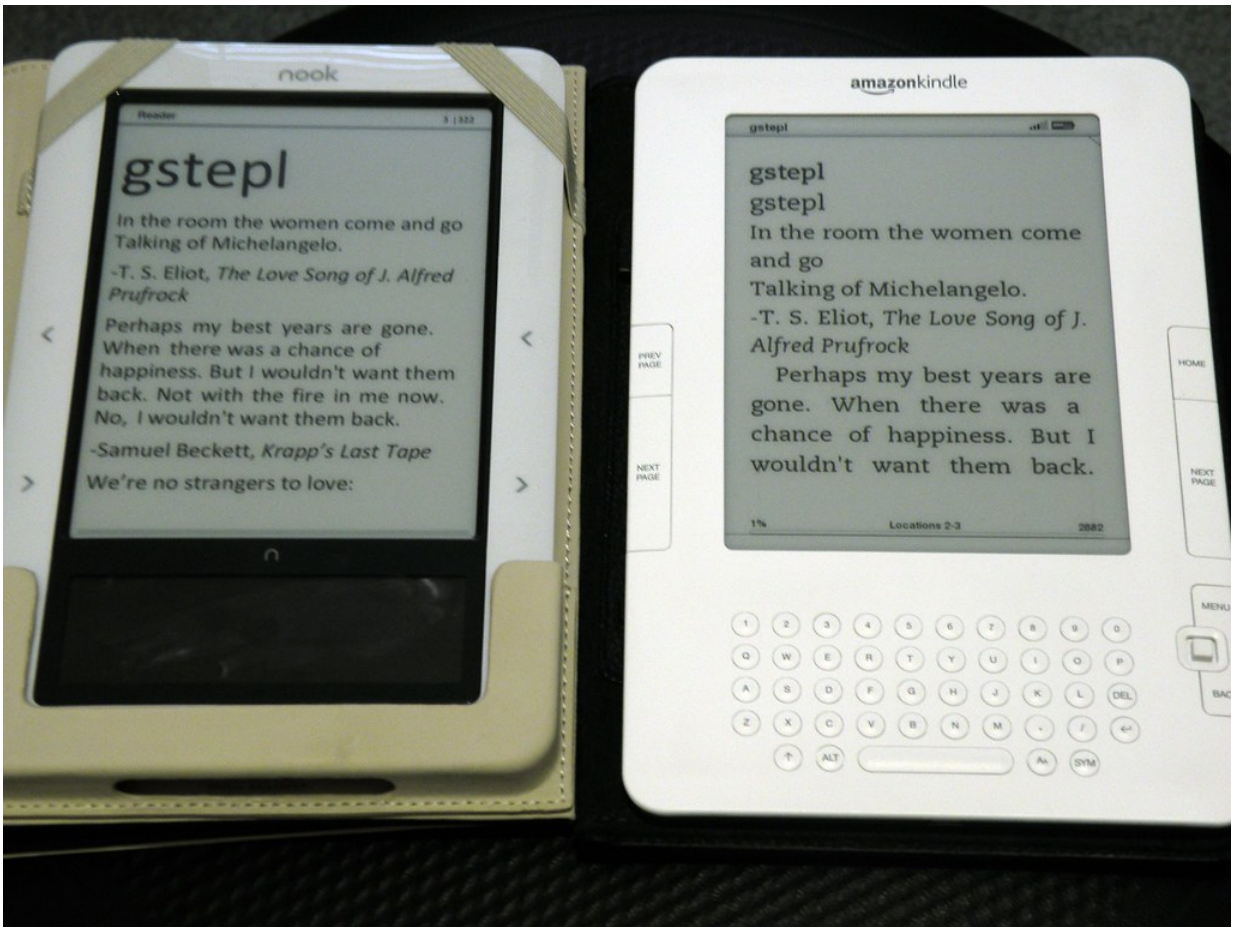


Figure 13.5.3: "Kindle vs Nook" by jacobnmartinez is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Comparative Advantages

The goal of this speech is to compare items side-by-side and show why one of them is more advantageous than the other. For example, let's say that you're giving a speech on which e-book reader is better: Amazon.com's Kindle or Barnes and Nobles' Nook. Here's how you could organize this speech:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that the Nook is more advantageous than the Kindle.

Main Points:

1. The Nook allows owners to trade and loan books to other owners or people who have downloaded the Nook software, while the Kindle does not.
2. The Nook has a color-touch screen, while the Kindle's screen is black and grey and noninteractive.
3. The Nook's memory can be expanded through microSD, while the Kindle's memory cannot be upgraded.

As you can see from this speech's organization, the simple goal of this speech is to show why one thing has more positives than something else. Obviously, when you are demonstrating comparative advantages, the items you are comparing the need to be functional equivalents—or, as the saying goes, you cannot compare apples to oranges.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence (Persuasive Speech)

Monroe's Motivated Sequence is a five-step organization pattern that attempts to persuade an audience by making a topic relevant, using positive and/or negative motivation, and including a call to action. The five steps are (1) attention, (2) need, (3) satisfaction, (4) visualization, and (5) action (Monroe & Ehninger, 1964).

The attention step is accomplished in the introduction to your speech. Whether your entire speech is organized using this pattern or not, any good speaker begins by getting the attention of the audience. We will discuss several strategies in Section 9 "Getting Your Audience's Attention" for getting an audience's attention. The next two steps set up a problem and solution.

After getting the audience's attention you will want to establish that there is a need for your topic to be addressed. You will want to cite credible research that points out the seriousness or prevalence of an issue. In the attention and need steps, it is helpful to use supporting material that is relevant and proxemic to the audience.

Once you have set up the need for the problem to be addressed, you move on to the satisfaction step, where you present a solution to the problem. You may propose your own solution if it is informed by your research and reasonable. You may also propose a solution that you found in your research.

The visualization step is next and incorporates positive and/or negative motivation as a way to support the relationship you have set up between the need and your proposal to satisfy the need. You may ask your audience to visualize a world where things are better because they took your advice and addressed this problem. This capitalizes on positive motivation. You may also ask your audience to visualize a world where things are worse because they did not address the issue, which is a use of negative motivation. Now that you have hopefully persuaded your audience to believe the problem is worthy of addressing, proposed a solution, and asked them to visualize potential positive or negative consequences, you move to the action step.

The action step includes a call to action where you as basically saying, "Now that you see the seriousness of this problem, here's what you can do about it." The call to action should include concrete and specific steps an audience can take. Your goal should be to facilitate the call to action, making it easy for the audience to complete. Instead of asking them to contact their elected officials, you could start an online petition and make the link available to everyone. You could also bring the contact information for officials that represent that region so the audience doesn't have to look them up on their own. Although this organizing pattern is more complicated than the others, it offers a proven structure that can help you organize your supporting materials and achieve your speech goals.

Some Additional Principles of Organization

It is possible that you may use more than one of these organizational patterns within a single speech. For example, the main points of your speech could be one organizational pattern and the subpoints a different one. In the spatial example above about the Native American nations of Georgia, the subpoints might be chronological (emphasizing their development over time), or they could be topical (explaining aspects of their culture).

You should also note that in all of the examples to this point (which have been kept simple for the purpose of explanation), each main point is relatively equal in emphasis; therefore, the time spent on each should be equal as well. While you are not obliged to spend exactly the same amount of time on each main point, the time spent (and the importance of the main point) should be about

the same. You would not want your first Main Point to be 30 seconds long, the second one to be 90 seconds, and the third 3 minutes. For example:

Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the rules of baseball.

1. Baseball has rules about equipment.
2. Baseball has rules about the number of players.
3. Baseball has rules about play.

Main Point 2 is not really equal in importance to the other two. There is a great deal you could say about the equipment and even more about the rules of play, but the number of players would take you about ten seconds to say. If Main Point 2 were "Baseball has rules about the positions on the field," that would make more sense and be closer in the level of importance to the other two.

To give another example, let's say you want to give a commemorative (or tribute) speech about a local veteran whom you admire.

1. James Owens is an admirable person because he earned the Silver Star in the Korean War.
2. James Owens is an admirable person because he served our community as a councilman for 25 years.
3. James Owens is an admirable person because he rescued five puppies who were abandoned in his backyard.

Although Main Point 3 is a good thing to do, it's really not equal to Main Points 1 and 2 in importance or in the amount of time you would need to spend on it.

Earlier in the chapter, we said that organizing a speech involves grouping, labeling, and order. Let's address labeling here. You will also notice that in most of the examples so far, the main points are phrased using a similar sentence structure. For example, "The first chamber in the blood flow is…" "The second chamber in the blood flow is…" This simple repetition of sentence structure is called **parallelism**, a technique useful for speakers and helpful for the audience in remembering information. It is not absolutely necessary to use it and will not always be relevant, but parallelism should be used when appropriate and effective.

In relation to the way each main point is written, notice that they are full grammatical sentences, although sometimes short and simple. For purposes of preparation, this is a good habit, and your instructor will probably require you to write your main points in full sentences. Your instructor may also expect you to write your subpoints in complete sentences as well, but he or she will discuss that with you. There are examples of the different versions of full sentence outlines provided at the ends of some chapters.

Finally, in the way you phrase the main points, be sure they are adequately labeled and clearly explain your content. Students are often tempted to write main points as directions to themselves, "Talking about the health department" or "Mention the solution." This is not helpful for you, nor will your instructor be able to tell what you mean by those phrases. "The health department provides many services for low-income residents," says something we can all understand.

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13.6: Guidelines for Introductions and Conclusions

Learning Objectives

After reading this section, the student will be able to:

- Recognize the functions of introductions and conclusions;
- Identify the primary elements of a speech introduction;
- Identify the primary elements of a speech conclusion;
- Construct introductions and conclusions.

Can you imagine how strange a speech would sound without an introduction? Or how jarring it would be if, after making a point, a speaker just walked off the podium and sat down? You would most likely be pretty confused, and the takeaway from that speech—even if the content was really good—would likely be, "I was confused" or "That was a weird speech."

This is just one of the reasons all speeches need introductions and conclusions. Introductions and conclusions serve to frame the speech and give it a clearly defined beginning and end. They help the audience to see what is to come in the speech and then let them mentally prepare for the end. In doing this, introductions and conclusions provide a "preview/review" of your speech as a means to reiterate to your audience what you are talking about.

If you remember back to Chapter 2, we talked about "planned redundancy" as a strategy for reminding the audience about your topic and what you are trying to accomplish with your speech. Since speeches are auditory and live, you need to make sure the audience remembers what you are saying. So one of the primary functions of an introduction is to preview what you will be covering in your speech, and one of the main roles of the conclusion is to review what you have covered. It may seem like you are repeating yourself and saying the same things over and over, but that repetition ensures that your audience understands and retains what you are saying.

The challenge, however, is that there is much more that a speaker must do in her introduction and conclusion than just preview or review her topic and main points. The roles that introductions and conclusions fulfill are numerous, and, when done correctly, can make your speech stronger. The challenge with all this, though, is that the introduction and conclusion aren't what your audience wants or needs to hear; that is primarily contained in the body section where the bulk of your research and information will be housed. So to that end, the introduction and conclusion need to be relatively short and to the point.

The general rule is that the introduction and conclusion should each be about 10% of your total speech, leaving 80% for the body section. You can extend the introduction to 15% if there is a good reason to, so 10-15% of the speech time is a good guideline. Let's say that your informative speech has a time limit of 5-7 minutes: if we average that out to 6 minutes that gives us 360 seconds. Ten to fifteen percent of 360 is 36-54, meaning your full introduction—which includes the thesis and preview—should come in at about a minute. That isn't to say that your speech instructor will be timing you and penalize you for hitting the 60-second mark, but rather to highlight the fact that you need to be economical with your time. An introduction or conclusion of a 6-minute speech that lasts 90 seconds is taking up 25% of your speech. leaving much less time for the body.

Consequently, there are some common errors to avoid in introductions:

- rambling and meandering, not getting to the point;
- speaking to become comfortable;
- saying the specific purpose statement, especially as first words;
- choosing a technique that hurts credibility, such as pedantic (defining words like "love") or a method that is not audience-centered;
- beginning to talk as you approach the platform or lectern—reach your destination, pause, smile, and begin;
- reading your introduction from your notes; it is vital to establish eye contact in the introduction, so knowing it very well is important;
- talking too fast; let your audience get used to your voice by speaking emphatically and clearly.

As we have mentioned before, it is best to write your introduction after you have a clear sense of the body of your presentation. The challenge to introductions is that there is a lot you need to get done in that 10%-15%, and all of it is vital to establishing yourself as

a knowledgeable and credible speaker.

In terms of the conclusions, be careful NOT to:

- signal the end multiple times. In other words, no “multiple conclusions” or saying “As I close” more than once;
- rambling; if you signal the end, end;
- talking as you leave the platform or lectern
- indicating with facial expression or body language that you were not happy with the speech. In the following sections, we will discuss specifically what you should include in the introduction and conclusion and offer a number of options for accomplishing each.

14.5.1: Structuring the Introduction

14.5.2: Examples of Introductions

14.5.3: Structuring the Conclusion

14.5.4: Examples of Conclusions

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13.6.1: Structuring the Introduction

A common concern many students have as the date of their first major speech approaches is “I don’t know how I should start my speech.” What they are really saying is they aren’t sure what words will be memorable, attention-capturing, and clever enough to get their audience interested or, on a more basic level, sound good. This is a problem most speakers have, since the first words you say, in many ways, set the tone for the rest of your speech. There may not be anyone “best” way to start a speech, but we can provide some helpful guidelines that will make starting a speech much easier.

With that in mind, there are five basic elements that you will want to incorporate into your introduction. And while you have some leeway to structure your introduction in a way that best fits with your speech and you wouldn’t necessarily do all of these in the order below, the following order of these five elements is fairly standard. Unless you have a specific reason to do otherwise, it is probably a pretty good order for you to use.

Element 1: Get the Audience’s Attention

The first major purpose of an introduction is to gain your audience’s attention and make them interested in what you have to say. While many audiences may be polite and not talk while you’re speaking, actually getting them to listen to what you are saying is a completely different challenge. Let’s face it—we’ve all tuned someone out at some point because we weren’t interested in what they had to say. If you do not get the audience’s attention at the outset, it will only become more difficult to do so as you continue speaking.

That’s why every speech should start with an **attention-getter**, or some sort of statement or question that piques the audience’s interest in what you have to say at the very start of a speech. Sometimes these are called “grabbers.” The first words out of your mouth should be something that will perk up the audience’s ears. Starting a speech with “Hey everybody. I’m going to talk to you today about soccer” already sounds boring and has not tried to engage the individuals in the audience who don’t care about soccer. Once your audience has deemed your speech to be boring, trying to inform, persuade, or entertain them becomes exponentially more difficult. So let’s briefly discuss what you can do to capture your audience’s attention from the onset.

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

You will also want to choose an attention-getting device appropriate for your speech topic. Ideally, your attention-getting device should have a relevant connection to your speech. Imagine if a speaker pulled condoms out of his pocket, yelled “Free sex!” and threw the condoms at the audience in the beginning of a speech about the economy. While this may clearly get the audience’s attention, this isn’t really a good way to prepare an audience for a speech about the stock market. To help you out, below we have listed a number of different attention-getters that you may find useful for opening your speech.

Anecdotes and Narratives

An **anecdote** is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event. Notice the emphasis here is on the word “brief.” A common mistake speakers make when telling an anecdote is to make the anecdote too long. An example of an anecdote used in a speech about the pervasiveness of technology might look something like this:

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

Notice that the anecdote is short and has a clear point. From here the speaker can begin to make his or her point about how technology is controlling our lives.

The second type of anecdote is a parable or fable. A parable or fable is an allegorical anecdote designed to teach general life lessons. The most widely known parables for most Americans are those given in the Bible and the best-known fables are Aesop’s Fables (http://www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php). So if you decide your speech will focus on the benefits of remaining in college for

more than four years in order to obtain multiple degrees, you may want to adapt some version of “The Tortoise and The Hare” as your attention-getter.

It is sometimes helpful to begin your speech in a way that your audience finds familiar since this can make them feel more connected to your speech. This may be particularly helpful for topics with which your audience is unfamiliar. One of the best and easiest ways to do this is to begin with a story that your audience is likely to have heard before. These types of stories come in a number of forms, but the most common ones include fables, tall tales, ghost stories, parables, fairy tales, myths, and legends.

Two primary issues that you should be aware of often arise with using stories as attention-getters. First, you shouldn’t let your story go on for too long. If you are going to use a story to begin your speech, your need to think of it more in terms of summarizing the story rather than actually reciting the entire thing. Even a relatively simple story like “The Tortoise and the Hare” can take a couple of minutes to get through in its entirety, so you’ll need to cut it down to the main points or highlights. The second issue with using stories as attention-getters is that the story must in some way relate to your speech. If you begin your speech by recounting the events in “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” your speech will in some way need to deal with finding balance or coming to a compromise about a matter. If your story doesn’t relate to your topic, you will likely confuse your audience and they may spend the remainder of your speech trying to figure out the connection rather than listening to what you have to say.

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

> *In the fall of 2015, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease*.

If you use a personal example, don’t get carried away with the focus on yourself and your own life. Your speech topic is the purpose of the attention-getter, not the other way around. Another pitfall in using a personal example is that it may be too personal for you to maintain your composure. For example, a student once started a speech about her grandmother by stating, “My grandmother died of cancer at 3:30 this morning.” The student then proceeded to cry nonstop for five minutes. While this is an extreme example, we strongly recommend that you avoid any material that could get you upset while speaking. When speakers have an emotional breakdown during their speech, audience members stop listening to the message and become very uncomfortable. They may empathize with the distraught speaker, but the effectiveness has been diminished in other ways.

Startling Statement/Statistic/Fact

Another way to start your speech is to surprise your audience with startling information about your topic. Often, startling statements come in the form of statistics and strange facts. The goal of a good startling statistic is that it surprises the audience and gets them engaged in your topic. For example, if you’re giving a speech about oil conservation, you could start by saying, “A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel.” You could start a speech on the psychology of dreams by noting, “The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year.” A strange fact, on the other hand, is a statement that does not involve numbers but is equally surprising to most audiences. For example, you could start a speech on the gambling industry by saying, “There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas.” You could start a speech on the Har-

lem Globetrotters by saying, “In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters.” All four of these examples came from a great website for strange facts (www. strangefacts.com).

Although startling statements are fun, it is important to use them ethically. First, make sure that your startling statement is factual. The Internet is full of startling statements and claims that are simply not factual, so when you find a statement you’d like to use, you have an ethical duty to ascertain its truth before you use it and to provide a reliable citation. Second, make sure that your startling statement is relevant to your speech and not just thrown in for shock value. We’ve all heard startling claims made in the media that are clearly made for purposes of shock or fear-mongering, such as “Do you know what common household appliance could kill you? We’ll tell you at 11:00.” As speakers, we have an ethical obligation to avoid playing on people’s emotions in this way.

A Rhetorical Question

A **rhetorical question** is a question to which no actual reply is expected. For example, a speaker talking about the history of Mother's Day could start by asking the audience, "Do you remember the last time you told your mom you loved her?" In this case, the speaker does not expect the audience to shout out an answer, but rather to think about the questions as the speech goes on.



Immediate Reference to Subject

The most direct (but probably the least interesting of the possible attention getters) is to tell your audience the subject of your speech. Here's an example:

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

This sentence explicitly tells an audience that the speech they are about to hear is about the importance of understanding statistics. While this isn't the most entertaining or interesting attention-getter, it is very clear and direct. And note that it justifies the importance of the audience paying attention while avoiding being completely snooze-inducing, as it would have been if it were reworded as, "I want to talk to you about statistics."

Reference to Audience or Appeal to Self-Interest

As we have tried to emphasize throughout this book, your audience is the single most important factor is crafting your speech, so it makes sense that one approach to opening your speech is to make a direct reference to the audience. In this case, the speaker has a clear understanding of the audience and points out that there is something unique about the audience that should make them interested in the speech's content. Here's an example:

> *As students at Dalton State, you and I know the importance of selecting a major that will benefit you in the future. In today's competitive world, we need to study a topic that will help us be desirable to employers and provide us with lucrative and fulfilling careers. That's why I want you all to consider majoring in communication.*

In this example, the speaker reminds the audience of their shared status as Dalton State students and uses the common ground to acknowledge the importance of selecting a major that will benefit them in the future. Earlier in the textbook we used the expression **WIIFM** ("What's in it for me?") to remind you that your topic and approach should appeal to the self-interests and needs of the audience members.

Quotation

Another way to capture your listeners' attention is to use the words of another person that relate directly to your topic. Maybe you've found a really great quotation in one of the articles or books you read while researching your speech. If not, you can also use a number of Internet or library sources that compile useful quotations from noted individuals. Quotations are a great way to start a speech, so let's look at an example that could be used during the opening of a commencement address (a type of special occasion speech discussed later in Chapter 15):

> *The late actress, fashion icon, and social activist Audrey Hepburn once noted that, "Nothing is impossible. The word itself says 'I'm possible'!"*

If you use a quotation as your attention getter, be sure to give the source first (as in this example) so that it isn't mistaken as your own wording.

Reference to Current Events

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

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

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

Historical Reference

You may also capture your listeners' attention by referring to a historical event related to your topic. Obviously, this strategy is closely related to the previous one, except that instead of a recent news event you are reaching further back in history to find a relevant reference. For example, if you are giving a speech on the perception of modern music as crass or having no redeeming values, you could refer back to Elvis Presley and his musical breakout in the 1950s as a way of making a comparison:

> *During the mid-1950s, Elvis Presley introduced the United States to a new genre of music: rock and roll. Initially viewed as distasteful, and Presley was himself chastised for his gyrating dance moves and flashy style. Today he is revered as "The King of Rock 'n Roll." So when we criticize modern artists for being flamboyant or over the top, we may be ridiculing some of the most important musical innovators we will know in our lifetimes.*

In this example, the speaker is evoking the audience's knowledge of Elvis to raise awareness of similarities to current artists that may be viewed today as he was in the 1950s.

Humor

Humor is another effective method for gaining an audience's attention. Humor is an amazing tool when used properly. We cannot begin to explain all the facets of humor within this chapter, but we can say that humor is a great way of focusing an audience on what you are saying. However, humor is a double-edged sword. If you do not wield the sword carefully, you can turn your audience against you very quickly.



When using humor, you really need to know your audience and understand what they will find humorous. One of the biggest mistakes a speaker can make is to use some form of humor that the audience either doesn't find funny or, worse, finds offensive. Think about how incompetent the character of Michael Scott seems on the television program The Office, in large part because of his ineffective use of humor. We always recommend that you test out the humor of any kind on a sample of potential audience members prior to actually using it during a speech. If you do use a typical narrative "joke," don't say it happened to you. Anyone who heard the joke before will think you are less than truthful!

Now that we've warned you about the perils of using humor, let's talk about how to use humor as an attention-getter. Humor can be incorporated into several of the attention-getting devices mentioned. You could use a humorous anecdote, quotation, or current

event. As with other attention-getting devices, you need to make sure your humor is relevant to your topic, as one of the biggest mistakes some novices make when using humor is to add humor that really doesn't support the overall goal of the speech. So when looking for humorous attention-getters, you want to make sure that the humor is not going to be offensive to your audience and relevant to your speech.

For example, here's a humorous quotation from Nicolas Chamfort, a French author during the sixteenth century: "The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless." While this quotation could be effective for some audiences, other audiences may find this humorous quotation offensive. The Chamfort quotation could be appropriate for a speech on the ills of modern society, but probably not for a speech on the state of modern religious conflict. It also would not be appropriate in an area that had just experienced damaging floods. You want to make sure that the leap from your attention-getter to your topic isn't too complicated for your audience, or the attention-getter will backfire.

This list of attention-getting devices represents a thorough, but not necessarily exhaustive, range of ways that you can begin your speech. Certainly, these would be the more common attention-getters that most people employ. Again, as mentioned earlier, your selection of attention-getter is not only dependent on your audience, your topic, and the occasion, but also on your preferences and skills as a speaker. If you know that you are a bad storyteller, you might elect not to start your speech with a story. If you tend to tell jokes that no one laughs at, avoid starting your speech off with humor.

To review, think back to the factors of attention in Chapter 7. The best attention-getters are

- concrete (they bring up or refer to real experiences);
- novel (they use material that is new or that the audience is unlikely to have heard before);
- movement-oriented (don't spend too long in the introduction because the audience will wonder where you are headed);
- need-oriented (your attention getter and introduction, in general, should relate to the needs or interests of the audience).

Other factors like suspense (introduce a story and finish it at the end) or conflict (telling a story with strong opposing forces and tension) can also be used.

Element 2: Establish or Enhance Your Credibility

Whether you are informing, persuading, or entertaining an audience, one of the things they will be expecting is for you to know what you are talking about. So the second element of an introduction is to let your audience know that you are a knowledgeable and credible source for this information. To do this, you will need to explain how you know what you know about your topic.

For some people, this will be simple. If you are informing your audience how a baseball is thrown, and you have played baseball since you were eight years old, that makes you a fairly credible source. You probably know what you are talking about. So let us know that by saying something like, "Having played baseball for over ten years, including two years as the starting pitcher on my high school's varsity team, I can tell you about the ways that pitchers use to throw different kinds of balls in a baseball game." With regard to persuasive speaking, if you are trying to convince your audience to join Big Brothers Big Sisters and you have been volunteering for years, let them know: "I've been serving with Big Brothers Big Sisters for the last two years, and I can tell you that the experience is very rewarding." By telling your audience you volunteer, you are saying to them "I'm not asking you to do anything I wouldn't do myself." If you do it (and have done it for two years) then it must be a good experience.

However, you may be speaking on a subject with which you have no history of credibility. If you are just curious about when streetlights were installed at intersections and why they are red, yellow, and green, you can do that. But you will still need to give your audience some sort of reason to trust your knowledge. Since you were required to do research, you are at least more knowledgeable on the subject than anyone else in the class. In this case, you might say, "After doing some research and reading several books on the subject, I want to share what I've learned about the history and evolution of traffic lights in America."

Element 3: Establish Rapport

The next element of your introduction will be to establish rapport with your audience. **Rapport** is basically a relationship or connection you make with your audience. In everyday life, we say that two people have a rapport when they get along really well and are good friends. In your introduction, you will want to explain to your audience why you are giving them this information and why it is important to them (answering the WIIFM question). You will be making a connection through this shared information and

explaining to them how it will benefit them. One of the best examples of rapport we have seen came from an informative speech on the poet Lord Byron:

> *You may be asking yourselves why you need to know about Lord Byron. If you take Humanities 1202 as I did last semester, you will be discussing his life and works, so after this speech, you will have a good basis for the class material.*

What is important here is that this speaker used the audience analysis techniques discussed in Chapter 2 to determine the demographic make-up of her audience and determine what would motivate them to listen. Knowing that they are all college students, she enticed them to listen with the suggestion that this information would benefit them in a future class they might take.

Another important thing to note here is that there is not necessarily a right or wrong way to establish rapport with your audience. You as the speaker must determine what you think will work best and help make a connection. Take for example an informative speech on "how to throw a baseball." How would you establish rapport with your audience on that topic? Maybe you choose to focus on the age of your audience and noting that they are all relatively young and that some of them are already parents, you might say, "A lot of people in this room have or may have children someday, and if you decide you want to throw a ball with them or help them with sports, here are three steps you can use to teach them how to throw a baseball." Will everyone in the class have kids someday? Probably not, but it is reasonable to guess that most about your audience will relate to this approach based on demographic analysis.

Element 4: Preview Your Topic/Purpose/Central Idea

The fourth major function of an introduction after getting the audience's attention is to reveal the purpose of your speech to your audience. Have you ever sat through a speech wondering what the basic point was? Have you ever come away after a speech and had no idea what the speaker was talking about? An introduction should make the topic, purpose, and central idea clear.

When previewing your topic in the introduction, be explicit with regard to exactly what your topic is. Spell it out for them if you have to. While it may not be great writing, the sentence "I'd like to tell you about how to properly change your car's oil" is clear and leaves no doubt what your speech will be about. This might be a good place for you to review the material in Chapter 4 about writing central idea statements and specific purposes.



While not a hard and fast rule, you will probably also want to avoid having the audience "guess" what your topic is through clues. Consider the following topic reveal:

> *Today I'd like to talk to you about a man who overcame great adversity to become the President of the United States. During his time in office he faced increasing opposition from conservative voices in government, as well as some dissension among his own party, all while being thrust into a war he didn't want.*

As an attention-getter, this may not be bad, but what it doesn't do is reveal the topic. The speaker at this point might assume the audience has clearly figured out who this speech is about and moved on. Unfortunately, the above passage could refer to either Abraham Lincoln or Barack Obama, and members of the audience might either be confused or disappointed when they figure out the speech isn't covering what they thought it was.

It should also be noted here that at no point in your introduction do you ever want to read your specific purpose statement as a way of revealing your topic. Your specific purpose is included on your outline for your instructor's sake and to keep you on track during preparation. The language used in the specific purpose ("To inform my audience…") is too awkward to be actually read aloud.

Element 5: Preview Your Main Points

Just like previewing your topic, previewing your main points helps your audience know what to expect throughout the course of your speech and prepares them for what you are going to speak on. Your preview of the main points should be clear and easy to follow so that there is no question in your audience's minds about what they are. Long, complicated, or verbose main points can get confusing. Be succinct and simple: "Today, in our discussion of Abraham Lincoln's life, we will look at his birth, his role a president, and his assassination." From that, there is little question as to what specific aspects of Lincoln's life the speech will cover. However, if you want to be extra sure they get it, you can always enumerate them by using signposts (as we discussed in Chapter 6): "In discussing how to make chocolate chip cookies, first we will cover what ingredients you need, second we will talk about how to mix them, and third we will look at baking them."

What these five elements do is prepare your audience for the bulk of the speech (i.e. the body section) by letting them know what they can expect, why they should listen, and why they can trust you as a speaker. Having all five elements starts your speech off on much more solid ground than you would get without having them.

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13.6.2: Examples of Introductions

Below you will find examples of informative and persuasive introductions. Notice that each contains the five elements necessary for a good intro: an attention-getter, the reveal and relate statement, the speaker's credibility, the central idea, and the clearly articulated main points (the preview statement). An important point to mention about the introduction is that the parts should flow or "bridge" into each other. You do not want to have a disconnect or a disrupted narrative.

Informative Speech Introductions

Topic: Allergies

My parents knew that something was really wrong when my mom received a call from my home economics teacher saying that she needed to get to the school immediately and pick me up. This was all because of an allergy, something that everyone in this room is either vaguely or extremely familiar with. Allergies affect a large number of people, and three very common allergies include pet and animal allergies, seasonal allergies, and food allergies. All three of these allergies take control over certain areas of my life, as all three types affect me, starting when I was just a kid and continuing today [attention-getter]. Because of this, I have done extensive research on the subject,[credibility], and would like to share some of what I've learned with all of you today. Whether you just finished your freshman year of college, you are a new parent, or you have kids that are grown and out of the house, allergies will most likely affect everyone in this room at some point, [rapport] so it will benefit you all to know more about them, specifically the three most common sources of allergies and the most recent approaches to treating them [purpose and preview].

Topic: Seasonal Affective Disorder (See if you can identify the parts on this one.)

When winter is approaching and the days are getting darker and shorter, do you feel a dramatic reduction in energy or do you sleep longer than usual during the fall or winter months? If you answered yes to either of these questions, you may be one of the millions of people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD. For most people, these problems do not cause great suffering in their life, but for an estimated six percent of the United States population, these problems can result in major suffering. As a student in the registered nursing program here at Dalton State, I became interested in SAD after learning more about it and want to share this information with all of you in case you recognize some of these symptoms in yourself or someone you love. In order to fully understand SAD, it is important to look at the medical definition of SAD, the symptoms of this disorder, and the measures that are commonly used to ease symptoms.

Persuasive Speech Introduction

Topic: Term Life Insurance

You have cried silent tears and uttered desperate prayers, but as you watch the medical team unhook the tubes, turn off the heart monitor and shoot furtive, helpless glances your way, you face the unmistakable reality that

cancer has won and you are left with unimaginable grief, despair and yes, financial burden. Most of us would not choose to cause our loved ones financial pain on top of the emotional pain of our deaths, but by failing to plan for their financial needs, that is exactly what we do. I have learned a lot about life insurance in my research for this presentation, from taking a thirteen-week course about financial matters, and from the experience of purchasing a term life insurance policy just last year. I know most of you probably have not thought much about life insurance, but someday each and every one of us in this room will pass away and somebody is going to have to pay for our funerals. Term life insurance is affordable, protects those you love from the financial devastation of your uninsured death, and reinforces your commitment to their financial and emotional well-being while you are living. Let's examine the definition of term life insurance and then its benefits.

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13.6.3: Structuring the Conclusion

Similar to the introduction, the conclusion has three specific elements that you will want to incorporate in order to make it as strong as possible. Given the nature of these elements and what they do, these should generally be incorporated into your conclusion in the order they are presented below.

Element 1: Signal the End

The first thing a good conclusion should do is to signal the end of a speech. You may be thinking that telling an audience that you're about to stop speaking is a "no brainer," but many speakers really don't prepare their audience for the end. When a speaker just suddenly stops speaking, the audience is left confused and disappointed. Instead, you want to make sure that audiences are left knowledgeable and satisfied with your speech. In a way, it gives them time to begin mentally organizing and cataloging all the points you have made for further consideration later.



Generally, the easiest way to signal that it is the end of your speech is to begin your conclusion with the words, "In conclusion." Similarly, "In summary" or "To conclude" work just as well. While these may seem very blunt ways of communicating the end of your speech to the audience, you want it to be extremely clear to everyone that you are wrapping things up. Certainly, you can choose to employ more elegant, interesting, or creative language here, but you then run the risk of the audience not catching on to the fact that your speech is ending.

On the other hand, saying "In conclusion" (and definitely saying it more than once) can have an unintended negative effect. The audience may figure you are finished and turn you off, sort of like how we get up and leave during the credits in a movie. Therefore, you can also go straight to the summary, which is Element 2.

Element 2: Restate Main Points

In the introduction of a speech you delivered a preview of your main points; now in the conclusion, you will deliver a review. One of the biggest differences between written and oral communication is the necessity of repetition in oral communication (the issue of "planned redundancy" again). When you preview your main points in the introduction, effectively discuss and make transitions to your main points during the body of the speech, and finally, review the main points in the conclusion, you increase the likelihood that the audience will understand and retain your main points after the speech is over. Remember, your English instructor can re-read your essays as many times as he or she wants, but your audience – and your instructor – only have one opportunity to catch and remember the points you are trying to get across in your speech.

Because you are trying to remind the audience of your main points, you want to be sure not to bring up any new material or ideas. For example, if you said, "There are several other issues related to this topic, such as…but I don't have time for them," that would make the audience confused and perhaps wonder why you did not address those in the body section. Or if you were giving a persuasive speech on wind energy and you ended with, "Wind energy is the energy of the future, but there are still a few problems with it, such as noise and killing lots of birds," you are bringing up a counter-argument that should have been dealt with in the body of the speech.

This is a good place to remind you that the introduction, preview, transitions, and conclusion are for helping the audience be interested and prepared to listen, retain, and follow your speech. The conclusion is too late for that. The hard-core facts and content are in the body. If you are tempted to cram lots of material into the conclusion, that is not the place for it, nor is it the place to provide the important steps to a solution.

As you progress as a public speaker, you will want to work on rephrasing your summary statement so that it does not sound like an exact repeat of the preview. For example, if your preview was:

> *The three arguments in favor of medical marijuana that I will present are that it would make necessary treatments available to all, it would cut down on the costs to law enforcement, and it would bring revenue to state budgets.*

Your summary might be:

> *In the minutes we've had together, I have shown you that approving medical marijuana in our state will greatly help persons with a variety of chronic and severe conditions. Also, funds spent on law enforcement to find and convict legitimate marijuana users would go down as revenues from medical marijuana to the state budget would go up.*

Element 3: Clincher

The third element of your conclusion is the **clincher** or something memorable with which to conclude your speech. The clincher is sometimes referred to as a Concluding Device. These are the very last words you will say in your speech, so you need to make them count. This is the last thing your audience will hear, so you want to make it good. In a certain way, you might think of your speech as a nice dinner at a fancy restaurant: the introduction is the appetizer that gets everyone ready for the main course, the body section is the "meat and vegetables," and the conclusion is like dessert. But have you ever had a nice meal that ended with a dessert that didn't really taste good? Regardless of how good the rest of the meal was, you probably walked away thinking, It was okay, but I just remember not liking it at the end. A good clincher prevents your audience from thinking that way, and in fact, can even make an audience remember a speech more favorably.

In many ways, the clincher is like the inverse of the attention-getter. You want to start the speech off with something strong, and you want to end the speech with something strong. To that end, similar to what we discussed above with attention-getters, there are a number of ways you can make your clincher strong and memorable.

Conclude with a Challenge

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

In a challenge, try to make it aspirational but reasonable. The challenge should be something they can strive for but not see as something impossible. Two or three more servings a day of fruits and vegetables is reasonable, but six probably would be seen as too much.

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

One specific type of appeal for action is the immediate call to action. Whereas some appeals ask for people to engage in behavior in the future, the immediate call to action asks people to engage in behavior right now. If a speaker wants to see a new traffic light placed at a dangerous intersection, he or she may conclude by asking all the audience members to sign a digital petition right then and there, using a computer the speaker has made available. For a speech on eating more vegetables, pass out raw veggies and dip at the conclusion of the speech; someone giving a speech on petitioning a lawmaker for a new law could provide audience members with a prewritten e-mail they can send to the lawmaker.

If you are giving a persuasive speech about a solution to a problem, you should not relegate the call to action to the very end of the speech. It should probably be a main point where you can deal with the steps and specifics of the solution in more detail. For example, perhaps a speaker has been discussing the problems associated with the disappearance of art education in the United States. The speaker could then propose a solution of creating more community-based art experiences for school children as a way to fill this gap. Although this can be an effective conclusion, a speaker must ask herself or himself whether the solution should be

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

Conclude with a Quotation

Another way you can conclude a speech is by providing a quotation relevant to the speech topic. When using a quotation, you need to think about whether your goal is to end on a persuasive note or an informative note. Some quotations will have a clear call to action, while other quotations summarize or provoke thought. For example, let's say you are delivering an informative speech about dissident writers in the former Soviet Union. You could end by citing this quotation from Alexander Solzhenitsyn: "A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason, no regime has ever loved great writers."

Notice that this quotation underscores the idea of writers as dissidents, but it doesn't ask listeners to put forth the effort to engage in any specific thought process or behavior. If, on the other hand, you were delivering a persuasive speech urging your audience to sponsor a child in a developing country for $40 per month, you might use this quotation by Forest Witcraft:

"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."

In this case, the quotation leaves the audience with the message that monetary sacrifices are worth taking, that they make our lives worthwhile, and that the right thing to do is to go ahead and make that sacrifice.

Conclude by Visualizing the Future

The purpose of a conclusion that refers to the future is to help your audience imagine the future you believe can occur. If you are giving a speech on the development of video games for learning, you could conclude by depicting the classroom of the future where video games are perceived as true learning tools. More often, speakers use visualization of the future to depict how society or how individual listeners' lives would be different if the speaker's persuasive attempt worked. For example, if a speaker proposes that a solution to illiteracy is hiring more reading specialists in public schools, the speaker could ask her or his audience to imagine a world without illiteracy. In this use of visualization, the goal is to persuade the audience to adopt the speaker's point of view. By showing that the speaker's vision of the future is a positive one, the conclusion should help to persuade the audience to help create this future.

Conclude by Inspiration

By definition, the word **inspire** means to affect or arouse someone. Both affect and arouse have strong emotional connotations. The ultimate goal of an inspirational concluding device is similar to an "appeal for action" but the ultimate goal is more lofty or ambiguous; the goal is to stir someone's emotions in a specific manner. This is done by sharing a story, poem, or quotation that appeals to the audience's basic values and therefore appeals to emotions. Stories or allusions to "underdogs" who overcame obstacles to achieve something worthwhile or those who make sacrifices for the good of others can help inspire. You probably know of such stories (Olympic athletes and a well-known figure such as Captain Sullenberger are examples) that would be of value, as long as they are relevant to your topic and purpose. Poetry is sometimes used to inspire, but you want to use a short passage (eight lines or less) of poetry that is clear to the audience.

Conclude with a Question

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

Refer Back to the Introduction

This method provides a good sense of closure to the speech and can be one of the most effective methods. If you started the speech with a startling statistic or fact, such as "Last year, according to the official website of the American Humane Society, four million pets were euthanized in shelters in the United States," in the end you could say, "Remember that shocking number of four million euthanized pets? With your donation of time or money to the Northwest Georgia Rescue Shelter, you can help lower that number in our region."

Conclude with an Anecdote or Personal Story

As with your attention-getter, a brief story can be a strong way to conclude. However, it must be relevant and not go on too long. Combining this method and the previous one, you might finish telling a story that you started in the introduction as your clincher. This method is probably better with persuasive speeches where you want to end with a strong emotional appeal.

Conclude with a Reference to Audience or Audience Self-Interest

The last concluding device involves a direct reference to your audience. This concluding device is used when a speaker attempts to answer the basic audience question, “What’s in it for me?” (the WIIFM question). The goal of this concluding device is to spell out the direct benefits a behavior or thought change has for audience members. For example, a speaker talking about stress reduction techniques could conclude by clearly listing all the physical health benefits stress reduction offers (e.g., improved reflexes, improved immune system, improved hearing, reduction in blood pressure). In this case, the speaker is clearly spelling out why audience members should care about the topic and what’s in it for them.

Informative versus Persuasive Conclusions

As you read through the above possible ways to conclude a speech, hopefully, you noticed that some of the methods are more appropriate for persuasive speeches and others are more appropriate for informative speeches. An appeal to action, for example, may not be appropriate for an informative speech since asking your audience to do something often borders on persuasion, which isn’t what an informative speech is intended to do. Similarly, if your persuasive speech is on the importance of voting in the next local election, an appeal to action clincher would probably be one of your stronger options.

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13.6.4: Examples of Conclusions

Informative Speech Conclusion

Topic: Anxiety

Anxiety is a complex emotion that afflicts people of all ages and social backgrounds and is experienced uniquely by each individual. We have seen that there are multiple symptoms, causes, and remedies, all of which can often be related either directly or indirectly to cognitive behaviors. While most people do not enjoy anxiety, it seems to be part of the universal human experience, so realize that you are not alone, but also realize that you are not powerless against it. With that said, the following quote, attributed to an anonymous source, could not be more true, “Worry does not relieve tomorrow of its stress; it merely empties today of its strength.”

Persuasive Speech Conclusion

Topic: Adopting a Rescue Animal

I believe you should adopt a rescue animal because it helps stop forms of animal cruelty, you can add a healthy companion to your home, and it is a relatively simple process that can save a life. Each and every one of you should go to your nearest animal shelter, which may include the Catoosa Citizens for Animal Care, the Humane Society of NWGA in Dalton, the Murray County Humane Society, or the multiple other shelters in the area to bring a new animal companion into your life. I’ll leave you with a paraphrased quote from Deborah Jacobs’s article “Westminster Dog Show Junkie” on Forbes.com: “You may start out thinking that you are rescuing the animal, and ultimately find that the animal rescues you right back.”

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13.7: Determining Your Main Ideas

Learning Objectives

1. Revisit the function of a specific purpose.
2. Understand how to make the transition from a specific purpose to a series of main points.
3. Be able to narrow a speech from all the possible points to the main points.
4. Explain how to prepare meaningful main points.

When creating a speech, it's important to remember that speeches have three clear parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction establishes the topic and whets your audience's appetite, and the conclusion wraps everything up at the end of your speech. The real "meat" of your speech happens in the body. In this section, we're going to discuss how to think strategically about the body of your speech.

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

What Is Your Specific Purpose?

Before we discuss how to determine the main points of your speech, we want to revisit your speech's specific purpose, which we discussed in detail
previously in this textbook. Recall that a speech can have one of three general purposes: to inform, to persuade, or to entertain.

The general purpose refers to the broad goal for creating and delivering the speech. The specific purpose, on the other hand, starts with one of those broad goals (inform, persuade, or entertain) and then further informs the listener about the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* of the speech.

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

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

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

From Specific Purpose to Main Points

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

How Many Main Points Do I Need?

While there is no magic number for how many main points a speech should have, speech experts generally agree that the fewer the number of main points the better. First and foremost, experts on the subject of memory have consistently shown that people don't tend to remember very much after they listen to a message or leave a conversation. [1] While many different factors can affect a listener's ability to retain information after a speech, how the speech is organized is an important part of that process. [2] For the speeches you will be delivering in a typical public speaking class, you will usually have just two or three main points. If your speech is less than three minutes long, then two main points will probably work best. If your speech is between three and ten minutes in length, then it makes more sense to use three main points.

You may be wondering why we are recommending only two or three main points. The reason comes straight out of the research on listening. According to LeFrancois, people are more likely to remember information that is meaningful, useful, and of interest to them; different or unique; organized; visual; and simple. [3] Two or three main points are much easier for listeners to remember than ten or even five. In addition, if you have two or three main points, you'll be able to develop each one with examples, statistics, or other forms of support. Including support for each point will make your speech more interesting and more memorable for your audience.

Narrowing Down Your Main Points

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

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

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

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

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

Helpful Hints for Preparing Your Main Points

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

Uniting Your Main Points

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

Suppose you added a fourth main point about open-source software for musicians—would this fourth main point go with the other three? Probably not. While you may have a strong passion for open-source music software, that main point is extraneous information for the speech you are giving. It does not help accomplish your specific purpose, so you'd need to toss it out.

Keeping Your Main Points Separate

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

Balancing Main Points

One of the biggest mistakes some speakers make is to spend most of their time talking about one of their main points, completely neglecting their other main points. To avoid this mistake, organize your speech so as to spend roughly the same amount of time on each main point. If you find that one of your main points is simply too large, you may need to divide that main point into two main points and consolidate your other main points into a single main point. Let's see if our preceding example is balanced (school districts use the software in their operations; what is open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider). What do you think? Obviously, the answer depends on how much time a speaker will have to talk about each of these main points. If you have an hour to talk, then you may find that these three main points are balanced. However, you may also find them wildly unbalanced if you only have five minutes to speak because five minutes is not enough time to even explain what open-source software is. If that's the case, then you probably need to rethink your specific purpose to ensure that you can cover the material in the allotted time.

Creating Parallel Structure for Main Points

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

Maintaining Logical Flow of Main Points

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

sense to you, you probably need to think about the flow of your main points. Often, this process is an art and not a science. But let's look at a couple of examples.

School Dress Codes Example	
Main Point 1	History of school dress codes
Main Point 2	Problems with school dress codes
Main Point 3	Eliminating school dress codes
Rider Law Legislation	
Main Point 1	Why should states have rider laws?
School Dress Codes Example	
Main Point 2	What are the effects of a lack of rider laws?
Main Point 3	What is rider law legislation?

When you look at these two examples, what are your immediate impressions of the two examples? In the first example, does it make sense to talk about history, and then the problems, and finally how to eliminate school dress codes? Would it make sense to put history as your last main point? Probably not. In this case, the main points are in a logical sequential order. What about the second example? Does it make sense to talk about your solution, then your problem, and then define the solution? Not really! What order do you think these main points should be placed in for a logical flow? Maybe you should explain the problem (lack of rider laws), then define your solution (what is rider law legislation), and then argue for your solution (why states should have rider laws). Notice that in this example you don't even need to know what "rider laws" are to see that the flow didn't make sense.

Key Takeaways

- All speeches start with a general purpose and then move to a specific purpose that gives the *who*, *what*, *where*, and *how* for the speech.
- Transitioning from the specific purpose to possible main points means developing a list of potential main points you could discuss. Then you can narrow your focus by looking for similarities among your potential main points and combining ones that are similar.
- Shorter speeches will have two main points while longer speeches will generally have three or more main points. When creating your main points, make sure that they are united, separate, balanced, parallel, and logical.

Exercises

1. Generate a specific purpose for your current speech. Conduct a brainstorming activity where you try to think of all the possible points you could possibly make related to your specific purpose. Once you've finished creating this list, see if you can find a meaningful pattern that helps you develop three main points.
2. Pair up with a partner. Take the three main points you developed in the previous exercise, exchange papers with your partner, and ask him or her to see whether or not they are united, separate, balanced, parallel, and logical. You do the same for your partner's main points. If they are not, what can you or your partner do to fix your main points?

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13.8: Keeping Your Speech Moving

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the importance of transitions within a speech.
2. Identify and be able to use a variety of transition words to create effective transitions within a speech.
3. Understand how to use a variety of strategies to help audience members keep up with a speech's content: internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

Have you ever been listening to a speech or a lecture and found yourself thinking, "I am so lost!" or "Where the heck is this speaker going?" Chances are one of the reasons you weren't sure what the speaker was talking about was that the speaker didn't effectively keep the speech moving. When we are reading and encounter something we don't understand, we have the ability to reread the paragraph and try to make sense of what we're trying to read. Unfortunately, we are not that lucky when it comes to listening to a speaker. We cannot pick up our universal remote and rewind the person. For this reason, speakers need to really think about how they keep a speech moving so that audience members are easily able to keep up with the speech. In this section, we're going to look at four specific techniques speakers can use that make following a speech much easier for an audience: transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

Transitions between Main Points

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

- Now that we've seen the problems caused by the lack of adolescent curfew laws, let's examine how curfew laws could benefit our community.
- Thus far we've examined the history and prevalence of alcohol abuse among Native Americans, but it is the impact that this abuse has on the health of Native Americans that is of the greatest concern.
- Now that we've thoroughly examined how these two medications are similar to one another, we can consider the many clear differences between the two medications.
- Although he was one of the most prolific writers in Great Britain prior to World War II, Winston Churchill continued to publish during the war years as well.

You'll notice that in each of these transition examples, the beginning phrase of the sentence indicates the conclusion of a period of time (now that, thus
far). Figure **13.8.1**: "Transition Words" contains a variety of transition words that will be useful when keeping your speech moving.

Figure 13.8.1:Transition Words

Addition	also, again, as well as, besides, coupled with, following this, further, furthermore, in addition, in the same way, additionally, likewise, moreover, similarly
Consequence	accordingly, as a result, consequently, for this reason, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, so then, subsequently, therefore, thus, thereupon, wherefore
Generalizing	as a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, generally speaking, ordinarily, usually
Exemplifying	chiefly, especially, for instance, in particular, markedly, namely, particularly, including, specifically, such as
Illustration	for example, for instance, for one thing, as an illustration, illustrated with, as an example, in this case
Emphasis	above all, chiefly, with attention to, especially, particularly, singularly
Similarity	comparatively, coupled with, correspondingly, identically, likewise, similar, moreover, together with
Exception	aside from, barring, besides, except, excepting, excluding, exclusive of, other than, outside of, save
Restatement	in essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say, in short, in brief, to put it differently
Contrast and Comparison	contrast, by the same token, conversely, instead, likewise, on one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, nevertheless, rather, similarly, yet, but, however, still, nevertheless, in contrast
Sequence	at first, first of all, to begin with, in the first place, at the same time, for now, for the time being, the next step, in time, in turn, later on, meanwhile, next, then, soon, the meantime, later, while, earlier, simultaneously, afterward, in conclusion, with this in mind
Common Sequence Patterns	first, second, third...
	generally, furthermore, finally
	in the first place, also, lastly
	in the first place, pursuing this further, finally
	to be sure, additionally, lastly
	in the first place, just in the same way, finally
	basically, similarly, as well
Summarizing	after all, all in all, all things considered, briefly, by and large, in any case, in any event, in brief, in conclusion, on the whole, in short, in summary, in the final analysis, in the long run, on balance, to sum up, to summarize, finally
Diversion	by the way, incidentally
Direction	here, there, over there, beyond, nearly, opposite, under, above, to the left, to the right, in the distance
Location	above, behind, by, near, throughout, across, below, down, off, to the right, against, beneath, in back of, onto, under, along, beside, in front of, on top of, among, between, inside, outside, around, beyond, into, over

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

Internal Previews

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

Ausubel was the first person to examine the effect that internal previews had on the retention of oral information. [1] Basically, when a speaker clearly informs an audience what he or she is going to be talking about in a clear and organized manner, the audience listens for those main points, which leads to higher retention of the speaker's message. Let's look at a sample internal preview:

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

When an audience hears that you will be exploring two different ideas within this main point, they are ready to listen for those main points as you talk about them. In essence, you're helping your audience keep up with your speech. Rather than being given alone, internal previews often come after a speaker has transitioned to that main topic area. Using the previous internal preview, let's see it along with the transition to that main point.

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

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

Internal Summaries

Whereas an internal preview helps an audience know what you are going to talk about within a main point at the beginning, an internal summary is delivered to remind an audience of what they just heard within the speech. In general, internal summaries are best used when the information within a specific main point of a speech was complicated. To write your own internal summaries, look at the summarizing transition words in Table 10.1 "Transition Words" Let's look at an example.

To sum up, school bullying is a definite problem. Bullying in schools has been shown to be detrimental to the victim's grades, the victim's scores on standardized tests, and the victim's future educational outlook.
In this example, the speaker was probably talking about the impact that bullying has on an individual victim educationally. Of course, an internal summary can also be a great way to lead into a transition to the next point of a speech.
In this section, we have explored how bullying in schools has been shown to be detrimental to the victim's grades, the victim's scores on standardized tests, and the victim's future educational outlook (internal summary). Therefore, schools need to implement campus-wide, comprehensive antibullying programs (transition).

While not sounding like the more traditional transition, this internal summary helps readers summarize the content of that main point. The sentence that follows then leads to the next major part of the speech, which is going to discuss the importance of antibullying programs.

Signposts

Have you ever been on a road trip and watched the green rectangular mile signs pass you by? Fifty miles to go. Twenty-five miles to go. One mile to go. Signposts within a speech function the same way. A signpost is a guide a speaker gives her or his audience to help the audience keep up with the content of a speech. If you look at Table 10.1 "Transition Words" and look at the "common sequence patterns," you'll see a series of possible signpost options. In essence, we use these short phrases at the beginning of a piece of information to help our audience members keep up with what we're discussing. For example, if you were giving a speech whose main point was about the three functions of credibility, you could use internal signposts like this:

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

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

In addition to helping audience members keep up with a speech, signposts can also be used to highlight specific information the speaker thinks is important. Where the other signposts were designed to show the way (like highway markers), signposts that call attention to specific pieces of information are more like billboards. Words and phrases that are useful for highlighting information can be found in Table 10.1 "Transition Words" under the category “emphasis.” All these words are designed to help you call attention to what you are saying so that the audience will also recognize the importance of the information.

Key Takeaways

- Transitions are very important because they help an audience stay on top of the information that is being presented to them. Without transitions, audiences are often left lost and the ultimate goal of the speech is not accomplished.
- Specific transition words, like those found in Figure **13.8.1** "Transition Words", can be useful in constructing effective transitions.
- In addition to major transitions between the main points of a speech, speakers can utilize internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts to help focus audience members on the information contained within a speech.

Exercises

1. Using the main points you created earlier in this chapter, create clear transitions between each main point. Look at the possible transition words
   in Figure **13.8.1**: "Transition Words" See which words are best suited for your speech. Try your transitions out on a friend or classmate to see if the transition makes sense to other people.
2. Take your most complicated main point and create an internal preview for that main point and then end the point with an internal summary.
3. Think about your current speech. Where can you use signposts to help focus your audience’s attention? Try at least two different ways of phrasing your signposts and then decide which one is better to use.

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13.9: Analyzing a Speech Body

Learning Objectives

1. See what a full speech body looks like in order to identify major components of the speech body.

Thus far this chapter has focused on how you go about creating main points and organizing the body of your speech. In this section, we're going to examine the three main points of an actual speech. Before we start analyzing the introduction, please read the paragraphs that follow.

Smart Dust Speech Body

To help us understand smart dust, we will begin by first examining what smart dust is. Dr. Kris Pister, a professor in the robotics lab at the University of California at Berkeley, originally conceived the idea of smart dust in 1998 as part of a project funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). According to a 2001 article written by Bret Warneke, Matt Last, Brian Liebowitz, and Kris Pister titled "Smart Dust: Communicating with a Cubic-Millimeter Computer" published in *Computer*, Pister's goal was to build a device that contained a built-in sensor, communication device, and a small computer that could be integrated into a cubic millimeter package. For comparison purposes, Doug Steel, in a 2005 white paper titled "Smart Dust" written for C. T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston, noted that a single grain of rice has a volume of five cubic millimeters. Each individual piece of dust, called a mote, would then have the ability to interact with other motes and supercomputers. As Steve Lohr wrote in the January 30, 2010, edition of the *New York Times* in an article titled "Smart Dust? Not Quite, but We're Getting There," smart dust could eventually consist of "tiny digital sensors, strewn around the globe, gathering all sorts of information and communicating with powerful computer networks to monitor, measure, and understand the physical world in new ways."

Now that we've examined what smart dust is, let's switch gears and talk about some of the military applications for smart dust. Because smart dust was originally conceptualized under a grant from DARPA, military uses of smart dust have been widely theorized and examined. According to the Smart Dust website, smart dust could eventually be used for "battlefield surveillance, treaty monitoring, transportation monitoring, scud hunting" and other clear military applications. Probably the number one benefit of smart dust in the military environment is its surveillance abilities. Major Scott Dickson in a Blue Horizons Paper written for the Center for Strategy and Technology for the United States Air Force Air War College, sees smart dust as helping the military in battlespace awareness, homeland security, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) identification. Furthermore, Major Dickson also believes it may be possible to create smart dust that has the ability to defeat communications jamming equipment created by foreign governments, which could help the US military to not only communicate among itself but could also increase communications with civilians in the military combat zones. On a much larger scale, smart dust could even help the US military and NASA protect the earth. According to a 2010 article written by Jessica Griggs in *New Scientist*, one of the first benefits of smart dust could be an early defense warning for space storms and other debris that could be catastrophic.

Now that we've explored some of the military benefits of smart dust, let's switch gears and see how smart dust may be able to have an impact on our daily lives. According to the smart dust project website, smart dust could quickly become a part of our daily lives. Everything from pasting smart dust particles to our fingertips to create a virtual computer keyboard to inventory control to product quality control has been discussed as possible applications for smart dust. Steve Lohr in his 2010 *New York Times* article wrote, "The applications for sensor-based computing, experts say, include buildings that manage their own energy use, bridges that sense motion and metal fatigue to tell engineers they need repairs, cars that track traffic patterns and report potholes, and fruit and vegetable shipments that tell grocers when they ripen and begin to spoil." Medically, according to the smart dust project website, smart dust could help disabled individuals interface with computers.

Theoretically, we could all be injected with smart dust, which relays information to our physicians and detects adverse changes to our body instantly. Smart dust could detect the microscopic formations of cancer cells or alert us when we've been infected by a bacteria or virus, which could speed up treatment and prolong all of our lives.

Now that you've had a chance to read the body of the speech on smart dust, take a second and attempt to conduct your own analysis of the speech's body. What are the main points? Do you think the main points make sense? What organizational pattern is used? Are there clear transitions? What other techniques are used to keep the speech moving? Is evidence used to support the

speech? Once you're done analyzing the speech body, look at Figure **13.9.1** "Smart Dust Speech Body Analysis", which presents our basic analysis of the speech's body.

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Figure **13.9.1**: Smart Dust Speech Body Analysis

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

Theoretically, we could all be injected with smart dust, which relays information to our physicians and detects adverse changes to our body instantly. Smart dust could detect the microscopic formations of cancer cells or alert us when we've been infected by a bacteria or virus, which could speed up treatment and prolong all of our lives. of cancer cells or alert us when we've been infected by a bacteria or virus, which could speed up treatment and prolong all of our lives.	

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13.10: The Required Outlines

Learning Objectives

1. Define three types of outlines: working outline, full-sentence outline, and speaking outline.
2. Identify the advantages of using notecards to present your speaking outline.

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

Working Outline/Worksheet

A working outline is the first step in developing your speech. The worksheet that you do for each speech is your Working Outline as it starts you thinking about what it is that you want to communicate to your audience by laying out the basic structure of your speech. The worksheet will include a topic, a general and specific purpose; a concrete central idea and preview statement, three main points, and at least an example of an oral citation with a quote, and a bibliography entry.

The worksheet outline can be thought of as a "rough draft," or feeder document in the development of your message. Here is an example of a worksheet outline:

Name: Anomaly May McGillicuddy
Topic: Smart dust
General Purpose: To inform
Specific Purpose: To inform a group of science students about the potential of smart dust

Central Idea: Thus far, researchers hypothesize that smart dust could be used for everything from tracking patients in hospitals to early warnings of natural disasters and defending against bioterrorism.
Preview Statement: Today, I'm going to explain what smart dust is and the various applications smart dust has in the near future. To help you understand I will first examine what smart dust is and how it works. Then examine some military applications of smart dust. And we will end by discussing some nonmilitary applications of smart dust.

Main Points:

1. Smart dust is an assembly of microcomputers.
2. Smart dust can be used by the military—no, no—smart dust could be an enormous asset in covert military operations. (That's better because it is more clear and precise.)
3. Smart dust could also have applications to daily life.

Oral Citation:

According to a 2010 article written by Jessica Griggs in *New Scientist*, one of the first benefits of smart dust could be an early defense warning for space storms and other debris that could be catastrophic.

Bibliography Source

Griggs, J. (2010, February 6). Smart dust to provide solar early warning defense. *New Scientist, 205* (2746), 22.

This stage of preparation turns out to be a good place to go back and examine whether all the main points are directly related to the central idea and to each other. If so, your message has a strong potential for the unity of focus. But if the relationship of one of the main points is weak, this is the time to strengthen it. It will be more difficult later for two reasons: first, the sheer amount of text on

your pages will make the visual task more difficult, and second, it becomes increasingly difficult to change things in which you have a large investment in time and thought.

You can see that this worksheet outline can lay a strong foundation for the rest of your message and how the information transfers directly to your preparation outline. Its organization is visually apparent. Once you are confident in the internal unity of your basic message, you can begin adding the supporting points/evidence in descending detail—that is, from the general (main points) to the particular (supporting points) and so on. The outline makes it visually apparent where the information fits. You only need to assess your supporting points to be sure they're credible and directly relevant to the main points they should support.

In the next type of outline, the preparation outline, we'll take a look at the transitions and see how they make the listener aware of the shifting focus to the next main point.

Preparation (Full-Sentence) Outline

Your **Preparation Outline** should contain full sentences only. There are several reasons why this kind of outline is important. First, you have a full plan of everything you intend to say to your audience so that you will not have to struggle with wordings or examples. Second, you have a clear idea of how much time it will take to present your speech. Third, it contributes a fundamental ingredient of good preparation, part of your ethical responsibility to your audience.

The preparation outline allows you to iron out the kinks in your message. For instance, let's say you've made the claim that coal mining is a hazardous occupation but you cannot find credible and authoritative evidence as support. Now you must reexamine that main point to assess its validity. You might have to change that main point in order to be able to support it. If you do so, however, you must make sure the new main point is a logical part of the *central idea/preview statement–three main points–conclusion* sequence.

Notice in the preparation outline that each of the three main points moves from the general to the particular. Specifically, each main point is a claim, followed by particular information that supports that claim so that the audience will perceive its validity. For example, for a speech about coal mining safety, your first main point might focus on the idea that coal mining is a hazardous occupation. You might begin by making a very general claim, such as "Coal mining is one of the most hazardous occupations in the United States," and then become more specific by providing statistics, authoritative quotations, or examples to support your primary claim.

Sometimes transitions seem troublesome, and that's not surprising. We often omit them when we have informal conversations. Our conversation partners understand what we mean because of our gestures and vocal strategies. However, others might not understand what we mean but think they do, and so we might never know whether they understood us. Even when we include transitions, we don't generally identify them as transitions. In a speech, however, we need to use effective transitions as a gateway from one main point to the next. The listener needs to know when a speaker is moving from one main point to the next.

This is how a full-sentence outline looks:

Name: Anomaly May McGillicuddy
Title: The potential of smart dust.

Introduction

(Attention Grabber): In 2002, famed science fiction writer, Michael Crichton, released his book *Prey*, which was about a swarm of nanomachines that were feeding off living tissue. The nanomachines were solar-powered, self-sufficient, and intelligent. Most disturbingly, the nanomachines could work together as a swarm as it took over and killed its prey in its need for new resources. The technology for this level of sophistication in nanotechnology is surprisingly more science-fact than science fiction. In 2000, three professors of electrical engineering and computer science at the University of California at Berkeley, Kahn, Katz, and Pister, hypothesized in the *Journal of Communications and Networks* that wireless networks of tiny micro-electromechanical sensors, or MEMS; robots; or devices could detect phenomena including light, temperature, or vibration. By 2004, *Fortune Magazine* listed "smart dust" as the first in their "Top 10 Tech Trends to Bet On."

(Reveal/Relate): Today, I'm going to talk about this nano-technology called "smart dust" and the various applications for usage in society. If any of you are familiar with the shows *Jake 2.0* or *Chuck*, or fans of the Marvel Universe and the character Minn-Erva, then you are already aware of the military and espionage uses that nanotechnology like "smart dust" could be used for. I'm

sure that there are some of you who are interested in possibly becoming superheroes, supervillains, or super spies in the future so my speech is a great way to find out what could be in store.

(Credibility Statement): Since watching those earlier TV shows and being an avid reader of sci-fi and espionage literature, I became interested in nanotechnology. When I found out about "smart dust" I couldn't wait to do more research and find out about the infinite possibilities of these microscopic computers.

(Central Idea): Thus far researchers hypothesized that smart dust could be used for everything from tracking patients in hospitals to early warnings of natural disasters and as a defense against bioterrorism.

(Preview): Today, I'm going to explain what smart dust is and the various applications smart dust has in the near future. To help us understand the small of it all, we will first examine what smart dust is and how it works. We will then examine some military applications of smart dust. And we will end by discussing some nonmilitary applications of smart dust.

Body

(Transition) To help us understand smart dust, we will begin by first examining what smart dust is.
Main Point I: Dr. Kris Pister, a professor in the robotics lab at the University of California at Berkeley, originally conceived the idea of smart dust in 1998 as part of a project funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

1. According to a 2001 article written by Bret Warneke, Matt Last, Brian Liebowitz, and Kris Pister titled "Smart Dust: Communicating with a Cubic-Millimeter Computer" published in *Computer*, Pister's goal was to build a device that contained a built-in sensor, communication device, and a small computer that could be integrated into a cubic millimeter package.
2. For comparison purposes, Doug Steel, in a 2005 white paper titled "SmartDust" written for C. T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston, noted that a single grain of rice has a volume of five cubic millimeters.
    1. Each individual piece of dust, called a mote, would then have the ability to interact with other motes and supercomputers.
    2. As Steve Lohr wrote in January 30, 2010, edition of the *New York Times* in an article titled "Smart Dust? Not Quite, But We're Getting There," smart dust could eventually consist of "Tiny digital sensors, strewn around the glove, gathering all sorts of information and communicating with powerful computer networks to monitor, measure, and understand the physical world in new ways."

(Transition) Now that we've examined what smart dust is, let's switch gears and talk about some of the military applications for smart dust.
Main Point II: Because smart dust was originally conceptualized under a grant from DARPA, military uses of smart dust have been widely theorized and examined.

1. According to the smart dust website, smart dust could eventually be used for "battlefield surveillance, treaty monitoring, transportation monitoring, scud hunting" and other clear military applications.

1. Probably the number one benefit of smart dust in the military environment is its surveillance abilities.

1. Major Scott Dickson, in a Blue Horizons paper written for the US Air Force Center for Strategy and Technology's Air War College, sees smart dust as helping the military in battlespace awareness, homeland security, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) identification.
2. Furthermore, Major Dickson also believes it may be possible to create smart dust that has the ability to defeat communications jamming equipment created by foreign governments, which could help the US military not only communicate among itself but could also increase communications with civilians in military combat zones.
2. According to a 2010 article written by Jessica Griggs in new *Scientist*, one of the first benefits of smart dust could be an early defense warning for space storms and other debris that could be catastrophic.

(Transition) Now that we've explored some of the military benefits of smart dust, let's switch gears and see how smart dust may be able to have an impact on our daily lives.
Main Point III: According to the smart dust project website, smart dust could quickly become a common part of our daily lives.

1. Everything from pasting smart dust particles to our fingertips to create a virtual computer keyboard to inventory control to product quality control have been discussed as possible applications for smart dust.

1. Steve Lohr, in his 2010 *New York Times* article, wrote, “The applications for sensor-based computing, experts say, include buildings that manage their own energy use, bridges that sense motion and metal fatigue to tell engineers they need repairs, cars that track traffic patterns and report potholes, and fruit and vegetable shipments that tell grocers when they ripen and begin to spoil.”

2. Medically, according to the smart dust website, smart dust could help disabled individuals interface with computers.

1. Theoretically, we could all be injected with smart dust, which relays information to our physicians and detects adverse changes to our body instantly.

2. Smart dust could detect the microscopic formations of center cells or alert us when we’ve been infected by a bacterium or virus, which could speed up treatment and prolong all of our lives.

(Transition) Today, we’ve explored what smart dust is, how smart dust could be utilized by the US military, and how smart dust could impact all of our lives in the near future.

Conclusion

(Restate Preview/Summary): In conclusion, today we talked about smart dust: what it is and military and nonmilitary applications.

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

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Communicating with a cubic millimeter computer. *Computer*, *31*, 44–51.

You will notice that the various parts of your speech, for instance, the transition and main points, are labeled. There are compelling reasons for these labels. First, as you develop your message, you will sometimes find it necessary to go back and look at your wording in another part of the outline. Your labels help you find particular passages easily. Second, the labels work as a checklist so that you can make sure you've included everything you intended to. Third, it helps you prepare your speaking outline.

You'll also notice the Bibliography at the end of the outline. They match the citations within the outline. Sometimes while preparing a speech, a speaker finds it important to go back to an original source to be sure the message will be accurate. You should insert your sources as you develop your speech rather than afterward, so that they will be complete and accurate. Don't think of the references as busywork or drudgery. Although they're more time-consuming than text, they are good practice for the more advanced academic work you will do in the immediate future.

Speaking Outline

Your preparation outline prepares you to present a clear and well-organized message, but your speaking outline will include far less detail. Whenever possible, you will use keywords and phrases, but in some instances, an extended quotation will need to be fully written on your speaking outline. Resist the temptation to use your preparation outline as your speaking outline. The temptation is real for at least two reasons. First, once you feel that you've carefully crafted every sequence of words in your speech, you might not want to sacrifice quality when you shift to vocal presentation. Second, if you feel anxiety about how well you will do in front of an audience, you may want to use your full-sentence outline as a "safety net." In our experience, however, if you have your full-sentence outline with you, you will end up reading, rather than speaking, to your audience. Remember that you want to make your speech extemporaneous.

Your speech has five main components: introduction, main point one, main point two, main point three, and the conclusion. Therefore we strongly recommend the use of five notecards: one for each of those five components. There are extenuating circumstances that might call for additional cards, but begin with five cards only.

How will five notecards suffice in helping you produce a complete, rich delivery? Why can't you use the full-sentence outline you labored so hard to write? First, the presence of your full-sentence outline will make it appear that you don't know the content of your speech. Second, the temptation to read the speech directly from the full-sentence outline is nearly overwhelming; even if you resist this temptation, you will find yourself struggling to remember the words on the page rather than speaking extemporaneously. Third, sheets of paper are noisier and more awkward than cards. Fourth, it's easier to lose your place using the full outline. Finally, cards just look better. Carefully prepared cards, together with practice, will help you more than you might think.

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

How will notecards be sufficient? When they are carefully written, your practice will reveal that they will work. If, during practice, you find that one of your cards doesn't work well enough, you can rewrite that card.

Using a set of carefully prepared, sparingly worded cards will help you resist the temptation to rely on PowerPoint slides to get you through the presentation. Although they will never provide the exact word sequence of your full-sentence outline, they should keep you organized during the speech.

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

You must discover what works for you and then select those words that tend to jog your recall. Having identified what works, make a preliminary set of no more than five cards written on one side only, and practice with them. Revise and refine them as you would an outline.

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

Card 1.

Introduction: 2002, *Prey*, swarm nanomachines feed on living tissue.
Kahn, Katz, and Pister, U C Berkeley engineering and computer sci. profs. hyp. Microelectromechanical (MEMS) devices could detect light, temp, or vib.

R/R : TV shows and espionage

Credibility: TVs, movies and did my own research

Central idea: Researchers hyp that s.d. could track patients, warn of natural disaster, act as defense against bioterrorism.
Prev.: What smart dust is and how it works, military aps, nonmilitary aps.*Transition*: To help understand, first, what smart dust is.

Card 2.

I. Dr. Kris Pister, prof robotics lab UC Berkeley conceived the idea in 1998 in a proj. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

1. 2001 article by Bret Warneke et al titled “Smart Dust: Communicating with a Cubic-Millimeter Computer” publ. in *Computer*, Pister wanted sensors, comm. devices, and computer in a cubic millimeter package.
2. Doug Steel of CT Bauer College of Bus at Houston noted grain of rice=5cm.

1. Each mote could interact w/ others.
2. (see extended quotation, next card)

Card 3.

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

Card 4.

II. Orig conceptualized under DARPA, military uses theor. and examined.

1. Smart Dust website, battlefield surveill., treaty monitor., transp. monitor., + scud hunting.

1. benefit, surveill.

1. Maj. Scott Dickson, Blue Horizons Paper for Ctr for Strat and Tech for USAF air war college, sees s.d. as help for battlespace awareness, homeland security, and WMD ID.
2. could also defeat comm. jamming equipt by communicating among itself and w/ civilians in combat zones.
2. 2010 article Jessica Griggs *New Scientist*, early defense, storms and debris.

   Transition: Switch gears to daily lives.

Card 5.
III. s.d. project website: s.d. could become common in daily life.

1. Pasting particles for virtual computer keyboard to inventory control poss.

1. Steve Lohr, 2010, NYT, “The applications for sensor-based computing, experts say, include buildings that manage their own energy use, bridges that sense motion and metal fatigue to tell engineers they need repairs, cars that track traffic patterns and report potholes, and fruit and vegetable shipments that tell grocers when they ripen and begin to spoil.”
2. Medically, according to SD project website, help disabled.

1. interface w/ computers
2. injected, cd. relay info to docs and detect body changes instantly

1. cancer cells, bacteria or virus, speed up treatment, and so on.

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

Card 6.
Conclusion: Repeat preview

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

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

What if you go blank? Take a few seconds to recall what you’ve said and how it leads to your next points. There may be several seconds of silence in the middle of your speech, and it may seem like minutes to you, but you can regain your footing most easily with a small set of well-prepared cards.
Under no circumstances should you ever attempt to put your entire speech on cards in little tiny writing. You will end up reading a sequence of words to your audience instead of telling them your message.

Key Takeaways

- Worksheet outlines help you with speech logic, development, and planning.
- The preparation (full sentence) outline develops the full detail of the message.
- The speaking outline helps you stay organized in front of the audience without reading to them.
- Using notecards for your speaking outline helps with delivery and makes it easier to find information if you lose your place or draw a blank.

Examples

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

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Delivery and Presentation Aids

In this chapter, we will discuss multiple aspects of delivering your speeches, including managing public speaking anxiety, the four methods of delivery, nonverbal and verbal, and using presentation aids.

14.1: Managing Public Speaking Anxiety

14.2: Methods of Delivery

14.3: Speech Delivery- Body Language and Voice

14.4: Presentation Aids in Speaking

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14.1: Managing Public Speaking Anxiety

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss common sources of public speaking anxiety.
2. Identify strategies for addressing public speaking anxiety.
3. Employ strategies for addressing public speaking anxiety.

If you feel fear, anxiety, or discomfort when confronted with the task of speaking in front of an audience, you are not alone. National polls consistently show that public speaking is among Americans' top fears (Bodie, 2010). Yet, since we all have to engage in some form of public speaking, this is a fear that many people must face regularly. Effectively managing speaking anxiety has many positive effects on your speech. One major area that can improve with less anxiety is delivery. Although speaking anxiety is natural and normal, it can interfere with verbal and nonverbal delivery, which makes a speech less effective.

Sources of Speaking Anxiety

Aside from the self-reported data in national surveys that rank the fear of public speaking high for Americans, decades of research conducted by communication scholars shows that communication apprehension is common among college students (Priem & Solomon, 2009). **Communication apprehension** (CA) is *fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to real or perceived communication with another person or persons*. CA is a more general term that includes multiple forms of communication, not just public speaking. CA can be further broken down into two categories. **Trait CA** refers to *a general tendency to experience anxiety related to communication*, in essence incorporating it into a person's personality. **State CA** refers to *anxiety related to communication that occurs in a particular situation and time* (Bodie, 2010). Of college students, 15 to 20 percent experience high trait CA, meaning they are generally anxious about communication. Seventy percent of college students experience some trait CA, which means that addressing communication anxiety in a class like the one you're taking now stands to benefit the majority of students (Priem & Solomon, 2009). Whether CA is a personal trait or not, we all occasionally experience state CA. Think about the jitters you get before a first date, a job interview, or the first day of school. The novelty or uncertainty of some situations is a common trigger for communication anxiety, and public speaking is a novel and uncertain situation for many.

Public speaking anxiety is a type of CA that produces physiological, cognitive, and behavioral reactions in people when faced with a real or imagined presentation (Bodie, 2010). Physiological responses to public speaking anxiety include increased heart rate, flushing of the skin or face, and sweaty palms, among other things. These reactions are the result of natural chemical processes in the human body. The fight or flight instinct helped early humans survive threatening situations. When faced with a ferocious saber-toothed tiger, for example, the body released adrenaline, cortisol, and other hormones that increased heart rate and blood pressure to get more energy to the brain, organs, and muscles to respond to the threat. We can be thankful for this evolutionary advantage, but our physiology hasn't caught up with our new ways of life. Our body doesn't distinguish between the causes of stressful situations, so facing down an audience releases the same hormones as facing down a wild beast.



Figure 14.1.1: The root of public speaking anxiety is the fight or flight instinct that is triggered when we face a fear. While we can't eliminate anxiety, we can change how we cognitively process it. Practical Cures – Anxiety – CC BY 2.0.

Cognitive reactions to public speaking anxiety often include intrusive thoughts that can increase anxiety: "People are judging me," "I'm not going to do well," and "I'm going to forget what to say." These thoughts are reactions to the physiological changes in the body but also bring in the social/public aspect of public speaking in which speakers fear being negatively judged or evaluated because of their anxiety. The physiological and cognitive responses to anxiety lead to behavioral changes. All these thoughts may lead someone to stop their speech and return to their seat or leave the classroom. Anticipating these reactions can also lead to avoidance behavior where people intentionally avoid situations where they will have to speak in public.

Addressing Public Speaking Anxiety

While we can't stop the innate physiological reactions related to anxiety from occurring, we do have some control over how we cognitively process them and the behaviors that result. Research on public speaking anxiety has focused on three key ways to address this common issue: systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, and skills training (Bodie, 2010). In addition, it is important to address the physical manifestations of speaking anxiety.

Systematic Desensitization

Although systematic desensitization may sound like something that would be done to you while strapped down in the basement of a scary hospital, it actually refers to the fact that we become less anxious about something when we are exposed to it more often (Bodie, 2010). As was mentioned earlier, the novelty and uncertainty of public speaking are a source of many people's anxiety. So becoming more familiar with public speaking by doing it more often can logically reduce the novelty and uncertainty of it.

Systematic desensitization can result from imagined or real exposure to anxiety-inducing scenarios. In some cases, an instructor leads a person through a series of relaxation techniques. Once relaxed, the person is asked to imagine a series of scenarios including speech preparation and speech delivery. This is something you could also try to do on your own before giving a speech. Imagine yourself going through the process of preparing and practicing a speech, then delivering the speech, then returning to your seat, which concludes the scenario. Aside from this imagined exposure to speaking situations, taking a communication course like this one is a great way to directly engage in systematic desensitization. Almost all my students report that they have less speaking anxiety at the end of a semester than when they started, which is at least partially due to the fact they were forced to engage with speaking more than they would have done if they weren't taking the class.

Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive restructuring entails changing the way we think about something. A first step in restructuring how we deal with public speaking anxiety is to cognitively process through our fears to realize that many of the thoughts associated with public speaking anxiety are irrational (Allen, Hunter & Donohue, 2009). For example, people report a fear of public speaking over a fear of snakes, heights, financial ruin, or even death. It's irrational to think that the consequences of giving a speech in public are more severe than getting bit by a rattlesnake, falling off a building, or dying. People also fear being embarrassed because they mess up or are

evaluated negatively. Well, you can't literally die from embarrassment, and in reality, audiences are very forgiving and overlook or don't even notice many errors that we, as speakers, may dwell on. Once we realize that the potential negative consequences of giving a speech are not as dire as we think they are, we can move on to other cognitive restructuring strategies.

Communication-orientation modification therapy (COM therapy) is a *type of cognitive restructuring that encourages people to think of public speaking as a conversation rather than a performance* (Motley, 2009). Many people have a performance-based view of public speaking. This can easily be seen in the language that some students use to discuss public speaking. They say that they "rehearse" their speech, deal with "stage fright," then "perform" their speech on a "stage." I like to remind my students that there is no stage at the front of our classroom; it is a normal floor. To get away from a performance orientation, we can reword the previous statements to say that they "practice" their speech, deal with "public speaking anxiety," then "deliver" their speech from the front of the room. Viewing public speaking as a conversation also helps with confidence. After all, you obviously have some conversation skills, or you wouldn't have made it to college. We engage in conversations every day. We don't have to write everything we're going to say out on a notecard, we don't usually get nervous or anxious in regular conversations, and we're usually successful when we try. Even though we don't engage in public speaking as much, we speak to others in public all the time. Thinking of public speaking as a type of conversation helps you realize that you already have accumulated experiences and skills that you can draw from, so you aren't starting from scratch.



Figure **14.1.2**: Thinking of public speaking as a conversation with an audience rather than a performance for an audience can help reduce speaking anxiety. The Open University – Speech – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Last, **positive visualization** is another way to engage in cognitive restructuring. Speaking anxiety often leads people to view public speaking negatively. They are more likely to judge a speech they gave negatively, even if it was good. They're also likely to set up negative self-fulfilling prophecies that will hinder their performance in future speeches. To effectively use positive visualization, it's best to engage first in some relaxation exercises such as deep breathing or stretching, which we will discuss more later, and then play through vivid images in your mind of giving a successful speech. This should be done a few times before giving the actual speech. Students sometimes question the power of positive visualization, thinking that it sounds corny. Ask an Olympic diver what his or her coach says to do before jumping off the diving board and the answer will probably be "Coach says to imagine completing a perfect 10 dive." Likewise, a Marine sharpshooter would likely say his commanding officer says to imagine hitting the target before pulling the trigger. In both instances, positive visualization is being used in high-stakes situations. If it's good enough for Olympic athletes and snipers, it's good enough for public speakers.

Skills Training

Skills training is a strategy for managing public speaking anxiety that focuses on learning skills that will improve specific speaking behaviors. These skills may relate to any part of the speech-making process, including topic selection, research and organization, delivery, and self-evaluation. Skills training, like systematic desensitization, makes the public speaking process more familiar for a speaker, which lessens uncertainty. In addition, targeting specific areas and then improving on them builds more confidence, leading to more improvement. Feedback is important to initiate and maintain this positive cycle of improvement. You can use the constructive criticism that you get from your instructor and peers in this class to target specific areas of improvement. Self-evaluation is also an important part of skills training. Make sure to evaluate yourself within the context of your assignment or job and the expectations for the speech. Don't get sidetracked by a small delivery error if the expectations for content far outweigh the expectations for delivery. Combine your self-evaluation with the feedback from your instructor, boss, and/or peers to set specific and measurable goals, and then assess whether or not you meet them in subsequent speeches. Once you achieve a goal, mark it off your list and use it as a confidence booster. If you don't achieve a goal, figure out why and adjust your strategies to try to meet it in the future.

Physical Relaxation Exercises

Suggestions for managing speaking anxiety typically address its cognitive and behavioral components, while the physical components are left unattended. As we learned earlier, we can't block these natural and instinctual responses. We can, however, engage in physical relaxation exercises to counteract the general physical signs of anxiety caused by cortisol and adrenaline release, which include increased heart rate, trembling, flushing, high blood pressure, and vocalized pauses.

Some breathing and stretching exercises release endorphins, which are your body's natural antidote to stress hormones. Deep breathing is a proven way to release endorphins. It also provides a general sense of relaxation and can be done discretely, even while waiting to speak. To get the benefits of deep breathing, you must breathe into your diaphragm. The **diaphragm** is *the muscle below your lungs that helps you breathe and stand up straight*, which makes it a good muscle for a speaker to exercise. To start, breathe in slowly through your nose, filling the bottom parts of your lungs up with air. While doing this, your belly should pooch out. Hold the breath for three to five full seconds and then let it out slowly through your mouth. After doing this only a few times, many students report that they can actually feel the flooding of endorphins, which creates a brief "light-headed" feeling. Once you have practiced and are comfortable with the technique, you can do this before you start your speech, and no one sitting around you will even notice. You might also want to try this technique during other stressful situations. Deep breathing before dealing with an angry customer or loved one, or before taking a test, can help you relax and focus.



Figure **14.1.3**: Discretely stretching your wrists and calf muscles is a good way to relieve anxiety and get your energy flowing while waiting to speak. Public Domain Pictures – public domain.

Stretching is another way to quickly and effectively release endorphins. Very old exercise traditions like yoga, tai chi, and Pilates teach the idea that stretching is a key component of having a healthy mind and spirit. Exercise in general is a good stress reliever, but many of us don't have the time or willpower to do it. We can, however, all take time to do some stretching. Simple and discrete stretches can help get the body's energy moving around, which can make a speaker feel more balanced and relaxed. Our blood and

our energy/stress tend to pool in our legs, especially when we're sitting. The following stretch can help manage the physical manifestations of anxiety while waiting to speak. Start with both feet flat on the floor. Raise your back heels off the floor and flex and release your calf muscles. You can flex and release your calves once before putting your heels back down and repeating, or you can flex a few times on each repetition. Doing this three to five times should sufficiently get your blood and energy moving around. Stretching your wrists can also help move energy around in your upper body since our huge amounts of typing and using other electronic controllers put a lot of stress on this intersection of muscles, tendons, and bones. Point one hand up at the wrist joint, as if you were waving at someone. Then use your other hand to pull, gently, the hand that's pointing up back toward your elbow. Stop pulling once you feel some tension. Hold the hand there for a few seconds and release. Then point the hand down at the wrist joint like you're pointing at something on the floor, and use the other hand to push the hand back toward your elbow. Again, stop pushing when you feel the tension, hold the stretch for a few seconds, and release. You can often do this stretch discretely as well while waiting to speak.

Vocal Warm-Up Exercises

Vocal warm-up exercises are a good way to warm up your face and mouth muscles, which can help prevent some of the pausing or stuttering issues that occur when speaking. Newscasters, singers, and other professional speakers use vocal warm-ups.

Sample Vocal Warm-Ups

- Purse your lips together and make a motorboat sound. Hold it for ten seconds and repeat. "BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB."
- Clench your teeth and say, "N, N, N, N," to stretch your cheek muscles.
- Say "Mum" five times, and open your mouth and eyes wide each time you say it.
- Say "Puh" five times, making sure to use your diaphragm to enunciate the *h*.
- Say "Red Rover" ten times, overenunciating each *r*.
- Say "Wilbur" ten times, overenunciating the *w* and *r*.
- Say "Bumblebee" ten times, enunciating each *b*.
- Say "Red letter, yellow letter" five times, making sure to distinctly pronounce each word.
- Say "Selfish shellfish" five times, making sure to distinctly pronounce each word.
- Say "Unique New York" five times, enunciating the *q* and *k*.

Top Ten Ways to Reduce Speaking Anxiety

As you can see in this section, many factors contribute to speaking anxiety, and there are many ways to address it. The following is a list of the top ten ways to reduce speaking anxiety that I developed with my colleagues, which helps review what we've learned.

1. Remember, you are not alone. Public speaking anxiety is common, so don't ignore it—confront it.
2. Remember, you can't literally "die of embarrassment." Audiences are forgiving and understanding.
3. Remember, it always feels worse than it looks.
4. Take deep breaths. It releases endorphins, which naturally fight the adrenaline that causes anxiety.
5. Look the part. Dress professionally to enhance confidence.
6. Channel your nervousness into positive energy and motivation.
7. Start your outline and research early. Better information = higher confidence.
8. Practice and get feedback from a trusted source. (Don't just practice for your cat.)
9. Visualize success through positive thinking.
10. Prepare, prepare, prepare! Practice is a speaker's best friend.

"Getting Critical": How Much Emphasis Should We Place on Delivery?

Before you read the rest of the chapter, take some time to think about the balance between the value of content and delivery in a speech. We know it's important to have solid content and to have an engaging and smooth delivery to convey that content, but how should each category be weighted and evaluated? Most people who have made it to college can put the time and effort into following assignment guidelines to put together a well-researched and well-organized speech. But some people are naturally better at delivering speeches than others. Some people are more extroverted, experience less public speaking anxiety, and are naturally more charismatic than others. Sometimes a person's delivery and charisma might distract an audience away

from critically evaluating the content of their speech. Charismatic and well-liked celebrities and athletes, for example, are used to endorse products and sell things to the public. We may follow their advice because we like them, instead of basing our choice on their facts or content. Aristotle, Cicero, and other notable orators instructed that delivery should be good enough to present the material effectively but not so good or so bad that it draws attention to itself. But in today's celebrity culture, the bling or packaging is sometimes more valued than the contents. This leads us to some questions that might help us unpack the sometimes tricky relationship between content and delivery.

1. Do you think worries about content or delivery contribute more to speaking anxiety? Explain your choice.
2. How should someone be evaluated who works hard to research, organize, and write a speech, but doesn't take the time to practice so they have a good delivery? What if they practice, but still don't deliver the speech well on speech day?
3. How should we evaluate a speaker who delivers an engaging speech that gets the audience laughing and earns a big round of applause but doesn't verbally cite sources or present well-organized ideas?
4. Is it ethical for someone to use their natural charisma or speaking abilities to win over an audience rather than rely on their speech content's merit and strength? In what speaking situations would this be more acceptable? Less acceptable?

Key Takeaways

- Getting integrated: Public speaking anxiety is a form of communication apprehension (CA) that is commonly experienced by many people and can be effectively managed using a variety of strategies. While we most often think of public speaking anxiety as an issue in the classroom and workplace, it can affect communication in personal and civic contexts as well.
- Systematic desensitization helps lessen public speaking anxiety through repeated exposure to real or imagined public speaking scenarios.
- Cognitive restructuring addresses public speaking by replacing negative thoughts with more positive thoughts, and COM therapy can help you view public speaking as a conversation rather than a performance.
- Skills training allows you to focus on improving specific skills related to public speaking, increasing confidence, and leading to further skill development.
- Physical relaxation exercises like deep breathing and stretching allow us to voluntarily use our bodies to address involuntary bodily reactions to anxiety.

Exercises

1. Test your speaking anxiety using McCroskey's "Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety" (PRPSA). You can access the scale here: http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/prpsa.htm. Follow the directions to determine your score. Do you agree with the result? Why or why not?
2. Of the strategies for managing public speaking anxiety listed in the chapter (systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, skills training, physical relaxation exercises), which do you think would be most useful for you and why?
3. When you take a communication course like this one, you are automatically engaging in some skills training. What are some public speaking skills that you are already good at? What are some skills that you should work on? Write out three goals you would like to accomplish for your next speech that focus on improving your public speaking skills.

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14.2: Methods of Delivery



Figure 14.2.1: "Student Speaker Leighanne Oh_6056136566_l.jpg" by NCSSMphotos is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter the student will be able to:

- Identify the different methods of speech delivery;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each delivery method;
- Identify key elements in preparing to deliver a speech;
- Understand the benefits of delivery-related behaviors;
- Utilize specific techniques to enhance speech delivery.

The Importance of Delivery

Good delivery is meant to augment your speech and help convey your information to the audience. Anything that potentially distracts your audience means that fewer people will be informed, persuaded, or entertained by what you have said. Practicing your speech in an environment that closely resembles the actual situation that you will be speaking in will better prepare you for what to do and how to deliver your speech when it really counts.

You need to first dismiss the myth that public speaking is just reading and talking at the same time. You already know how to read, and you already know how to talk, which is why you're taking a class called "public speaking" and **not one called "public talking" or "public reading."**

Speaking in public has more formality than talking. During a speech, you should present yourself professionally. This doesn't necessarily mean you must wear a suit or "dress up" unless your instructor asks you to. However, it does mean making yourself presentable by being well-groomed and wearing clean, appropriate clothes. It also means being prepared to use language correctly and appropriately for the audience and the topic, to make eye contact with your audience, and to look like you know your topic very well.

While speaking has more formality than talking, it has less formality than reading. Speaking allows for flexibility, meaningful pauses, eye contact, small changes in word order, and vocal emphasis. Reading is a more or less exact replication of words on paper without the use of any nonverbal interpretation. Speaking, as you will realize if you think about excellent speakers you have seen and heard, provides a more animated message.

Methods of Speech Delivery

What follows are four methods of delivery that can help you balance between too much and too little formality when giving a speech. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, but you will most likely want to focus on the **extemporaneous** approach **since that is probably what your instructor will want from you**.

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is *the presentation of a short message without advance preparation*. You have probably done impromptu speaking many times in informal, conversational settings. Self-introductions in group settings are examples of impromptu

speaking: “Hi, my name is Steve, and I’m a volunteer with the Homes for the Brave program.” Another example of impromptu speaking occurs when you answer a question such as, “What did you think of the movie?” Your response has not been preplanned, and you are constructing your arguments and points as you speak. Even worse, you might find yourself going into a meeting and your boss says, “I want you to talk about the last stage of the project. . . “ and you have no warning.

The advantage of this kind of speaking is that it’s spontaneous and responsive in an animated group context. The disadvantage is that the speaker is given little or no time to contemplate the central theme of his or her message. As a result, the message may be disorganized and difficult for listeners to follow.

Here is a step-by-step guide that may be useful if you are called upon to give an impromptu speech in public:

1. **Take a moment to collect your thoughts and plan the main point or points you want to make.**
2. **Thank the person for inviting you to speak.** Do not make comments about being unprepared, called upon at the last moment, on the spot, or uneasy. No one wants to hear that and it will embarrass others and yourself.
3. **Deliver your message, making your main point as briefly as you can while still covering it adequately and at a pace your listeners can follow.**
4. **Stay on track.** Answer the question or prompt as given; resist the temptation to go elsewhere.
5. **If you can, use a structure, using numbers if possible:** “Two main reasons . . .” or “Three parts of our plan. . .” or “Two side effects of this drug. . .” Past, present, and future or East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast are common structures.
6. **Thank the person again for the opportunity to speak.**
7. **Stop talking** (it is easy to “ramble on” when you don’t have something prepared). If in front of an audience, don’t keep talking as you move back to your seat

Impromptu speeches are generally most successful when they are brief and focus on a single point.

Manuscript Speaking

Speaking from a written or printed document that contains the entirety of a speech is known as **manuscript delivery**. Manuscript delivery can be the best choice when a speech has complicated information and/or the contents of the speech are going to be quoted or published. A manuscript speech may also be appropriate at a more formal affair (like a funeral) when your speech must be said exactly as written in order to convey the proper emotion or decorum the situation deserves. Despite the fact that most novice speakers are not going to find themselves in that situation, many are drawn to this delivery method because of the security they feel with having everything they’re going to say in front of them. Unfortunately, the security of having every word you want to say at your disposal translates to a **poorly delivered and unengaging speech**. Unless the speaker has rehearsed the reading as a complete performance animated with vocal expression and gestures (well-known authors often do this for book readings), the presentation tends to be dull. Keeping one’s eyes glued to the script prevents eye contact with the audience. For this kind of “straight” manuscript speech to hold the audience's attention, the audience must be already interested in the message and speaker before the delivery begins.

It is worth noting that professional speakers, actors, news reporters, and politicians often read from an autocue device, such as a teleprompter, especially when appearing on television, where eye contact with the camera is crucial. Almost all politicians who give televised addresses use teleprompters. In Figure **14.2.2** “President Obama’s Teleprompter System”, you can see President Obama’s teleprompter system.



Figure **14.2.2**: President Obama's Teleprompter System. Newscasters and politicians frequently use teleprompters so they can use manuscript delivery but still engage with the audience. Wikimedia Commons – CC BY-SA 2.0.

You may not even notice them, as the technology has improved to give the illusion that a speaker is engaged with the audience and delivering a speech from memory. The Plexiglas sheets on poles that surround the president during the inauguration and State of the Union addresses are cleverly hidden teleprompters. Even these useful devices can fail. A quick search for "teleprompter fail" on YouTube will yield many examples of politicians and newscasters who probably wish they had a paper backup of their speech. Since most of us will likely not have opportunities to speak using a teleprompter, great care should be taken to ensure that the delivery is effective. Success in this medium depends on two factors: (1) the speaker is already an accomplished public speaker who has learned to use a conversational tone while delivering a prepared script, and (2) the speech is written in a style that sounds conversational and in spoken rather than written, edited English, for example, with shorter sentences and clearer transitions. To make the delivery seem more natural, print the speech out in a larger-than-typical font, triple-space between lines so you can easily find your place, use heavier-than-normal paper so it's easy to pick up and turn the pages as needed, and use a portfolio so you can carry the manuscript securely.

For the purposes of your public speaking class, you will **not** be encouraged to read your speech. Again we note that you will be asked to give an **extemporaneous** presentation.

Memorized Speaking

Memorized speaking is *the exact recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory*. Actors, of course, recite from memory whenever they perform from a script. The advantage of memorization is that it enables the speaker to maintain eye contact with the audience throughout the speech. Being free of notes means that you can move freely around the stage and use your hands to make gestures. If your speech uses visual aids, this freedom is even more of an advantage. However, when a speaker's anxiety level spikes at the beginning of their speech and their minds go blank for a minute, many admit they should have chosen a different delivery method. When using any of the other delivery methods, speakers still need to rely on their memory. An impromptu speaker must recall facts or experiences related to their topic, and speakers using a manuscript want to have some of their content memorized so they do not read their entire speech to their audience. The problem with memorized delivery overall is that it puts too much responsibility on our memory, which we all know from experience is fallible.

When memorizing, most people use rote memorization techniques, which entail reading and then reciting something over and over until it is committed to memory. One major downfall of this technique is its effect on your speaking rate. When we memorize this way, we end up going over the early parts of a speech many more times than the later parts. As you memorize one sentence, you add on another, and so on. Unless you also plan and memorize every **vocal cue** (*the subtle but meaningful variations in speech delivery, which can include the use of pitch, tone, volume, and pace*), gesture, and facial expression, your presentation will be flat and uninteresting, and even the most fascinating topic will suffer. You might end up speaking in a monotone or a sing-song repetitive delivery pattern. You might also present your speech in a rapid "machine-gun" style that fails to emphasize the most important points.

Rote memorization tasks that many of us had to do in school have left their mark on our memorized delivery. Being made to recite the pledge of allegiance, the preamble to the Constitution, and so on didn't enhance our speaking abilities. Many speech students who use memorization remind give off the same sound of school children flatly going through the motions of reciting the Pledge of

Allegiance. It's the "going through the motions" impression that speakers should want to avoid. Also, if you lose your place during a speech and start trying to ad-lib, the contrast in your style of delivery will alert your audience that something is wrong. If you go completely blank during the presentation, it will be extremely difficult to find your place and keep going. Obviously, memorizing a typical seven-minute classroom speech takes a great deal of time and effort, and if you aren't used to memorizing, it is very difficult to pull off. Realistically, you probably will not have the time necessary to give a completely memorized speech. However, if you practice adequately, you will approach the feeling of being fully memorized while still keeping with what your teacher wants, **extemporaneous speaking**.



Figure **14.2.3**: Memorized delivery is a good option for people like tour guides, who need to move while speaking and be interactive with an audience. John Lambert Pearson – "listening" to adam – CC BY 2.0.

In summary, We only recommend memorized delivery in cases where the speech is short (only one to two minutes), the speech is personal (like a brief toast), or the speech will be repeated numerous times (like a tour guide's spiel), and even in these cases, it may be perfectly fine to have notes. Many students think that their anxiety and/or delivery challenges will be fixed if they just memorize their speech only to find that they are more anxious and have more problems.

Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemporaneous speaking is *the presentation of a carefully planned and rehearsed speech, spoken in a conversational manner using brief notes*. By using notes rather than a full manuscript, the extemporaneous speaker can establish and maintain eye contact with the audience and assess how well they are understanding the speech as it progresses. And since you will be graded (to some degree) on establishing and maintaining eye contact with your audience, extemporaneous speaking can be extremely beneficial in that regard. Without all the words on the page to read, you have little choice but to look up and make eye contact with your audience. In some cases, your instructor will require you to prepare strong preparation and speaking (notes) outlines as a foundation for your speech.

This delivery style brings together many of the strengths of the previous three methods. Since you only internalize and *memorize* the main structure of a speech, you don't have to worry as much about the content and delivery seeming stale. Extemporaneous delivery brings in some of the spontaneity of *impromptu* delivery but still allows a speaker to carefully plan, like a *manuscript*, the overall structure of a speech and incorporate supporting materials that include key facts, quotations, and paraphrased information. Speaking extemporaneously has some advantages. It promotes the likelihood that you, the speaker, will be perceived as knowledgeable and credible since you know the speech well enough that you don't need to read it. In addition, your audience is likely to pay better attention to the message because it is engaging both verbally and nonverbally. It also allows flexibility; you are working from the strong foundation of an outline, but if you need to delete, add, or rephrase something at the last minute or to adapt to your audience, you can do so. The outline also helps you be aware of main ideas vs. subordinate ones.

When preparing a speech that you will deliver extemporaneously, you will want to start practicing your speech early and then continue to practice as you revise your content. Investing quality time and effort into the speech-outlining process helps with extemporaneous delivery. As you put together your outline, you are already doing the work of internalizing the key structure of your speech. Read parts of your outline aloud as you draft them to help ensure they are written in a way that makes sense and is easy for you to deliver. By the time you complete the formal, full-sentence outline, you should have already internalized much of the key information in your speech. Now, you can begin practicing with the full outline. As you become more comfortable with the

content of your full outline, start to convert it into your speaking outline. Take out information that you know well and replace it with a keyword or key phrase that prompts your memory. You'll probably want to leave key quotes, facts, and other paraphrased information, including your verbal source citation information, on your delivery outline so you make sure to include it in your speech. Once you've converted your full outline into your speaking outline, practice it a few more times, making sure to take some time between each practice session so you don't inadvertently start to memorize the speech word for word. The final product should be a confident delivery of a well-organized and structured speech that is conversational and adaptable to various audiences and occasions.

Adequate preparation cannot be achieved the day before you're scheduled to speak, so be aware that if you want to present a credibly delivered speech, you will need to practice many times.

Practicing Your Delivery

There is no foolproof recipe for good delivery. Each of us is unique, and we each embody different experiences and interests. This means each person has an approach or a style, that is effective for her or him. This further means that anxiety can accompany even the most carefully researched and interesting message. But there are some techniques you can use to minimize that anxious feeling and put yourself in the best possible position to succeed on speech day.

If you've ever watched your favorite college football team practice, you may have noticed that sometimes obnoxiously loud crowd noise is blaring over the speaker system in the stadium. The coaches know that the crowd, whether home or away, will be raucous and noisy on game day. So, to prepare, they practice in as realistic an environment as possible. You need to prepare for your speech in a similar way. What follows are some general tips you should keep in mind, but they all essentially derive from one very straight-forward premise:

Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in class.



Figure **14.2.4**: You can practice your speech in front of a mirror to gauge your use of facial expressions and gestures. In addition, practice in front of a couple of people for feedback. Tschlunder – Mirror – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Practice Your Speech Out Loud

We sometimes think that the purpose of practicing a speech is to learn the words and be prepared for what we will need to say. Certainly, that is part of it, but the practice also lets you know where potential problems lie. For example, if you only read your speech in your head, or whisper the words quietly, you're not really practicing what you will be doing in front of the class. Since you will be speaking with a normal volume for your assignment, you need to practice that way, even at home. Not only will this help you learn the speech, but it will help identify any places where you tend to mispronounce or stumble over words. Also, sentences on paper do not always translate well to the spoken medium. Practicing out loud allows you to actually hear where your sentences and phrases are awkward, unnatural, or too long, and allows you to correct them before getting up in front of the audience.

Practice Your Speech Standing Up

In all the time that the authors of this book have been teaching speech, not once have either of us come into a classroom and seen a bed behind the lectern for students to speak from. This is to say that when you practice at home, lying on your bed reading your speech really only prepares you for one thing: lying on a bed reading a speech. Since you will be standing in front of your class, you need to practice that way. As we mention in more detail below, the default position for delivering a speech is with your feet

shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent. Practicing this way will help develop muscle memory and will make it feel more natural when you are doing it for real. We also suggest you wear the same shoes you will be wearing on the day of your speech.

Practice Your Speech with a Lectern

One of the biggest challenges with practicing a speech as you're going to give it is usually the fact that most of us don't own a lectern. This is problematic since you don't want to practice giving your speech while holding your notes in front of you because that is what will feel comfortable when you give your speech for real. So the solution is to practice your speech while standing behind something that approximates the lectern you will have in your classroom. Sometimes this may be a kitchen counter or maybe even a dresser you pull away from the wall. One particularly creative idea that has been used in the past is to pull out an ironing board and stand behind that. The point is that you want to get experience standing behind something and resting your speech on it.

Of course, if you really want to practice with an actual lectern, it might be worth the time to see if your classroom is empty later in the day or find out if another classroom has the same type of lectern in it. Practicing with the "real thing" is always ideal.

Practice Your Speech with an Audience

Obviously, on the day you give your speech you will have an audience of your fellow students and your professor watching you. The best way to prepare for the feeling of having someone watch you while giving a speech is to have someone watch you while you practice giving a speech. We don't mean a collection of stuffed animals arranged on your bed or locking your pets in the room with you, but actual human beings. Ask your parents, siblings, friends, or significant other to listen to you while running through what you will say. Not only will you get practice in front of an audience, but they may be able to tell you about any parts that were unclear or problems you might encounter when you give it for a grade.

Not to overcomplicate the issue, but remember that when you speak to your class, you will have an entire room full of people watching. Therefore, if you only have one person watching you practice, be sure to simulate an entire audience by looking around the room and not focusing on just that one person. When you give your speech for real, you will want to make eye contact with the people on the left side of the room as well as the right; with the people in the front as well as in the back. You also want the eye contact to be around five seconds long, not just a glance; the idea is that you are talking to individuals, not just a glob of people. During practice, it may help to pick out some strategically placed objects around the room to occasionally focus on just to get into the habit of looking around more often.



Figure **14.2.5**: "Stopwatch" by mrlerone is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Practice Your Speech for Time

You will undoubtedly be given a time limit for each of your speeches, and points will probably be deducted from your grade if you go over or under that time. Therefore, you want to make sure you are well within time. As a general rule, if your speech window is 5-7 minutes, your ideal speech time is going to be 6 minutes; this gives you an extra 60 seconds in the beginning in case you talk very fast and race through it, and 60 seconds on the back end in case you get lost or want to add something at the last minute. If you practice at home and your 5-7 minute speech lasts 5:06, you are probably going to be in trouble on speech day. Most likely your nerves will cause you to speak slightly faster and put you under the 5:00 mark. If your times are vastly different, you may have to practice four or more times.

When practicing your speech at home, it is a good idea to time yourself at least three times. This way you can see if you are generally coming in around the same time and feel pretty good that it is an accurate reflection of how long you will speak.

Conversely, if during your three rehearsals your times are 5:45, 5:12, and 6:37, then that is a clear indicator that you need to be more consistent in what you are saying and doing.

Although we are using examples of practicing for classroom speeches, the principle is even more important for non-classroom speeches. One of the authors had to give a very important presentation about the college to an accreditation board. She practiced about 15 times, to make sure the time was right, that her transitions made sense, that she was fluid, and that the presentational slides and her speech matched. Each time something improved.

Practice Your Speech by Recording Yourself

There is nothing that gets us to change what we're doing or correct a problem more quickly than seeing ourselves doing something we don't like on video. Your instructor may record your speech in class and have you critique it afterward, but it may be more helpful to do that in advance of giving your speech. By watching yourself, you will notice all the small things you do that might prove to be distracting and affect your grade during the actual speech. Many times students aren't aware that they have low energy or a monotone/monorate voice, or that they bounce, sway, pull at their clothes, play with hair or jewelry, or make other unusual and distracting movements. At least, they don't know this until they see themselves doing it. Since we are generally our own harshest critics, you will be quick to notice any flaws in your speech and correct them.

It is important enough that it deserves reiterating:

Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in class.

Following these steps will not only prepare you better for delivering the speech, but they may also help reduce anxiety since you will feel more familiar with the situation you find yourself in when faced with a speaking engagement. Additionally, the more you speak publicly, whether for practice or in front of a live audience, the more fluid you will become for later speeches.

Key Takeaways

- The four methods of delivering a speech are impromptu, manuscript, memorized, and extemporaneous delivery.
- Impromptu delivery evokes higher levels of speaking anxiety because a speaker has little to no time to prepare the speech; however, this method can increase public speaking skills for people who enjoy thinking on their feet.
- Manuscript delivery entails speaking from a manuscript that contains a word-for-word transcript of your speech. This delivery method can be good for speeches that contain complex information that will be published or quoted but can be challenging because speakers may read their speech, which lessens engagement with the audience.
- Memorized delivery entails speaking from memory. Speakers with a reliable memory will be able to include specific information and engage the audience freely. This method is the most time-consuming delivery option and may come across as a recitation instead of an engaging speech.
- Extemporaneous delivery entails memorizing the general structure of a speech, not every word, and then delivering the speech from a keyword outline. Having the keyword outline allows a speaker to include specific information and references while remaining adaptable to the occasion and audience since every word isn't planned out.

Exercise

1. Which delivery methods have you used before? Which did you like the best and why? Which delivery method would you most prefer a speaker to use if you were an audience member and why?
2. Have you ever had any "surprises" come up during a speech that you could have prevented with more effective practice sessions? If so, explain. If not, list some surprises that good practice sessions could help prevent.

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14.3: Speech Delivery- Body Language and Voice

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the role of facial expressions and eye contact in speech delivery.
2. Explain the role of posture, gestures, and movement in speech delivery.
3. Explain the connection between personal appearance and credibility in speech delivery.
4. Explain the connection between visual aids and speech delivery.
5. Identify elements of vocal delivery that make a speech more engaging.
6. Identify elements of vocal delivery that make a speech clearer.
7. Discuss the relationship between vocal delivery and speaker credibility.

The interplay between the verbal and nonverbal components of your speech can either bring the message vividly to life or confuse or bore the audience. Therefore, it is best that you neither overdramatize your speech delivery behaviors nor downplay them. This is a balance achieved through rehearsal, trial and error, and experience. One way to think of this is in terms of the Figure **14.3.1**: Goldilocks Paradigm: you don't want to overdo the delivery because you might distract your audience by looking hyper or overly animated. Conversely, someone whose delivery is too understated (meaning they don't move their hands or feet at all) looks unnatural and uncomfortable, which can also distract. Just like Goldilocks, you want a delivery that is "just right." This middle ground between too much and too little is a much more natural approach to public speaking delivery. This natural approach will be covered in more detail in the following sections where we discuss specific aspects of your delivery and what you need to think about while actually giving your speech.

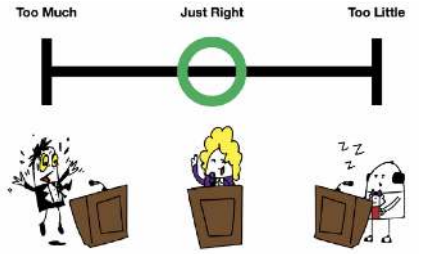


Figure **14.3.1**: The Goldilocks Paradigm of Delivery

Nonverbal Delivery

Many speakers are more nervous about physical delivery than vocal delivery. Putting our bodies on the line in front of an audience often makes us feel more vulnerable than putting our voice out there. Yet most audiences are not as fixated on our physical delivery as we think they are. Knowing this can help relieve some anxiety, but it doesn't give us a free pass when it comes to physical delivery. We should still practice for physical delivery that enhances our verbal message. Audience members primarily take in information through their eyes and ears. Beyond the actual words of your speech, the nonverbal communication that accompanies your verbal messages affects your credibility.

Gestures

Gestures are *any arm and hand movements used during your speech*. We all use hand gestures while we speak, but we didn't even take a class in matching verbal communication with the appropriate gestures; we have just internalized these norms over time based on observation and put them into practice. By this point in your life, you have a whole vocabulary of hand movements and gestures that spontaneously come out while you're speaking. Some of these gestures are emphatic and some are descriptive (Koch, 2007).

Emphatic gestures are the most common hand gestures we use, and they function to *emphasize our verbal communication and often relate to the emotions we verbally communicate*. Pointing with one finger or all the fingers straight out is an emphatic gesture. We can even bounce that gesture up and down to provide more emphasis. Moving the hand in a circular motion in front of our chest with the fingers spread apart is a common emphatic gesture that shows excitement and often accompanies an increased rate of verbal speaking. We make this gesture more emphatic by using both hands. **Descriptive gestures** function to illustrate or refer to objects rather than emotions. We use descriptive gestures to *indicate the number of something by counting with our fingers or the*

size, shape, or speed of something. Our hands and arms are often the most reliable and easy-to-use visual aids a speaker can have. While it can be beneficial to plan a key gesture or two in advance, it is generally best to gesture spontaneously in a speech, just as you would during a regular conversation.

It may sound funny, but due to speech anxiety, we have seen more than one student unknowingly incorporate "jazz hands" (shaking your hands at your sides with fingers opened wide) at various points in their speech. While certainly an extreme example, this and behaviors like it can easily become distracting. At the other end of the scale, people who don't know what to do with their hands or use the "too little" sometimes hold their arms stiffly at their sides, behind their backs, or in their pockets, all of which can also look unnatural and distracting.

However, with all that said, if you have nothing else to do with your hands, such as meaningful gestures, the default position for them is to be resting gently on the sides of the lectern (see Figure **14.3.3**). You don't want to grip the lectern tightly, but resting them on the edges keeps them in a position to move your notes on if you need to or use them to gesture. As stated above, you want to practice this way beforehand so you are used to speaking this way when you come to class.



Figure **14.3.2**



Figure **14.3.3**



Figure **14.3.4**

Feet

Sometimes the movement of the whole body, instead of just gesturing with hands, is appropriate in a speech. Just like your hands, a lot of nervous energy is going to try to work its way out of your body through your feet. On the "too much" end, this is most common when people start "dancing" behind the lectern Another variation is twisting feet around each other or the lower leg. On the other end are those who put their feet together, lock their knees, and never move from that position. Both of these options look unnatural, and therefore will prove to be distracting to your audience. Locking your knees can also lead to loss of oxygen in your brain, not a good state to be in because it can cause you to faint.

The default position for your feet, then, is to have them shoulder-width apart with your knees slightly bent (see Figure **14.3.4**). Again, you want to look and feel natural, so it is fine to adjust your weight or move out from behind the lectern, but constant motion (or perpetual stillness) will not lead to a good overall delivery.

These two sections on gestures and feet mention "energy." Public speakers need to look energetic—not hyperactive, but engaged and upbeat about communicating their message. Slumping, low and unvarying pitch and rate, and lack of gestures telegraph "I don't care" to an audience.

Objects

There is a very simple rule when it comes to what you should bring with you to the lectern when you give your speech: **Only bring to the lectern what you absolutely need to give the speech**. Anything else you have with you will only serve as a distraction for both you and the audience. For the purposes of this class, the only objects you should need to give your speech are whatever materials you are speaking from, and possibly a visual aid if you are using one. Beyond that, don't bring pens, laptops, phones, lucky charms, or notebooks with you to the lectern. These extra items can ultimately become a distraction themselves when they fall off the lectern or get in your way. Some students like to bring their electronic tablet, laptop computer, or cell phone with them, but there are some obvious disadvantages to these items, especially if you don't turn the ringer on your cell phone off. Cell phones are not usually large enough to serve as presentation notes; we've seen students squint and hold the phone up to their faces.

Not only do you need to be aware of what you bring with you, but you should also be aware of what you have on your person as well. Sometimes, in the course of dressing for a speech, we can overlook simple issues that can cause problems while speaking. Some of these can include:

- Jewelry that 'jingles' when you move, such as heavy bracelets;
- Uncomfortable shoes or shoes that you are not used to (don't make speech day the first time you try wearing high heels);
- Anything with fringe, zippers, or things hanging off it. They might become irresistible to play with while speaking;
- For those with longer hair, remember that you will be looking down at your notes and then looking back up. Don't be forced to "fix" your hair or tuck it behind your ear every time you look up. Use a barrette, hairband, or some other method to keep your hair totally out of your face so that the audience can see your eyes and you won't have to adjust your hair constantly. It can be very distracting to an audience to watch a speaker pull hair from his face after every sentence.

The Lectern and Posture

Extra movements caused by anxiety are called **nonverbal adaptors**, and most of them manifest as distracting movements or gestures. These nonverbal adaptors, like tapping a foot, wringing hands, playing with a paper clip, twirling hair, jingling change in a pocket, scratching, and many more, can definitely detract from a speaker's message and credibility. Conversely, a confident posture and purposeful gestures and movement can enhance both.

A lectern is a tool for you to use that should ultimately make your speech easier to give, and you need to use it that way. On the "too much" end, some people want to trick their audience into thinking they are not nervous by leaning on the podium in a relaxed manner, sometimes going so far as to actually begin tipping the podium forward. Your lectern is **NOT** part of your skeletal system, to prop you up, so don't do this. On the "too little" end are those who are afraid to touch it, worried that they will use it incorrectly or somehow knock it over (you won't!).

As always, you want the "Goldilocks" middle ground. Just rest your notes and hands on it, but don't lean on the lectern or "hug" it. Practicing with a lectern (or something similar to a lectern) will eliminate most of your fears about using it.

Posture is *the position we assume with our bodies, either intentionally or out of habit*. The lectern use is related to posture. Most of us let gravity pull us down. One of the muscle memory tricks of public speaking is to roll your shoulders back. Along with making your shoulder muscles feel better, doing so with feet apart and knees bent, rolling your shoulders back will lead to a more credible physical presence—you'll look taller and more energetic. You'll also feel better, and you'll have a larger lung capacity for breathing to support your tone and volume. In a formal speaking situation, it's important to have an erect posture that communicates professionalism and credibility. However, a military posture of standing at attention may feel and look unnatural in a typical school or business speech. In informal settings, it may be appropriate to lean on a table or lectern, or even sit among your audience members.



Figure **14.3.5**: Government and military leaders use an erect posture to communicate confidence and professionalism during public appearances. Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

Facial Expressions

Remember, it's a good thing for audience members to look at you because it means they're paying attention and interested. Audiences look for f**acial expressions** of the speaker, or *cues about the tone and content of the speech seen on the face*. **Facial expressions** can help bring a speech to life when used by a speaker to communicate emotions and demonstrate enthusiasm for the

speech. We tend to use facial expressions naturally and without conscious effort when engaging in day-to-day conversations. Yet many speakers' expressive faces turn "deadpan" when they stand in front of an audience. Some people naturally have more expressive faces than others—think about the actor Jim Carey's ability to contort his face as an example. But we can also consciously control and improve on our facial expressions to be more effective speakers. As with other components of speech delivery, becoming a higher self-monitor and increasing your awareness of your typical delivery habits can help you understand, control, and improve your delivery. Although you shouldn't only practice your speech in front of a mirror, doing so can help you get an idea of how expressive or unexpressive your face is while delivering your speech.



Figure **14.3.6**: Facial expressions are key for conveying emotions and enthusiasm in a speech. Jeff Wasson – Immutable Law Of The Universe #2 – CC BY 2.0.

Facial expressions help set the emotional tone for a speech, and it is important that your facial expressions stay consistent with your message. In order to set a positive tone before you start speaking, briefly look at the audience and smile. A smile is a simple but powerful facial expression that can communicate friendliness, openness, and confidence. Facial expressions communicate a range of emotions and are also associated with various moods or personality traits. For example, combinations of facial expressions can communicate that a speaker is tired, excited, angry, confused, frustrated, sad, confident, smug, shy, or bored, among other things. Even if you aren't bored, for example, a slack face with little animation may lead an audience to think that you are bored with your own speech, which isn't likely to motivate them to be interested. So make sure your facial expressions are communicating an emotion, mood, or personality trait that you think your audience will view favorably. Also, make sure your facial expressions match the content of your speech. When delivering something lighthearted or humorous, a smile, bright eyes, and slightly raised eyebrows will nonverbally enhance your verbal message. When delivering something serious or somber, a furrowed brow, a tighter mouth, and even a slight head nod can enhance that message. If your facial expressions and speech content are not consistent, your audience could become confused by the conflicting messages, which could lead them to question your honesty and credibility.

"Getting Competent": Improving Facial Expressions

My very first semester teaching, I was required by my supervisor to record myself teaching and evaluate what I saw. I was surprised by how serious I looked while teaching. My stern, expressionless face was due to my anxiety about being a beginning teacher and my determination to make sure I covered the content for the day. I didn't realize that it was also making me miss opportunities to communicate how happy I was to be teaching and how passionate I was about the content. I just assumed those things would come through in my delivery. I was wrong. The best way to get an idea of the facial expressions you use while speaking is to record your speech using a computer's webcam, much like you would look at and talk to the computer when using Skype or another video-chat program. The first time you try this, minimize the video window once you've started recording so you don't get distracted by watching yourself. Once you've recorded the video, watch the playback and take notes on your facial expressions. Answer the following questions:

1. Did anything surprise you? Were you as expressive as you thought you were?
2. What facial expressions did you use throughout the speech?
3. Where did your facial expressions match with the content of your speech? Where did your facial expressions not match with the content of your speech?
4. Where could you include more facial expressions to enhance your content and/or delivery?

> You can also have a friend watch the video and give you feedback on your facial expressions to see if your assessment matches with theirs. Once you've assessed your video, re-record your speech and try to improve your facial expressions and delivery. Revisit the previous questions to see if you improved.

Eye Contact

We tend to look at a person's face when we are listening to them. Again, this often makes people feel uncomfortable and contributes to their overall speaking anxiety. Many speakers don't like the feeling of having "all eyes" on them, even though having a room full of people avoiding making eye contact with you would be much more awkward.

As we've said consistently throughout this book, your audience is the single biggest factor that influences every aspect of your speech. And since eye contact is how you establish and maintain a rapport with your audience during your speech, it is an extremely important element of your delivery. Your professor may or may not indicate a standard for how much eye contact you need during the speech, such as 50%, but he or she will absolutely want to see you making an effort to engage your audience by looking directly at them. Eye contact has the power to make people feel welcome/unwelcome, comfortable/uncomfortable, listened to / ignored, and so on. As a speaker, eye contact can also be used to establish credibility and hold your audience's attention. We often interpret a lack of eye contact to mean that someone is not credible or not competent, and as a public speaker, you don't want your audience thinking either of those things.

What is important to note here is that you want to establish genuine eye contact with your audience and not "fake" eye contact. There have been a lot of techniques generated for "faking" eye contact, and none of them look natural. For example, these are not good ideas:

- Three points on the back wall – You may have heard that instead of making eye contact, you can just pick three points on the back wall and look at those. What ends up happening, though, is you look like you are staring off into space and your audience will spend the majority of your speech trying to figure out what you are looking at. To avoid this, look around the entire room, including the front, back, left, and right sides of the space.
- The swimming method – This happens when someone is reading his or her speech and looks up quickly and briefly to try to make it seem like they are making eye contact, not unlike a swimmer who pops his head out of the water for a breath before going back under. Eye contact is more than just physically moving your head; it is about looking at your audience and establishing a connection. In general, your eye contact should last at least five seconds at a time and should be with individuals throughout the room.
- The stare down – Since you will, to some degree, be graded on your eye contact, some students think (either consciously or not), that the best way to ensure they get credit for establishing eye contact is to always and exclusively look directly at their professor. While we certainly appreciate the attention, we want to see that you are establishing eye contact with your entire audience, not just one person. Also, this behavior is uncomfortable for the instructor.

Eye contact holds attention because an audience member who knows the speaker is making regular eye contact will want to reciprocate that eye contact to show that they are paying attention. This will also help your audience remember the content of your speech better because acting like we're paying attention actually leads us to pay attention and better retain information.

Norms for eye contact vary among cultures. Therefore it may be difficult for speakers from countries that have higher power distances or are more collectivistic to get used to the idea of making direct and sustained eye contact during a speech. In these cases, it is important for the speaker to challenge himself or herself to integrate some of the host culture's expectations and for the audience to be accommodating and understanding of the cultural differences.

Tips for Having Effective Eye Contact

1. Once in front of the audience, establish eye contact before you speak.
2. Make slow and deliberate eye contact, sweeping through the whole audience from left to right.
3. Despite what high school speech teachers or others might have told you, do not look over the audience's heads, at the back wall, or the clock. Unless you are in a huge auditorium, it will just look to the audience like you are looking over their heads.
4. Do not just make eye contact with one or a few people that you know or that look friendly. Also, do not just make eye contact with your instructor or boss. Even if it's comforting for you as the speaker, it is usually awkward for the audience member.

5. Try to memorize your opening and closing lines so you can make full eye contact with the audience. This will strengthen the opening and closing of your speech and help you make a connection with the audience.

Personal Appearance

Looking like a credible and prepared public speaker will make you feel more like one and will make your audience more likely to perceive you as such. This applies to all speaking contexts: academic, professional, and personal. Although the standards for appropriate personal appearance vary between contexts, meeting them is key. You may have experienced a time when your vocal and physical delivery suffered because you were not “dressed the part.” "Dressing the part" makes you feel more confident, which will come through in your delivery. Ideally, you should also be comfortable in the clothes you’re wearing. If the clothes are dressy, professional, and nice but ill-fitting, then the effect isn’t the same. Avoid clothes that are too tight or too loose. "Looking the part" is just as important as "dressing the part," so make sure you are cleaned and groomed in a way that’s appropriate for the occasion. The following “Getting Real” box goes into more detail about professional dress in a variety of contexts.

“Getting Real”: Professional Dress and Appearance

No matter what professional field you go into, you will need to consider the importance of personal appearance. Although it may seem petty or shallow to put so much emphasis on dress and appearance, impressions matter, and people make judgments about our personality, competence, and credibility based on how we look. In some cases, you may work somewhere with a clearly laid out policy for personal dress and appearance. In many cases, the suggestion is to follow guidelines for “business casual.” Despite the increasing popularity of this notion over the past twenty years, people’s understanding of what business casual means is not consistent (Cullen, 2008). The formal dress codes of the mid-1900s, which required employees to wear suits and dresses, gave way to the trend of business casual dress, which seeks to allow employees to work comfortably while still appearing professional (Heathfield, S. M., 2012). While most people still dress more formally for job interviews or high-stakes presentations, the day-to-day dress of working professionals varies. Here are some tips for maintaining “business casual” dress and appearance:

- **Things to generally avoid.** Jeans, hats, flip-flops, exposed underwear, exposed stomachs, athletic wear, heavy cologne/perfume, and chewing gum.
- **General dress guidelines for men.** Dress pants or khaki pants, button-up shirt or collared polo/golf shirt tucked in with belt, and dress shoes; jacket and/or tie are optional.
- **General dress guidelines for women.** Dress pants or skirt, blouse or dress shirt, dress, and closed-toe dress shoes; jacket is optional.
- **Finishing touches.** Make sure shoes are neat and polished, not scuffed or dirty; clothes should be pressed, not wrinkled; make sure fingernails are clean and trimmed/groomed; and remove any lint, dog hair, and so on from clothing.

Obviously, these are general guidelines and there may be exceptions. It’s always a good idea to see if your place of business has a dress code, or at least guidelines. If you are uncertain whether or not something is appropriate, most people recommend to air on the side of caution and choose something else. While consultants and professionals usually recommend sticking to dark colors such as black, navy, and charcoal and/or light colors such as white, khaki, and tan, it is OK to add something that expresses your identity and makes you stand out, like a splash of color or a nice accessory like a watch, eyeglasses, or a briefcase. In fact, in the current competitive job market, employers want to see that you are serious about the position, can fit in with the culture of the organization, and are confident in who you are (Verner, 2008).

1. What do you think is the best practice to follow when dressing for a job interview?
2. In what professional presentations would you want to dress formally? Business casual? Casual?
3. Aside from the examples listed previously, what are some other things to generally avoid, in terms of dress and appearance, when trying to present yourself as a credible and competent communicator/speaker?
4. In what ways do you think you can conform to business-casual expectations while still preserving your individuality?

Verbal Delivery

Vocal delivery includes components of speech delivery that relate to your voice. Incorporating vocal variety in terms of volume, pitch, rate, and pauses is key to being a successful speaker. Our voice is important to consider when delivering our speech for two

main reasons. First, vocal delivery can help us engage and interest the audience. Second, vocal delivery helps ensure that our ideas are communicated clearly. We have all had the displeasure of listening to an unengaging speaker. Even though the person may care about his or her topic, an unengaging delivery that doesn't communicate enthusiasm will translate into a lack of interest for most audience members. Although a speaker can be visually engaging by incorporating movement and gestures, a flat or monotone vocal delivery can be sedating or even annoying.

Volume

Volume refers to *the relative softness or loudness of your voice*. Like most of the other issues we've discussed in this section, the proper volume for a given speaking engagement usually falls on the scale in Figure **14.3.1**: The Goldilocks Paradigm of Delivery. If you speak too softly ("too little" volume), your audience will struggle to hear and understand you and may give up trying to listen. If you speak with "too much" volume, your audience may feel that you are yelling at them, or at least feel uncomfortable with you shouting. The volume you use should fit the size of the audience and the room.

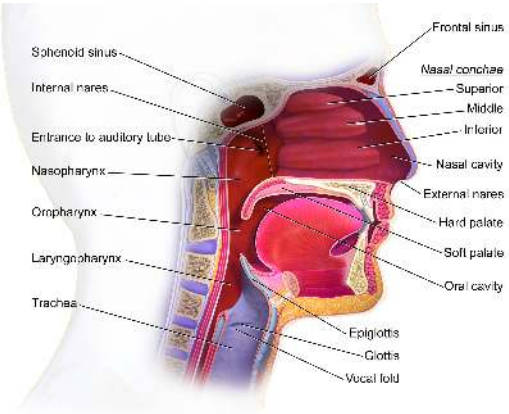
When speaking in a typically sized classroom or office setting that seats about twenty-five people, using a volume a few steps above a typical conversational volume is usually sufficient. When speaking in larger rooms, you will need to project your voice. You may want to look for nonverbal cues from people in the back rows or corners, like leaning forward or straining to hear, to see if you need to adjust your volume more. Obviously, in some settings, a microphone will be necessary to be heard by the entire audience. Softer speakers are sometimes judged as meek, which may lead to lowered expectations for the speech or less perceived credibility. Louder speakers may be seen as overbearing or annoying, which can lead audience members to disengage from the speaker and message. Be aware of the volume of your voice and, when in doubt, increase your volume a notch, since beginning speakers are more likely to have an issue of speaking too softly rather than too loudly.



Figure **14.3.7**: Speak a couple of steps above your regular volume for speeches that occur in typically sized classrooms or meeting rooms that seat twenty to forty people. A microphone may be necessary for larger groups or rooms. Speaker at Podium – CC BY 2.0.

Public speaking relies on the voice for interest, credibility, audibility, and clarity. The British Prime Minister of the 19th century was quoted saying, "There is no greater index of character so sure as the voice." While that seems exaggerated today, a public speaker at any level cannot ignore the energy, loudness, and clarity in their voice. There are four steps to voice production: breathing (produced by the lungs, which are largely responsible for the vocal characteristic of volume); phonation (the production of the sound in the vocal folds, which close and vibrate to produce sound for speaking as the air is exhaled over them; phonation creates pitch); resonation (a type of amplification of the sound in the larynx, oral cavity, and nasal cavity, which creates the characteristic of quality); and articulation, which produces the sounds of language others can understand and is responsible for rate and for being understood.

The visual in Figure **14.3.5** shows a cutaway of these parts of the anatomy. Your instructor may give you more directions on maximizing the power of your voice to achieve more variety and power. In section 11.6 we include a vocal exercise for doing so. We have all listened to a low-energy, monotone, monorate speaker and know how hard it is, so you should pay attention to your recording, perhaps by closing your eyes and just listening, to see if your voice is flat and lifeless.



The Upper Respiratory System

Figure **14.3.8**: "File:Blausen 0872 UpperRespiratorySystem.png" by BruceBlaus. Blausen.com staff (2014). 'Medical gallery of Blausen Medical 2014'. WikiJournal of Medicine 1 (2). DOI:10.15347/wjm/2014.010. ISSN 2002-4436. is licensed under CC BY 3.0

Pitch

Pitch is *the relative highness or lowness of your voice*, and like everything, you can have too much or too little (with regard to the variation of it). Too much pitch variation occurs when people "sing" their speeches, and their voices oscillate between very high pitched and very low pitched. While uncommon, this is sometimes attributed to nerves. More common is *too little variation in pitch*, which is known as being **monotone**.

Delivering a speech in a monotone manner is usually caused by reading too much; generally, the speaker's focus is on saying the words correctly (because they have not practiced). They forget to speak normally to show their interest in the topic, as we would in everyday conversation. Changing our pitch is a good way to communicate enthusiasm and indicate emphasis or closure. In general, our pitch goes up when we are discussing something exciting. Our pitch goes down slightly when we emphasize a serious or important point. Lowering the pitch is also an effective way to signal transitions between sections of your speech or the end of your speech, which cues your audience to applaud and avoids an awkward ending.

For most people, changing pitch isn't a major issue, but if you think it might be for you, ask the people in your practice audience what they think. You can also record yourself practicing your speech to help determine if the amount of pitch variety and enthusiasm you think you convey while speaking actually comes through. Generally, if we are interested in and passionate about communicating our thoughts, we are not likely to be monotone. We are rarely monotone when talking to friends and family about matters of importance to us, so pick topics you care about.

Rate

The **rate** of speaking refers to *how fast or slow you speak*. Too little rate (i.e. speaking too slowly) will make it sound like you may not fully know your speech or what you are talking about, and will ultimately cost you some credibility with your audience. It may also result in the audience being bored and lose focus on what you are saying. Speaking slowly may lead the audience to infer that the speaker is uninterested, uninformed, or unprepared to present his or her own topic. These negative assumptions, whether they are true or not, are likely to hurt the credibility of the speaker. Rate is one reason you should try to record yourself, even if just audio on your phone, beforehand and be mindful of time when you practice. Your voice's rate will affect the time it takes to give the speech.

By contrast, too much rate (i.e. speaking too fast) can be overly taxing on an audience's ability to keep up with and digest what you are saying. It sometimes helps to imagine that your speech is a jog or run that you and your friends (the audience) are taking together. You (as the speaker) are setting the pace based on how quickly you speak. If you start sprinting, it may be too difficult for your audience to keep up and they may give up halfway through. Some people naturally speak faster than others, which is fine, but we can all alter our rate of speaking with practice. If you find that you are a naturally fast speaker, make sure that you do not "speed talk" through your speech when practicing it. As always, recording and timing your speech during practice helps. You can also include reminders to "slow down" on your speaking outline.

You especially will want to maintain a good, deliberate rate at the beginning of your speech because your audience will be getting used to your voice. We have all called a business where the person answering the phone mumbles the name of the business in a rushed way. We aren't sure if we called the right number. Since the introduction is designed to get the audience's attention and interest in your speech, you will want to focus on clear delivery there. Regulating rate is another reason why video-recording yourself can be so helpful because we often do not realize how fast we speak.

Pauses

The common misconception for public speaking students is that pausing during your speech is bad, but that isn't necessarily true. You pause in normal conversations, so you shouldn't be afraid of pausing while speaking. This is especially true if you are making a particularly important point or want for a statement to have a more powerful impact: you will want to give the audience a moment to digest what you have said.

For example, consider the following statement: "Because of issues like pollution and overpopulation, in 50 years the earth's natural resources will be so depleted that it will become difficult for most people to obtain enough food to survive." Following a statement like this, you want to give your audience just a brief moment to fully consider what you are saying. Hopefully, they will think something along the lines of *What if I'm still alive then?* or *What will my children do*? and become more interested in hearing what you have to say

Of course, there is such a thing as pausing too much, both in terms of frequency and length. Someone who pauses too often (after each sentence) may come off seeming like they don't know their speech very well. Someone who pauses too long (more than a few seconds), runs the risk of the audience feeling uncomfortable or, even worse becoming distracted or letting their attention wander. We are capable of processing words more quickly than anyone can speak clearly, which is one of the reasons listening is difficult. Pauses should be controlled to maintain the attention of the audience.

Vocalized pauses

At various points during your speech, you may find yourself in need of a brief moment to collect your thoughts or prepare for the next section of your speech. At those moments, you will be pausing, but we don't always like to let people know that we're pausing. So what many of us do in an attempt to "trick" the audience is fill in those pauses with sounds so that it appears that we haven't actually paused. These are known as **vocalized pauses**, or sometimes "fillers." Another term for them is "nonfluencies."

Everyone uses vocalized pauses to some degree, but not everyone's vocalized pauses are problematic. This obviously becomes an issue when the vocalized pauses become distracting due to their overuse. We have little doubt that you can remember a time when you were speaking to someone who said the word "like" after every three words and you became focused on it. One of your authors remembers attending a wedding and (inadvertently) began counting the number of times the best man said "like" during his toast (22 was the final count). The most common vocalized pause is "uh," but then there are others. Can you think of any?

The bad news here is that there is no quick fix for getting rid of your vocalized pauses. They are so ingrained into all of our speech patterns that getting rid of them is a challenge. However, there is a two-step process you can employ to begin eliminating them. First, you need to identify what your particular vocalized pause is. Do you say "um," "well," or "now" before each sentence? Do you finish each thought with, "you know?" Do you use "like" before every adjective (as in "he was like so unhappy")?

After figuring out what your vocalized pause is, the second step is to carefully and meticulously try to catch yourself when you say it. If you hear yourself saying "uh," remind yourself, I need to try to not say that. Catching yourself and being aware of how often you use vocalized pauses will help you begin the process of reducing your dependence on them and hopefully get rid of them completely. If you do lose your train of thought, having a brief silent pause is better than injecting a vocalized pause, because the audience may not even notice the pause or may think it was intentional.

Common Causes of Vocalized Pauses

- **Lack of preparation.** Effective practice sessions are the best way to prevent these.
- **Not writing for speaking.** If you write your speech the way you've been taught to write papers, you will have these vocalized pauses. You must translate the written words into something easier for you to present orally. To do this, read your speech aloud and edit as you write to make sure your speech is easy for you to speak.
- **A poorly prepared speaking outline.** Whether it is on paper or note cards, sloppy writing, unorganized bullet points, or incomplete/insufficient information on a speaking outline leads to these.

- **Distractions.** Audience members and the external environment are unpredictable. Hopefully, audience members will be polite and will silence their phones, avoid talking while the speaker is presenting, and avoid moving excessively. There could also be external noise that comes through a door or window. A speaker can also be distracted by internal noise such as thinking about other things.

Vocal Variety

Overall, the lesson to take away from this section on vocal delivery is that variety is key. **Vocal variety** includes *changes in your rate, volume, and pitch* that can make you look more prepared, seem more credible, and be able to engage your audience better. Employing vocal variety is not something that takes natural ability or advanced skills training. It is something that beginning speakers can start working on immediately and everyone can accomplish. The key is to become aware of how you use your voice when you speak, and the best way to do this is to record yourself. We all use vocal variety naturally without thinking about it during our regular conversations, and many of us think that this tendency will translate over to our speaking voices. This is definitely not the case for most beginning speakers. Unlike in your regular conversations, it will take some awareness and practice to use vocal variety in speeches. Since it's something anyone can do, improving in this area will add to your speaking confidence, which usually translates into better speeches and better grades further on.

Articulation

Articulation refers to *the clarity of sounds and words we produce*. If someone is articulate, they speak words clearly, and speakers should strive to speak clearly. Poor articulation results when speakers do not speak clearly. For example, a person may say *dinnt* instead of *didn't*, *gonna* instead of *going to*, *wanna* instead of *want to*, or *hunnerd* instead of *hundred*. Unawareness and laziness are two common challenges to articulation. As with other aspects of our voice, many people are unaware that they regularly have errors in articulation. Recording yourself speak and then becoming a higher self-monitor are effective ways to improve your articulation. Laziness, on the other hand, requires a little more motivation to address. Some people just get in the habit of not articulating their words well. Both mumbling and slurring are examples of poor articulation. In more informal settings, this type of speaking may be acceptable, but in a formal setting, it will be negatively received, which will hurt a speaker's credibility. Perhaps the promise of being judged more favorably, which may help a person become more successful, is enough to motivate a mumbler to speak more clearly.

When combined with a low volume, poor articulation becomes an even greater problem. When you notice that you have trouble articulating a particular word, you can either choose a different word to include in your speech or you can repeat it a few times in a row in the days leading up to your speech to get used to saying it.

Pronunciation

Unlike articulation, which focuses on the clarity of words, **pronunciation** refers to *speaking words correctly, including the proper sounds of the letters and the proper emphasis*. Mispronouncing words can damage a speaker's credibility, especially when the correct pronunciation of a word is commonly known. I have actually heard someone, presenting on the topic of pronunciation, mispronounce the word *pronunciation*, saying "pro-NOUN-ciation" instead of "pro-NUN-ciation." In such a case, it would not be unwarranted for the audience to question the speaker's expertise on the subject.

We all commonly run into words that we are unfamiliar with and therefore may not know how to pronounce. Here are three suggestions when faced with this problem. The first is to look the word up in an online dictionary. Many dictionaries have a speaker icon with their definitions, and when you click on it, you can hear the correct pronunciation of a word. Some words have more than one pronunciation—for example, *Caribbean*—so choosing either of the accepted pronunciations is fine. Just remember to consistently use that pronunciation to avoid confusing your audience. If a word doesn't include audio pronunciation, you can usually find the phonetic spelling of a word, which is the word spelled out the way it sounds. There will occasionally be words that you can't locate in a dictionary. These are typically proper nouns or foreign words. In this case, you can "phone-a-friend." Call up the people you know who have large vocabularies or are generally smart when it comes to words, and ask them if they know how to pronounce them. If they do, and you find them credible, you're probably safe to take their suggestion. The third option is to "fake it 'til you make it" and should only be used as a last resort. If you can't find the word in a dictionary and your smart friends don't know how to pronounce it, it's likely that your audience will also be unfamiliar with the word. In that case, using your knowledge of how things are typically pronounced, decide on a pronunciation that makes sense and confidently use it during your

speech. Most people will not question it. In the event that someone does correct you on your pronunciation, thank him or her for correcting you and adjust your pronunciation.

The ten items listed above represent the major delivery issues you will want to be aware of when giving a speech, but it is by no means an exhaustive list. There is, however, one final piece of delivery advice we would like to offer. We know that no matter how hard you practice and how diligent you are in preparing for your speech, you are most likely going to mess up some aspect of your speech when you give it in class, at least a little. That's normal. Everyone does it. The key is to not make a big deal about it or let the audience know you messed up. Odds are that they will never even realize your mistake if you don't tell them there was a mistake. Saying something like "I can't believe I messed that up" or "Can I start over?" just telegraphs to the audience your mistake. In fact, you have most likely never heard a perfect speech delivered in your life. It is likely that you just didn't realize that the speaker missed a line or briefly forgot what they wanted to say.

As has been the driving maxim of this chapter, this means that you need to

Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in class.

Since you know you are likely going to make some sort of mistake in class, use your practice time at home to work on how you will deal with those mistakes. If you say a word incorrectly or start reading the wrong sentence, don't go back and begin that section anew. That's not what you would do in class, so just correct yourself and move on. If you practice dealing with your mistakes at home, you will be better prepared for the inevitable errors that will find their way into your speech in class.

A final thought on practice. We have all heard, "Practice makes perfect." That is not always true. Practice makes permanent; the actions become habitual. If you practice incorrectly, your performance will be incorrect. Be sure your practice is correct.

Key Takeaways

- Facial expressions help communicate emotions and enthusiasm while speaking. Make sure that facial expressions are consistent with the content being presented. Record yourself practicing your speech in order to evaluate your use of facial expressions.
- Eye contact helps establish credibility and keep your audience's attention while you're speaking.
- Posture should be comfortable and appropriate for the speaking occasion.
- Emphatic and descriptive gestures enhance the verbal content of our speech. Gestures should appear spontaneous but be purposeful.
- Movements from the waist down should be purposefully used to emphasize a point or as a transition during a speech.
- Audience members will make assumptions about your competence and credibility based on dress and personal appearance. Make sure your outer presentation of self is appropriate for the occasion and for the impression you are trying to project.
- Visual aids can add to your speech but can also interfere with your delivery and negatively affect your credibility if not used effectively.
- Speakers should use vocal variety, which is changes in rate, volume, and pitch, to make a speech more engaging.
- Speakers should use proper articulation and pronunciation to make their message clear.
- Interruptions to the fluency of a speech, including fluency hiccups and verbal fillers, detract from the speaker's message and can lessen a speaker's credibility.

Exercises

1. Identify three goals related to delivery that you would like to accomplish in this course. What strategies/tips can you use to help achieve these goals?
2. What nonverbal adaptors have you noticed that others use while speaking? Are you aware of any nonverbal adaptors that you have used? If so, what are they?
3. Getting integrated: Identify some steps that speakers can take to ensure that their dress and physical appearance enhance their credibility. How might expectations for the dress and physical appearance vary from context to context (academic, professional, personal, and civic)?
4. Record yourself practicing your speech. How does your speech sound in terms of vocal variety? Cite specific examples.
5. Listen to your recorded speech again. How would you evaluate your articulation and pronunciation? Cite specific examples.

6. Over the course of a day, take note of verbal fillers that you tend to use. List them here so you can be a higher self-monitor and begin to notice and lessen your use of them.

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14.4: Presentation Aids in Speaking

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- List and explain reasons why presentation aids are important in public speaking;
- Explain how presentation aids function in public speaking;
- Describe the various computer-based and non-computer-based types of presentation aids available to the students;
- Explain the correct use of various types of presentation aids;
- Design professional-looking slides using presentation software

What are Presentation Aids?

When you give a speech, you are presenting much more than just a collection of words and ideas. Because you are speaking "live and in-person," your audience members will experience your speech through all five of their senses: hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch. In some speaking situations, the speaker appeals only to the sense of hearing, more or less ignoring the other senses except to avoid visual distractions by dressing and properly presenting himself or herself. But the speaking event can be greatly enriched by appeals to the other senses. This is the role of presentation aids.

Presentation aids are *resources beyond the speech words and delivery that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience*. The type of presentation aids that speakers most typically make use of is visual aids: pictures, diagrams, charts and graphs, maps, and the like. Audible aids include musical excerpts, audio speech excerpts, and sound effects. A speaker may also use fragrance samples or food samples as **olfactory** (sense of smell) or **gustatory** (sense of taste) aids. Finally, presentation aids can be three-dimensional objects, animals, and people; they can also change over a period of time, as in the case of a how-to demonstration.

As you can see, the range of possible presentation aids is almost unlimited. However, all presentation aids have one thing in common: To be effective, each presentation aid a speaker uses must be a direct, uncluttered example of a specific element of the speech. Understandably, someone presenting a speech about Abraham Lincoln might want to include a photograph of him, but because everyone already knows what Lincoln looked like, **the picture would not contribute much to the message** unless, perhaps, the message was specifically about the changes in Lincoln's appearance during his time in office.

Other visual artifacts are more likely to deliver information more directly relevant to the speech—a diagram of the interior of Ford's Theater where Lincoln was assassinated, a facsimile of the messy and much-edited Gettysburg Address, or a photograph of the Lincoln family, for example. The key is that each presentation aid must directly express an idea in your speech.

Moreover, presentation aids must be used at the time when you are presenting the specific ideas related to the aid. For example, if you are speaking about coral reefs and one of your supporting points is about the location of the world's major reefs, it would make sense to display a map of these reefs while you're talking about location. If you display it while you are explaining what coral actually is, or describing the kinds of fish that feed on a reef, the map will not serve as a useful visual aid—in fact, it's likely to be a distraction.

To be effective, presentation aids must also be easy to use and easy for the listeners to see and understand. In this chapter, we will present some principles and strategies to help you incorporate effective presentation aids into your speech. We will begin by discussing the functions that good presentation aids fulfill. Next, we will explore some of the many types of presentation aids and how best to design and utilize them. We will also describe various media that can be used for presentation aids. We will conclude with tips for successful preparation and the use of presentation aids in a speech.

Functions of Presentation Aids

Why should you use presentation aids? If you have prepared and rehearsed your speech adequately, shouldn't a good speech with a good delivery be enough to stand on its own? While it is true that impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech, a good speech can often be made even better by the strategic use of presentation aids. Presentation aids can fulfill several functions: they can serve to improve your audience's understanding of the information you are conveying, enhance audience memory and

retention of the message, add variety and interest to your speech, and enhance your credibility as a speaker. Let's examine each of these functions.

Improving Audience Understanding

Human communication is a complex process that often leads to misunderstandings. If you are like most people, you can easily remember incidents when you misunderstood a message or when someone else misunderstood what you said to them. Misunderstandings happen in public speaking just as they do in everyday conversations.

One reason for misunderstandings is the fact that perception and interpretation are highly complex individual processes. Most of us have seen the image in which, depending on your perception, you see either the outline of a vase or the facial profiles of two people facing each other. Or perhaps you have seen the image of the woman who may or may not be young, depending on your frame of reference at the time. This shows how interpretations can differ, and it means that your presentations must be based on careful thought and preparation to maximize the likelihood that your listeners will understand your presentations as you intend them to do so.

As a speaker, one of your basic goals is to help your audience understand your message. To reduce misunderstanding, presentation aids can be used to clarify or to emphasize.

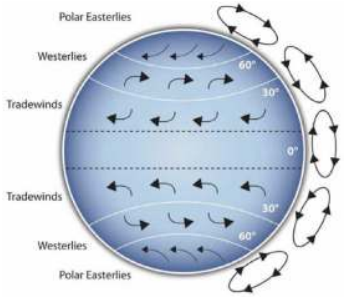


Figure **14.4.1**: Coriolis Effect. Source: *Stand up, Speak out: The Practice and Ethics of Public*

Clarifying

Clarification is important in a speech because if some of the information you convey is unclear, your listeners will come away puzzled or possibly even misled. Presentation aids can help clarify a message if the information is complex or if the point being made is a visual one.

If your speech is about the impact of the Coriolis Effect on tropical storms, for instance, you will have great difficulty clarifying it without a diagram because the process is a complex one. The diagram in Figure **14.4.1** ("Coriolis Effect") would be effective because it shows the audience the interaction between equatorial wind patterns and wind patterns moving in other directions. The diagram allows the audience to process the information in two ways: through your verbal explanation and the visual elements of the diagram. By the way, the Coriolis Effect is defined as "an effect whereby a mass moving in a rotating system experiences a force (the Coriolis force) acting perpendicular to the direction of motion and the axis of rotation. On the earth, the effect tends to deflect moving objects to the right in the northern hemisphere and to the left in the southern and is important in the formation of cyclonic weather systems." You can see why a picture really helps with this definition.

Emphasizing

When you use a presentational aid for emphasis, you impress your listeners with the importance of an idea. In a speech on water conservation, you might try to show the environmental proportions of the resource. When you use a conceptual drawing like the one in Figure **14.4.2** ("Planetary Water Supply"), you show that if the world water supply were equal to ten gallons, only ten drops would be available and drinkable for human or household consumption. This drawing is effective because it emphasizes the scarcity of useful water and thus draws attention to this important information in your speech.



Figure **14.4.2**: Planetary Water Supply. Source: *Stand up, Speak out: The Practice and Ethics of Public Speaking*

Aiding Retention and Recall

The second function that presentation aids can serve is to increase the audience's chances of remembering your speech. An article by the U.S. Department of Labor (1996) summarized research on how people learn and remember. The authors found that "83% of human learning occurs visually, and the remaining 17% through the other senses—11% through hearing, 3.5% through smell, 1% through taste, and 1.5% through touch."

For this reason, exposure to an image can serve as a memory aid to your listeners. When your graphic images deliver information effectively and when your listeners understand them clearly, audience members are likely to remember your message long after your speech is over. Moreover, people often can remember information that is presented in sequential steps more easily than if that information is presented in an unorganized pattern. When you use a presentation aid to display the organization of your speech (such as can be done with PowerPoint slides), you will help your listeners to observe, follow, and remember the sequence of information you conveyed to them. This is why some instructors display a lecture outline for their students to follow during class and why a slide with a preview of your main points can be helpful as you move into the body of your speech.

An added plus of using presentation aids is that they can boost your memory while you are speaking. Using your presentation aids while you rehearse your speech will familiarize you with the association between a given place in your speech and the presentation aid that accompanies that material.

Adding Variety and Interest

The third function of presentation aids is simply to make your speech more interesting. For example, wouldn't a speech on varieties of roses have a greater impact if you accompanied your remarks with a picture of each rose? You can imagine that your audience would be even more enthralled if you had the ability to display an actual flower of each variety in a bud vase. Similarly, if you were speaking to a group of gourmet cooks about Indian spices, you might want to provide tiny samples of spices that they could smell and taste during your speech.

Enhancing a Speaker's Credibility

Presentation aids alone will not be enough to create a professional image. As we mentioned earlier, impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech. Even if you give a good speech, you run the risk of appearing unprofessional if your presentation aids are poorly executed. Conversely, a high-quality presentation will contribute to your professional image. This means that in addition to containing important information, your presentation aids must be clear, clean, uncluttered, organized, and large enough for the audience to see and interpret correctly. Misspellings and poorly designed presentation aids can damage your credibility as a speaker.

In addition, make sure that you give proper credit to the source of any presentation aids that you take from other sources. Using a statistical chart or a map without proper credit will detract from your credibility, just as using a quotation in your speech without credit would. This situation will usually take place with digital aids such as PowerPoint slides. The source of a chart or the data shown in a chart form should be cited at the bottom of the slide.

If you focus your efforts on producing presentation aids that contribute effectively to your meaning, that look professional, and that is handled well, your audience will most likely appreciate your efforts and pay close attention to your message. That attention will help them learn or understand your topic in a new way and will thus help the audience see you as a knowledgeable, competent, and credible speaker. With the prevalence of digital communication, the audience expectation of quality visual aids has increased.

Avoiding Problems with Presentation Aids

Using presentation aids can come with some risks. However, with a little forethought and adequate practice, you can choose presentation aids that enhance your message and boost your professional appearance in front of an audience. One principle to keep in mind is to use only as many presentation aids as necessary to present your message or to fulfill your classroom assignment. The number and the technical sophistication of your presentation aids should never overshadow your speech.

Another important consideration is technology. Keep your presentation aids within the limits of the working technology available to you. Whether or not your classroom technology works on the day of your speech, you will still have to present. What will you do if the computer file containing your slides is corrupted? What will you do if the easel is broken? What if you had counted on stacking your visuals on a table that disappears right when you need it? Or the Internet connection is down for a YouTube video you plan to show?

You must be prepared to adapt to an uncomfortable and scary situation. This is why we urge students to go to the classroom well ahead of time to test the equipment and ascertain the condition of items they're planning to use. As the speaker, you are responsible for arranging the things you need to make your presentation aids work as intended. Carry a roll of masking tape so you can display your poster even if the easel is gone. Test the computer setup. Have your slides on a flash drive AND send it to yourself as an attachment or upload to a Cloud service. Has an alternative plan been prepared in case there is some glitch that prevents your computer-based presentation aids from being usable? And of course, you must know how to use the technology.

More important than the method of delivery is the audience's ability to see and understand the presentation aid. It must deliver clear information, and it must not distract from the message. Avoid overly elaborate presentation aids. Instead, simplify as much as possible, emphasizing the information you want your audience to understand.

Another thing to remember is that presentation aids do not "speak for themselves." When you display a visual aid, you should explain what it shows, pointing out and naming the most important features. If you use an audio aid such as a musical excerpt, you need to tell your audience what to listen for. Similarly, if you use a video clip, it is up to you as the speaker to point out the characteristics in the video that support the point you are making—but probably beforehand, so you are not speaking over the video. At the same time, a visual aid should be quickly accessible to the audience. This is where simplicity comes in. Just as in the organization of a speech you would not want to use 20 main points, but more like 3-5, you should limit categories of information on a visual aid.

Types of Presentation Aids

Now that we've explored some basic hints for preparing visual aids, let's look at the most common types of visual aids: charts, graphs, representations, objects/models, and people.

Charts

A **chart** is commonly defined as *a graphical representation of data (often numerical) or a sketch representing an ordered process*. Whether you create your charts or do research to find charts that already exist, it is important for them to exactly match the specific purpose in your speech.

Statistical Charts

For most audiences, **statistical charts** must be kept as simple as possible, and they must be explained. These charts are *useful for compiling and cross-referencing larger amounts of information*. The combination of rows and columns allows you to create headers and then divide them up into units, categories, dates, and so on. Medical information is put into charts so that periods of recorded information, such as vital signs, can be updated and scanned by doctors and nurses. They are also good for combining text and numbers, and they are easy to make with word processing software like Microsoft Word or spreadsheet software like Excel. Think of presenting your department's budget and spending at the end of a business quarter. You could have headers in the columns with the various categories and itemized deductions in the rows ending with a final total for each column. The statistical chart in Figure **14.4.3**: "Birth Weight Chi-Square" is from a study examining the effects of maternal smoking on a range of congenital birth defects. Unless you are familiar with statistics, this chart may be very confusing. When visually displaying information from a quantitative study, you need to make sure that you understand the material and can successfully and simply explain how one should interpret the data. If you are unsure about the data yourself, then you should probably not use this type of information. This is

definitely an example of a visual aid that, although it delivers a limited kind of information, does not speak for itself. On the other hand, if you are presenting to an upper-level or graduate class in health sciences or professionals in health occupations, this chart would be appropriate. As with all other principles of public speaking, **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**.

Congenital Anomalies	Relative Risk	Number of Smokers N = 1,943	Number of Nonsmokers N = 16,073	95% CI	p-Value
Cardiovascular System	1.56	43	217	1.12–2.19	$p < .01$
Skeletal System	1.11	19	139	0.68–1.82	NS
Hematologic System	1.39	20	121	0.86–2.25	NS
Nervous System	1.30	4	25	0.91–1.86	NS
Pulmonary System	1.25	7	39	0.55–2.84	NS
Gastrointestinal System	0.54	1	17	0.07–4.11	NS

Figure **14.4.3**: Birth Weight Chi-Square. Source: Woods, S. E., & Raju, U. (2001).

Sequence-of-Steps Charts

Sequence-of-steps charts are also useful when you are *trying to explain a process that involves several steps*. The two visual aids in Figure \(\PageIndex{4}\) (“Steps in Cell Reproduction”) both depict the process of cell division called mitosis using a sequence-of-steps chart, but they each deliver different information. The first chart lacks labels to indicate the different phases of cell division. Although the first chart has more visual detail and may look more scientific, the missing information may confuse your audience. In the second chart, each phase is labeled with a brief explanation of what is happening, which can help your audience understand the process.

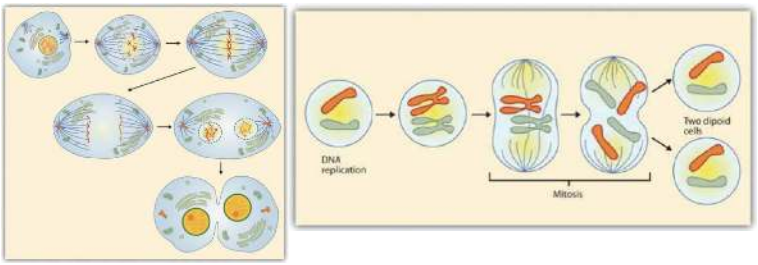


Figure **14.4.4**: Steps in Cell Reproduction. Source: Images courtesy of LadyofHats, and the National Institutes of Health.

Decision Trees

Decision trees are useful for *showing the relationships between ideas*. The example in Figure **14.4.5** (“Open Educational Resource Decision Tree”) shows how a decision tree could be used to determine whether to use open-source textbook material. As with the other types of charts, you want to be sure that the information in the chart is relevant to the purpose of your speech and that each question and decision is clearly labeled. This particular tree is pertinent to this textbook, which is an open educational resource drawing from other open educational resources, and the decision tree shows some of the processes the authors went through to decide on the content of this text.

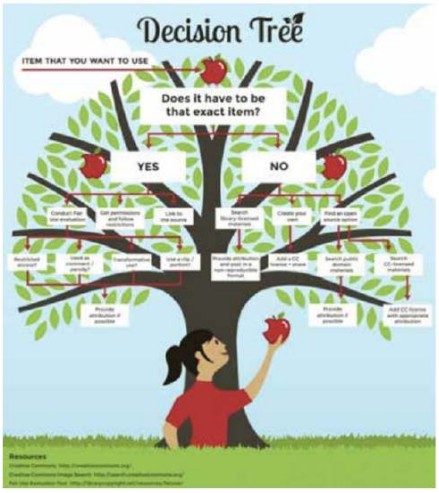


Figure 14.4.5: Open Educational Resource Decision Tree. Source: Image courtesy of Wikimedia.

Graphs

Strictly speaking, a graph may be considered a type of chart, but graphs are so widely used that we will discuss them separately. A **graph** is a *pictorial representation of the relationships of quantitative data using dots, lines, bars, pie slices, and the like*. Graphs show how one factor (such as size, weight, number of items) varies in comparison to other items. Whereas a statistical chart may report the mean ages of individuals entering college, a graph would show how the mean age changes over time. A statistical chart may report the number of computers sold in the United States, while a graph will use bars or lines to show their breakdown by operating systems such as Windows, Macintosh, and Linux.

Public speakers can show graphs using a range of different formats. Some of those formats are specialized for various professional fields. Very complex graphs often contain too much information that is not related to the purpose of a student's speech. If the graph is cluttered, it becomes difficult to comprehend. In this section, we're going to analyze the common graphs speakers utilize in their speeches: line graphs, bar graphs, pie graphs, and pictographs.

Line Graph

A **line graph** is *designed to show trends over time*. In Figure 14.4.6: "Enron's Stock Price," we see a line graph depicting the fall of Enron's stock price from August 2000 to January 2002. Notice that although it has some steep rises, the line has an overall downward trend clearly depicting the plummeting of Enron's stock price. This is far more effective in showing the relationship of numbers than a chart (as in Figure 14.4.7) or reading the numbers aloud.

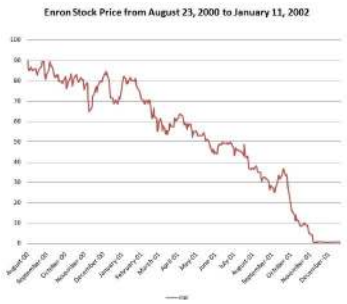


Figure 14.4.6: Enron's Stock Price. Source: Image courtesy of Nehrams 2020.

Bar Graph

Bar graphs are *useful for showing the differences between quantities*. They can be used for population demographics, fuel costs, math ability in different grades, and many other kinds of data. The graph in Figure 14.4.7 ("Suicide vs. Homicide") is well designed. It is relatively simple and is carefully labeled, making it easy for the speaker to guide the audience through the recorded numbers of each type of death. The bar graph is designed to show the difference between rates of suicides and homicides across

various age groups. When you look at the data, the first grouping clearly shows that eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds are more likely to die because of homicide than any of the other age groups.

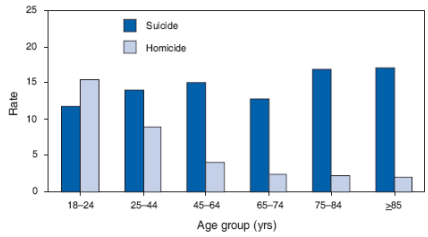


Figure **14.4.7**: Suicide vs. Homicide. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The graph in Figure **14.4.8** ("Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States") is a complicated bar graph depicting the disparity between the so-called "haves" and the "have nots" within the United States. On the left-hand side of the graph, you can see that the Top 20% of people within the United States account for 84.7% of all of the wealth and 50.1% of all of the income. On the other hand, those in the bottom 40% account for only 0.2% of the wealth and 12.1% of the actual income.



Figure **14.4.8**: Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States. Source: Wolff, E. N. (2007). Recent trends in household wealth in the United States: Rising debt and the middle-class squeeze (Working Paper No. 502). Retrieved from the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.

While the graph is very well designed, it presents a great deal of information. For example, it shows "wealth" and "income," for several groups; however, these are related but different concepts. In a written publication, readers will have time to sit and analyze the graph, but in a speaking situation, audience members need to be able to understand the information in a graph very quickly. For that reason, this graph is probably not as effective for speeches as the one in Figure **14.4.5** ("Suicide vs. Homicide").

Pie Graph

In a **pie graph**, *each piece of the pie corresponds to a percentage of the whole, and the size of the pie varies with the size of the percentage*. As with other charts and tables, most office software programs now easily make pie charts. They should be simplified as much as possible without eliminating important information. As with other graphs, the sections of the pie need to be plotted proportionally. In the pie graph shown in Figure **14.4.9** ("Causes of Concussions in Children") we see a clear and proportional chart that has been color-coded. **Color-coding** is *useful when it's difficult to fit the explanations in the actual sections of the graph; in that case, you need to include a legend, or key, to indicate what the colors in the graph mean*. In this graph, audience members can see very quickly that falls are the primary reason children receive concussions. However, the pie graph in Figure **14.4.10** ("20 Largest Economies") is jumbled, illegible, confusing, and overwhelming in every way. The use of the flags doesn't help. Overall, this graph simply contains too much information and is more likely to confuse an audience than help them understand something.

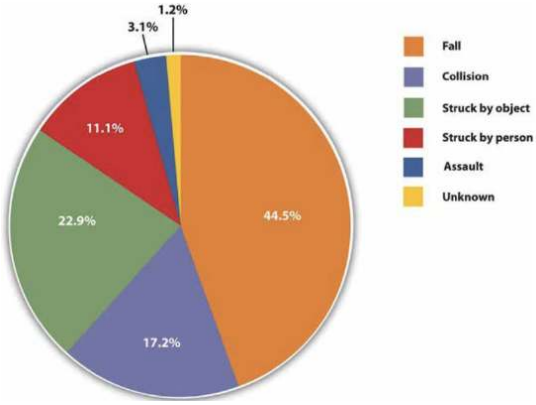


Figure 14.4.9: Causes of Concussions in Children. Source: akasport.org

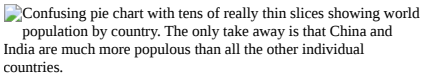


Figure 14.4.10: 20 Largest Economies. Source: Image courtesy of Wikimedia.

Graphs can present challenges in being effective but also in being ethical. To be both ethical and effective, you need a good understanding of what statistics mean, and you need to create or use graphs that show amounts clearly. If you were showing a bar graph and the bottom number on the graph was 37% rather than starting with 0%, that would result in a visually bigger difference than what really exists (see Figure 14.4.11).



Figure 14.4.11: Should Britain leave the EU? - Example. "File:EU 3.png" by Vasyl 10 is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Diagrams

Diagrams are *drawings or sketches that outline and explain the parts of an object, process, or phenomenon that cannot be readily seen*. Like graphs, diagrams can be considered a type of chart, as in the case of organizational charts and process flow charts. Diagrams are good alternatives to pictures when you only need to point out certain things that may be difficult to see in a photograph.

When you use a diagram, be sure to explain each part of the phenomenon, paying special attention to elements that are complicated or prone to misunderstanding. In the example shown, you might want to color-code the parts of the brain, like in (Figure 14.4.12).

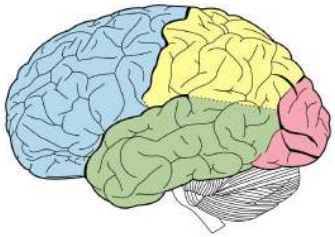


Figure 14.4.12: Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

Maps

Maps are extremely useful if the information is clear and limited. There are all kinds of maps, including population, weather, ocean current, political, and economic maps, so you should find the right kind for your speech. Choose a map that emphasizes the information you need to deliver. The map is shown in Figure 14.4.13 ("African Map with Nigerian Emphasis") is simple, showing clearly the geographic location of Nigeria. This can be extremely valuable for some audiences who might not be able to name and locate countries on the continent of Africa. The map also shows the relative size of Nigeria compared to its neighbors.

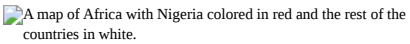


Figure 14.4.13: Map of Africa with Nigerian Emphasis. Source: Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

Photographs

Pictures can be useful when you need to show an exact replication of what you're speaking about. Sometimes a photograph or a drawing is the best way to show an unfamiliar but important detail. Figure **14.4.14** ("Native American House - Wigwam") is a photograph of a wigwam, a dwelling used by Native Americans in the North East. Audiences expect high quality in photographs now, and as with all presentation aids they should enhance the speech and not just "be there." It is common to put stock photographs on PowerPoint slides as "clip art," but they should be relevant and not detract from the message of the slide. Pictures can also connect to your audience on a personal level, especially if they evoke audience emotions. Think about the use of pictures in television commercials asking for donations or sponsorships. Organizations like Save the Children and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals successfully use pictures of malnourished children or abused animals to pull at the heartstrings of viewers. A series of well-chosen and themed pictures can have a meaningful impact on an audience. Although some pictures can be effectively presented when printed out on standard 8 1/2″ x 11″ printer paper using a black and white printer, others will need to be enlarged and/or printed in color, which will cost some money. You can often avoid this by incorporating a picture into a PowerPoint presentation, as the picture will be projected large enough for people to see. We will discuss PowerPoint in more detail later.

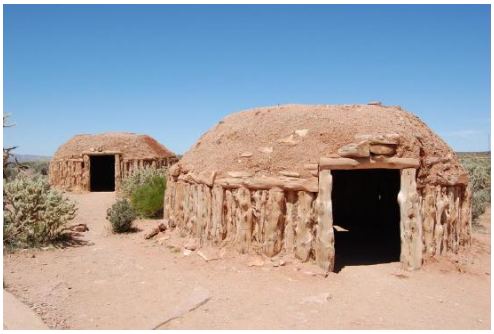


Figure **14.4.14**: "Native American House - Wigwam" by Ananth Narayan S is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Video or Audio Recordings

Another very useful type of presentation aid is a video or audio recording. Whether it is a short video from a website such as YouTube or Vimeo, a segment from a song, or a piece of a podcast, a well-chosen video or audio recording may be a good choice to enhance your speech. Imagine, for example, that you're giving a speech on how Lap-Band surgeries help people lose weight. One of the sections of your speech could explain how the Lap-Band works, so you could easily show a forty-three-second video available on YouTube to demonstrate the part of the surgery. Maybe you could include a recording of a real patient explaining why they decided to get the Lap-Band.

There is one major warning to using audio and video clips during a speech: do not forget that they are supposed to be aids to your speech, not the speech itself. In addition, be sure to avoid these five mistakes that speakers often make when using audio and video clips:

- Avoid choosing clips that are too long for the overall length of the speech. Your instructor can give you some guidelines for how long video and audio clips should be for the speeches in your class if they are allowed (and make sure they are).
- Practice with the audio or video equipment before speaking. If you are unfamiliar with the equipment, you'll look foolish trying to figure out how it works. This fiddling around will not only take your audience out of your speech but also harm your credibility. It also wastes valuable time. Finally, be sure that the speakers on the computer are on and at the right volume level.
- Cue the clip to the appropriate place before beginning your speech. We cannot tell you the number of times we've seen students spend valuable speech time trying to find a clip on YouTube or a DVD. You need to make sure your clip is ready to go before you start speaking. Later in this chapter, we will look at using video links in slides.
- In addition to cueing the clip to the appropriate place, the browser window should be open and ready to go. If there are advertisements before the video, be sure to have the video cued to play after the ad. The audience should not have to sit through a commercial. There is a website called TubeChop that can allow you to cut a segment out of a YouTube video, then creating a new link. It has limitations but can be useful.

- The audience must be given context before a video or audio clip is played, specifically what the clip is and why it relates to the speech. At the same time, the video should not repeat what you have already said but add to it.
- One useful strategy for incorporating video is to play a video without audio and speak along with the video, acting as a narrator. This allows the speaker to have more control over the visual aid and to adapt it and make it more relevant to a specific topic and audience.
- Additionally, video editing software like Final Cut and iMovie are readily available to college students and relatively easy to use. Some simple editing to cut together various clips that are meaningful or adding an introductory title or transitions can go a long way toward making your video look professional.

Objects or Models

Three-dimensional objects or models that represent an idea can be useful as a visual aid for a speech. **Objects** refer to *anything you could hold up and talk about during your speech*. If you're talking about the importance of not using plastic water bottles, you might hold up a plastic water bottle and a stainless steel water bottle as examples.

Models, on the other hand, are *re-creations of physical objects that you cannot have readily available with you during a speech*. If you're giving a speech on heart murmurs, you may be able to show how heart murmurs work by holding up a model of the human heart.

Tips for Using Objects Effectively

1. Make sure your objects are large enough for the audience to see.
2. Do not pass objects around, as it will be distracting.
3. Hold your objects up long enough for the audience to see them.
4. Do not talk to your object, wiggle or wave it around, tap on it, or obstruct the audience's view of your face with it.
5. Practice with your objects so your delivery will be fluent and there won't be any surprises.

People

Speakers can often use their own bodies to demonstrate facets of a speech. If your speech is about ballroom dancing or ballet, you might use your body to demonstrate the basic moves in the cha-cha or the five basic ballet positions.

In some cases, such as for a demonstration speech, you might want to ask someone else to serve as your presentation aid. You should arrange ahead of time for a person (or persons) to be an effective aid—do not assume that an audience member will volunteer on the spot. If you plan to demonstrate how to immobilize a broken bone, your volunteer must know ahead of time that you will touch them as much as necessary to splint the break

You must also make certain that they will arrive dressed presentably and that they will not draw attention away from your message through their appearance or behavior. The transaction between you and your human presentation aid must be appropriate, especially if you are going to demonstrate something like a dance step. In short, make sure your helper will know what is expected of them and consents to it.

Finally, before you decide to use an animal as a presentation aid, ask yourself if you could make your point equally well with a picture, model, diagram, or other representation of the animal in question.

Using Presentation Slides

Ever since the 1990s and the mainstreaming of personal computer technology, speakers have had the option of using slide presentation software to accompany their speeches and presentations. The most commonly known one is PowerPoint, although there are several others:

- Prezi, available at www.prezi.com You can see Prezi in action in this video by James Geary.
- Slide Rocket, available at www.sliderocket.com
- Google Slides, available in Google Drive and useful for collaborative assignments
- Keynote, the Apple presentation slide software on MACs
- Impress, an Open Office product (http://www.openoffice.org/product/impress.html)
- PrezentIt

- Adobe Acrobat Presenter
- ThinkFree

Creating Quality Slide Shows

Slides should show the principles of good design, which include unity, emphasis or focal point, scale and proportion, balance, and rhythm (Lauer & Pentak, 2000). Presenters should also pay attention to tone and usability. With those principles in mind, here are some tips for creating and then using presentation software.

Unity and Consistency

Generally, it is best to use a single font for the text on your visuals so that they look like a unified set. Or you can use two different fonts in a consistent way, such as having all headings and titles in the same font and all bullet points in the same font. Additionally, the background should probably remain consistent, whether you choose one of the many design templates or if you just opt for background color.

The adage, "Keep It Simple, Speaker" definitely applies to presentation slides in terms of unity. Each slide should have one message, one photo, one graphic. The audience members should know what they are supposed to look at on the slide. A phrase to remember about presentation slides and the wide range of design elements available is "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should."

The emphasis, Focal Point, and Visibility

Several points should be made about how to make sure the audience sees what they need to see on the slides.

1. It is essential to make sure the information is large enough for the audience to see; and since the display size may vary according to the projector you are using, this is another reason for practicing in advance with the equipment you intend to use.
2. High contrast between the text and slides is extremely important. White fonts against very dark backgrounds and black fonts against very light backgrounds are probably your safest bet here. Remember that the way it looks on your computer screen is not exactly how it will look when projected—the light is coming from a different place. Avoid words on photos.
3. Also in terms of visibility, most experts say that sans serif fonts such as Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana are better for reading from screens than serif fonts such as Times New Roman, Bookface, Georgia, or Garamond. Merriam-Webster (2018) defines "serif" as "any of the short lines stemming from and at an angle to the upper and lower ends of the strokes of a letter." Serifs are additions to the letters on different fonts that give them a different appearance and help the flow of the eye when reading.

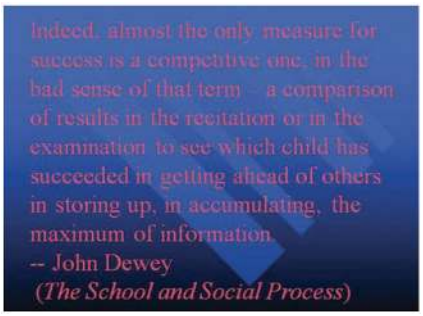


Figure **14.4.15**: Sample Slide for Critique.

How does the slide in Figure **14.4.15** stack up beside these rules for visibility? You probably noticed that slide is a "fail" in terms of high contrast between the font and background and the use of a block of text not broken up for easy reading. The audience would feel like they are supposed to read it but not be able to. Also, since the text is a quotation from John Dewey, the text should have quotation marks around it.

Scale and Proportion

Although there are several ways to think about scale and proportion, we will discuss three here. First, bullet points. Bullet points infer that the items in the bulleted list are equal and the sequence doesn't matter. If you want to communicate order or sequence or

priority, use numbers. Do not mix outline points or numerical points with bullet points. Also, you should not put your outline (Roman numerals, etc.) on the slide.

Bullet points should be short—not long, full sentences—but at the same time should be long enough to mean something. In a speech on spaying and neutering pets, the bullet point “pain” may be better replaced with “Pet feels little pain.” Second, when you are designing your slides, it is best to choose a template and stick with it. If you input all your graphics and material and then change the template, the format of the slide will change, in some cases dramatically, and you will have distorted graphics and words covered up. You will then have to redesign each slide, which can be unnecessarily time-consuming.

The third aspect of scale and proportion is the relationship between the graphics and text in terms of size. This aspect is discussed below in the next section on “Balance.” Also, a graphic should be surrounded by some space and not just take up the whole slide.

Balance

In general, you want symmetrical slides.

- Use a consistent theme with limited variation in font style and font size.
- You don't want too much “white space” below the text, leaving an imbalance between the text and graphics. The graphic should not go up into the title, and the title should be centered.
- The slides should not have full sentences or paragraphs. Break the text up into bullet points. Limit content to no more than six lines of text or six bullet points per slide.
- The graphic(s) should be sized appropriately for the slide (pulling the image from the corner to maintain picture quality).
- Avoid slides that are too “busy.” Don't have too much text or too many images

Rhythm in Presenting

The rhythm of your slide display should be reasonably consistent—you would not want to display a dozen different slides in the first minute of a five-minute presentation and then display only one slide per minute for the rest of the speech. Timing them so that the audience can actually take them in is important. Presenters often overdo the number of slides, thinking they will get a better grade, but too many slides just cause overkill.

If you can obtain a remote mouse to change slides, that can help you feel independent of the mouse attached to the computer. However, you have to practice with the remote “clicker.” But if you have to use the mouse to change the slide, keep your hands off of it between clicks. We have seen students wiggle the little arrow all over the screen. It is extremely annoying.

Whether using a remote “clicker” or the attached mouse, you must attend to the connection between what is on the screen and what you are actually talking about at the moment. Put reminders in your notes about when you need to change slides during your speech.

For better or worse, we have become very screen-oriented in our communication, largely because screens change often and that changing teaches us to expect new stimuli, which we crave. If the screen is up but you are not talking about what is on the screen, it is very confusing to the audience. To avoid this, some presenters put a black slide between slides in the presentation so that hitting the forward key gives the same effect, but hitting it again takes them to a new screen.

In fact, a basic presentation rule is to only show your visual aid when you are talking about it, and remove it when you no longer are talking about it. Some other practical considerations are as follows:

1. Be sure the file is saved in a format that will be “readable” on the computer where you are presenting. A common example is that a Keynote presentation (Apple) does not open on all PCs. You can save Keynote as a .ppt file for use on a PC. Likewise, if you chose to use Prezi or other web-based presentation software, you will need a strong, reliable Internet connection to show the slides.
2. A very strong temptation for speakers is to look at the projected image rather than the audience during the speech. This practice cuts down on eye contact, of course, and is distracting for the audience. Two solutions for that are to print your notes from the presentation slides and/or use the slides as your note structure. Also remember that if the image is on the computer monitor in front of you, it is on the screen behind you.
3. Always remember—and this cannot be emphasized enough—technology works for you, not you for the technology. The presentation aids are aids, not the speech itself.

4. If you are using a video or audio clip from an Internet source, it is probably best to hyperlink the URL on one of the slides rather than minimize the program and change to the Internet site. You can do this by highlighting a keyword on the slide, right-clicking to find “hyperlink,” and then paste the URL there. Although you can also embed video in a PowerPoint, it makes the file extremely large and that may cause problems of its own.
5. Finally, it is common for speakers to think “the slide changes, so the audience know there is a change, so I don’t need a verbal transition.” Please do not fall into this trap. Verbal transitions are just as, and maybe more, necessary for a speech using slides.

Something to Think About

What are some attention problems caused by using projection equipment during a speech?



Figure **14.4.16**:"Projector Images" by elvisripley is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Which kind of presentation aid would be most useful for the following?

1. data on how the average American family uses its income
2. discussing the number of wind turbines in five Midwestern states
3. explaining the changes in enrollment of minority students at your college over 20 year
4. a speech on the chambers of the human heart
5. a speech on the differences between North and South Korea
6. a speech on the Sutton Hoo archeological dig in England

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: The Informative Speech



Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

1. Recognize opinion versus factual information;
2. Recognize the different types of informative speeches;
3. Decide on the best organizational approach for types of informative speeches;
4. Follow proven guidelines for preparing an informative speech;
5. Construct an informative speech.

15.1: What are Informative Speeches?
15.2: Types of Informative Speeches
15.3: Organizing and Supporting an Informative Speech

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15.1: What are Informative Speeches?

Learning Objectives

1. Identify strategies for researching and supporting informative speeches.
2. Employ strategies for effective informative speaking, including avoiding persuasion, avoiding information overload, and engaging the audience.

Many people would rather go see an impassioned political speech or a comedic monologue than a lecture. Although informative speaking may not be the most exciting form of public speaking, it is the most common. Reports, lectures, training seminars, and demonstrations are all examples of informative speaking. That means you are more likely to give and listen to informative speeches in a variety of contexts. Some organizations, like consulting firms, and career fields, like training and development, are solely aimed at conveying information. College alumni have reported that out of many different speech skills, informative speaking is most important (Verderber, 1991). Since your exposure to informative speaking is inevitable, why not learn how to be a better producer and consumer of informative messages?



Figure **15.1.1**: Monash University – Surgery Workshop 2012 – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Informative Speaking Defined

Very simply, an informative speech can first be defined as *a speech-based entirely and exclusively on facts*. Basically, an informative speech conveys knowledge, a task that every person engages in every day in some form or another. Whether giving someone who is lost driving directions, explaining the specials of the day as a server, or describing the plot of a movie to friends, people engage in forms of informative speaking daily. Secondly, an informative speech does not attempt to convince the audience that one thing is better than another. **It does not advocate a course of action.** Consider the following two statements:

2 + 2 = 4

George Washington was the first President of the United States.

In each case, the statement made is what can be described as **irrefutable**, meaning a statement or claim that cannot be argued. In the first example, even small children are taught that having two apples and then getting two more apples will result in having four apples. This statement is irrefutable in that no one in the world will (or should!) argue this: It is a fact.

Similarly, with the statement, “George Washington was the first President of the United States,” this again is an irrefutable fact. If you asked one hundred history professors and read one hundred history textbooks, the professors and textbooks would all say the same thing: Washington was the first president. No expert, reliable source, or person with any common sense would argue about this.

(Someone at this point might say, “No, John Hanson was the first president.” However, he was the president under the Articles of Confederation for a short period—November 5, 1781, to November 3, 1782—not under our present Constitution. This example

shows the importance of stating your facts clearly and precisely and being able to cite their origins.)

Therefore, an informative speech should not incorporate **opinion**. This can be the tricky part of developing an informative speech, because some opinion statements sometimes sound like facts (since they are generally agreed upon by many people), but are really opinions.

Additionally, you should never take sides on an issue in an informative speech, nor should you "spin" the issue in order to influence the opinions of the listeners. Even if you are informing the audience about differences in views on controversial topics, you should simply and clearly explain the issues. This is not to say, however, that the audience's needs and interests have nothing to do with the informative speech. We come back to the WIIFM principle ("What's in it for me?) because even though an informative speech is fact-based, it still needs to relate to people's lives in order to maintain their attention.

The question may arise here, "If we can find anything on the Internet now, why bother to give an informative speech?" The answer lies in the unique relationship between audience and speaker found in the public speaking context. The speaker can choose to present information that is of most value to the audience. Secondly, the speaker is not just overloading the audience with data. As we have mentioned before, that's not really a good idea because audiences cannot remember great amounts of data and facts after listening. The focus of the content is what matters. This is where the specific purpose and central idea come into play. Remember, public speaking is not a good way to "dump data" on the audience, but to make information meaningful.

Finally, although we have stressed that the informative speech is fact-based and does not have the purpose of persuasion, information still has an indirect effect on someone. If a classmate gives a speech on correctly using the Heimlich Maneuver to help a choking victim, the side effect (and probably desired result) is that the audience would use it when confronted with the situation.

Avoiding Persuasion

We should avoid thinking of informing and persuading as dichotomous, meaning that it's either one or the other. It's more accurate to think of informing and persuading as two poles on a continuum, as in Figure **15.1.2**: "Continuum of Informing and Persuading" (Olbricht, 1968). Most persuasive speeches rely on some degree of informing to substantiate the reasoning. And informative speeches, although meant to secure the understanding of an audience, may influence audience members' beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors.

Figure **15.1.2**: Continuum of Informing and Persuading



Speakers can look to three areas to help determine if their speech is more informative or persuasive: speaker purpose, function of information, and audience perception (Verderber, 1991). First, for informative speaking, a speaker's purpose should be to create understanding by sharing objective, factual information. The specific purpose and thesis statements help establish a speaker's goal and purpose and can serve as useful reference points to keep a speech on track. When reviewing your specific purpose and thesis statement, look for words like *should*/*shouldn't*, *good*/*bad*, and *right*/*wrong*, as these often indicate a persuasive slant in the speech.

Second, information should function to clarify and explain in an informative speech. Supporting materials shouldn't function to prove a thesis or to provide reasons for an audience to accept the thesis, as they do in persuasive speeches. Although informative messages can end up influencing the thoughts or behaviors of audience members, that shouldn't be the goal.

Third, an audience's perception of the information and the speaker helps determine whether a speech is classified as informative or persuasive. The audience must perceive that the information being presented is not controversial or disputed, which will lead audience members to view the information as factual. The audience must also accept the speaker as a credible source of information. Being prepared, citing credible sources, and engaging the audience help to establish a speaker's credibility. Last, an audience must perceive the speaker to be trustworthy and not have a hidden agenda. Avoiding persuasion is a common challenge for informative speakers, but it is something to consider, as violating the speaking occasion may be perceived as unethical by the audience. Be aware of the overall tone of your speech by reviewing your specific purpose and thesis to make sure your speech isn't tipping from informative to persuasive.



Figure 15.1.3: Hans Splinter – balance – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Avoid *Faux* or Fake Informative Speech Topics

Sometimes students think that because something sounds like an informative speech topic, it is one. This happens a lot with political issues that are usually partisan in nature. Some students may feel that the speech topic “To inform my audience why William Henry Harrison was a bad president” sounds factual, but really this is an opinion. Similarly, a number of topics that include conspiracy and paranormal subject matter are usually mistaken for good informative topics as well.



Figure 15.1.4: "Conspiracy van" by mag3737 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

The problem here, as you have probably already guessed, is that these facts are not irrefutable. Not every single person who sees something unknown in the sky will agree it is an alien spacecraft, and there can be little doubt that not everyone who claims to have been abducted by a UFO is telling the truth. This isn’t to say that you can’t still do an informative speech on alien sites. For example, two viable options are “To inform my audience about the SETI Project” or “To inform my audience of the origin of the Area 51 conspiracy.” However, these types of speeches can quickly devolve into opinion if you aren’t careful, which would then make them persuasive speeches. Even if you start by trying to be objective, unless you can present each side equally, it will end up becoming a persuasive speech. Additionally, when a speaker picks such a topic, it is often because of a latent desire to persuade the audience about them.

Pick a Specific or Focused Topic

Perhaps one of the biggest and most common misconceptions students have about informative speech topics is that the topic needs to be broad in order to fill the time requirements for the speech. It is not uncommon for a student to propose an informative speech topic such as “To inform my audience about the history of music.” How is that topic even possible? When does the history of music

even begin? The thinking here is that this speech will be easy to research and write since there is so much information available. But the opposite is actually true. A topic that is this broad makes doing research even harder.

Let's consider the example of a student who proposes the topic "To inform my audience about the Civil War." The Civil War was, conservatively speaking, four years long, resulted in over 750,000 casualties, and arguably changed the course of human history. So to think that it is possible to cover all of that in five to seven minutes is unrealistic. Also, a typical college library has hundreds of books dealing with the Civil War. How will you choose which ones are best suited to use for your speech?

The better approach, in this case, is to be as specific as possible. A revised specific purpose for this speech might be something like "To inform my audience about the Gettysburg Address." This topic is much more compact (the Gettysburg Address is only a few minutes long), and doing research will now be exponentially easier—although you will still find hundreds of sources on it. Or, an even more specific topic would be like the one in the outline at the end of this chapter: "To inform my classmates of the specific places in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, that are considered haunted."

Instead of looking through all the books in your campus library on the Civil War, searching through the library's databases and catalog for material on the Gettysburg Address will yield a much more manageable number of books and articles. It may sound counterintuitive, but selecting a speech topic that is very specifically focused will make the research and writing phases of the informative speech much easier.

Researching an Informative Speech Topic

Having sharp research skills is a fundamental part of being a good informative speaker. Since informative speaking is supposed to convey factual information, speakers should take care to find sources that are objective, balanced, and credible. Periodicals, books, newspapers, and credible websites can all be useful sources for informative speeches. Aside from finding credible and objective sources, informative speakers also need to take time to find engaging information. This is where sharp research skills are needed to cut through all the typical information that comes up in the research process to find novel information. Novel information is atypical or unexpected, but it takes more skill and effort to locate. Even seemingly boring informative speech topics like the history of coupons can be brought to life with information that defies the audience's expectations. A student recently delivered an engaging speech about coupons by informing us that coupons have been around for 125 years, are most frequently used by wealthier and more educated households, and that a coupon fraud committed by an Italian American businessman named Charles Ponzi was the basis for the term *Ponzi scheme*, which is still commonly used today.



Figure **15.1.5**: To avoid boring an audience, effective informative speakers possess good research skills and the ability to translate information to be engaging and relevant for an audience. Niall Kennedy – Sleep – CC BY-NC 2.0.

As was mentioned earlier, the goal of informative speaking is to teach your audience. An audience is much more likely to remain engaged when they are actively learning. This is like a balancing act. You want your audience to be challenged enough by the information you are presenting to be interested, but not so challenged that they become overwhelmed and shut down. You should

take care to consider how much information your audience already knows about a topic. Be aware that speakers who are very familiar with their speech topic tend to overestimate their audience's knowledge about the topic. It's better to engage your topic at a level slightly below your audience's knowledge level than above. Most people won't be bored by a brief review, but many people become lost and give up listening if they can't connect to the information right away or feel it's over their heads.

A good informative speech leaves the audience thinking long after the speech is done. Try to include some practical "takeaways" in your speech. I've learned many interesting and useful things from the informative speeches my students have done. Some of the takeaways are more like trivia information that is interesting to share—for example, how prohibition led to the creation of NASCAR. Other takeaways are more practical and useful—for example, how to get wine stains out of clothing and carpet or explanations of various types of student financial aid.

Avoiding Information Overload

Many informative speakers have a tendency to pack a ten-minute speech with as much information as possible. This can result in information overload, which is a barrier to effective listening that occurs when a speech contains more information than an audience can process. Editing can be a difficult task, but it's an important skill to hone, because you will be editing more than you think. Whether it's reading through an e-mail before you send it, condensing a report down to an executive summary, or figuring out how to fit a client's message on the front page of a brochure, you will have to learn how to discern what information is best to keep and what can be thrown out. In speaking, being a discerning editor is useful because it helps avoid information overload. While a receiver may not be attracted to a brochure that's covered in text, they could take the time to read it, and reread it, if necessary. Audience members cannot conduct their own review while listening to a speaker live. Unlike readers, audience members can't review words over and over (Verderber, 1991). Therefore competent speakers, especially informative speakers who are trying to teach their audience something, should adapt their message to a listening audience. To help avoid information overload, adapt your message to make it more listenable.

Although the results vary, research shows that people only remember a portion of a message days or even hours after receiving it (Janusik, 2012). If you spend 100 percent of your speech introducing new information, you have wasted approximately 30 percent of your time and your audience's time. Information overload is a barrier to effective listening, and as good speakers, we should be aware of the limitations of listening and compensate for that in our speech preparation and presentation. I recommend that my students follow a guideline that suggests spending no more than 30 percent of your speech introducing new material and 70 percent of your speech repackaging that information. I specifically use the word *repackaging* and not *repeating*. Simply repeating the same information would also be a barrier to effective listening, since people would just get bored. Repackaging will help ensure that your audience retains most of the key information in the speech. Even if they don't remember every example, they will remember the main underlying point.

Avoiding information overload requires a speaker to be a good translator of information. To be a good translator, you can compare an unfamiliar concept with something familiar, give examples from real life, connect your information to current events or popular culture, or supplement supporting material like statistics with related translations of that information. These are just some of the strategies a good speaker can use. While translating information is important for any oral presentation, it is especially important when conveying technical information. Being able to translate complex or technical information for a lay audience leads to more effective informing because the audience feels like they are being addressed on their level and don't feel lost or "talked down to." The History Channel show, *The Universe*, provides excellent examples of informative speakers who act as good translators. The scientists and experts featured on the show are masters of translating technical information, like physics, into concrete examples that most people can relate to based on their everyday experiences. Preview statements, section transitions, and review statements are some examples of orienting material that helps focus an audience's attention and facilitates the process of informing (Verderber, 1991).



Figure **15.1.6**: Comparing the turbulent formation of the solar system to the collisions of bumper bars and spinning rides at an amusement park makes the content more concrete. Alexander Svensson – Ferris Wheel – CC BY 2.0.

Engaging Your Audience

As a speaker, you are competing for the attention of your audience against other internal and external stimuli. Getting an audience engaged and then keeping their attention is a challenge for any speaker, but it can be especially difficult when speaking to inform. As was discussed earlier, once you are in the professional world, you will most likely be speaking informatively about topics related to your experience and expertise. Some speakers fall into the trap of thinking that their content knowledge is enough to sustain them through an informative speech or that their position in an organization means that an audience will listen to them and appreciate their information despite their delivery. Content expertise is not enough to be an effective speaker. A person must also have speaking expertise (Verderber, 1991). Effective speakers, even renowned experts, must still translate their wealth of content knowledge into information that is suited for oral transmission, audience-centered, and well organized. I'm sure we're all familiar with the stereotype of the absentminded professor or the genius who thinks elegantly in his or her head but can't convey that same elegance verbally. Having well-researched and organized supporting material is an important part of effective informative speaking, but having good content is not enough.

Audience members are more likely to stay engaged with a speaker they view as credible. So complementing good supporting material with a practiced and fluent delivery increases credibility and audience engagement. In addition, as we discussed earlier, good informative speakers act as translators of information. Repackaging information into concrete familiar examples is also a strategy for making your speech more engaging. Understanding relies on being able to apply incoming information to life experiences.

Repackaging information is also a good way to appeal to different learning styles, as you can present the same content in various ways, which helps reiterate a point. While this strategy is useful with any speech, since the goal of informing is teaching, it makes sense to include a focus on learning within your audience adaptation. There are three main learning styles that help determine how people most effectively receive and process information: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (Fleming, 2012). Visual learners respond well to information presented via visual aids, so repackage information using text, graphics, charts, and other media. Public speaking is a good way to present information for auditory learners who process information well when they hear it. Kinesthetic learners are tactile; they like to learn through movement and "doing." Asking for volunteers to help with a demonstration, if appropriate, is a way to involve kinesthetic learners in your speech. You can also have an interactive review activity at the end of a speech, much like many teachers incorporate an activity after a lesson to reinforce the material.

"Getting Real"

Technical Speaking

People who work in technical fields, like engineers and information technology professionals, often think they will be spared the task of public speaking. This is not the case, however, and there is actually a branch of communication studies that

addresses public speaking matters for “techies.” The field of technical communication focuses on how messages can be translated from expert to lay audiences. I actually taught a public speaking class for engineering students, and they basically had to deliver speeches about the things they were working on in a way that I could understand. I ended up learning a lot more about jet propulsion and hybrid car engines than I ever expected!

Have you ever been completely lost when reading an instruction manual for some new product you purchased? Have you ever had difficulty following the instructions of someone who was trying to help you with a technical matter? If so, you’ve experienced some of the challenges associated with technical speaking. There are many careers where technical speaking skills are needed. According to the Society for Technical Communication, communicating about specialized or technical topics, communicating by using technology, and providing instructions about how to do something are all examples of technical speaking (Society for Technical Communication, 2012). People with technical speaking skills offer much to organizations and businesses. They help make information more useable and accessible to customers, clients, and employees. They can help reduce costs to a business by reducing unnecessary work that results from misunderstandings of instructions, by providing clear information that allows customers to use products without training or technical support and by making general information put out by a company more user-friendly. Technical speakers are dedicated to producing messages that are concise, clear, and coherent (Society for Technical Communication, 2012). Such skills are used in the following careers: technical writers and editors, technical illustrators, visual designers, web designers, customer service representatives, salespeople, spokespeople, and many more.

1. What communication skills that you’ve learned about in the book so far do you think would be important for a technical speaker?
2. Identify instances in which you have engaged in technical speaking or received information from a technical speaker. Based on what you have learned in this chapter, were the speakers effective or not, and why?

Key Takeaways

- Getting integrated: Informative speaking is likely the type of public speaking we will most often deliver and be audience to in our lives. Informative speaking is an important part of academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts.
- Effective informative speaking requires good research skills, as speakers must include novel information, relevant and proxemic examples, and “take-away” information that audience members will find engaging and useful.
- An effective informative speaker should avoid persuasion by reviewing the language used in the specific purpose and thesis statements, using objective supporting material, and appearing trustworthy to the audience.
- An effective informative speaker should avoid information overload by repackaging information and building in repetition and orienting material like reviews and previews.
- An effective informative speaker engages the audience by translating information into relevant and concrete examples that appeal to different learning styles.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: How might you use informative speaking in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic?
2. Brainstorm potential topics for your informative speech and identify which topic category each idea falls into. Are there any risks of persuading for the topics you listed? If so, how can you avoid persuasion if you choose that topic?

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15.2: Types of Informative Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common topic categories for informative speeches.
2. Explain the different methods of informing related to the category.

Choosing an Informative Speech Topic

Being a successful informative speaker starts with choosing a topic that can engage and educate the audience. Your topic choices may be influenced by the level at which you are speaking. Informative speaking usually happens at one of three levels: formal, vocational, and impromptu (Verderber, 1991). Formal informative speeches occur when an audience has assembled specifically to hear what you have to say. Being invited to speak to a group during a professional meeting, a civic gathering or a celebration gala brings with it high expectations. Only people who have accomplished or achieved much are asked to serve as keynote speakers, and they usually speak about these experiences. Many more people deliver informative speeches at the vocational level, as part of their careers. Teachers spend many hours lecturing, which is a common form of informative speaking. In addition, human resources professionals give presentations about policy changes and provide training for new employees, technicians in factories convey machine specifications and safety procedures, and servers describe how a dish is prepared in their restaurant. Last, we all convey information daily in our regular interactions. When we give a freshman directions to a campus building, summarize the latest episode of *American Idol* for our friend who missed it, or explain a local custom to an international student, we are engaging in impromptu informative speaking.

Whether at the formal, vocational, or impromptu level, informative speeches can emerge from a range of categories, which include objects, people, events, processes, concepts, and issues. An extended speech at the formal level may include subject matter from several of these categories, while a speech at the vocational level may convey detailed information about a process, concept, or issue relevant to a specific career.



Figure **15.2.1**: Subjects of informative speaking at the vocational level usually relate to a speaker's professional experience or expertise. Peter Long – Business Meeting – CC BY 2.0.

Since we don't have time to research or organize content for impromptu informative speaking, these speeches may provide a less detailed summary of a topic within one of these categories. A broad informative speech topic could be tailored to fit any of these categories. As you draft your specific purpose and thesis statements, think about which category or categories will help you achieve your speech goals, and then use them to guide your research. Figure **15.2.2**: "Sample Informative Speech Topics by Category" includes an example of how a broad informative subject area like renewable energy can be adapted to each category as well as additional sample topics.

Figure 15.2.2: Sample Informative Speech Topics by Category

Category	Renewable Energy Example	Other Examples
Objects and Places	Biomass gasifier	Tarot cards, star-nosed moles, Washington Monument
People	Al Gore	Jennifer Lopez, Bayard Rustin, the Amish
Concepts	Sustainability	Machismo, intuition, Wa (social harmony)
Events	Earth Day	Pi Day, Take Back the Night, 2012 presidential election
Processes	Converting wind to energy	Scrapbooking, animal hybridization, Academy Awards voting
Categories or Divisions	Types of Renewable Energy	Dog Breeds, Types of Chocolate, Car Styles

While the topics to choose from for informative speeches are nearly limitless, they can generally be pared down into five broad categories. Understanding the type of informative speech you will be giving can help you figure out the best way to organize, research, and prepare for it, as discussed below.

Type 1: Objects and Places

A common approach to selecting an informative speech topic is to discuss the history or development of something. With so much human knowledge available via the Internet, finding information about the origins and evolution of almost anything is much easier than it has ever been (with the disclaimer that there are quite a few websites out there with false information). With that in mind, some of the areas that a historical informative speech could cover would include:

Objects

(Example: the baseball; the saxophone). Someone at some point in history was the first to develop what is considered modern baseball. Who was it? What was it originally made of? How did it evolve into the baseball that is used by Major League Baseball today?

Places

(Example: your college; Disney World). There is a specific year that your college or university opened, a specific number of students who were initially enrolled, and often colleges and universities have name and mission changes. All of these facts can be used to provide an overall understanding of the college and its history. Likewise, the Disney World of today is different from the Disney World of the early 1970s; the design has developed over the last fifty years.

Type 2: People

Speeches about people focus on real or fictional individuals who are living or dead. These speeches require in-depth biographical research; an encyclopedia entry is not sufficient. Introduce a new person to the audience or share little-known or surprising information about a person we already know. Although we may already be familiar with the accomplishments of historical figures and leaders, audiences often enjoy learning the “personal side” of their lives.

A biography is similar to the history, but in this case, a subject is specifically a person, whether living or deceased. For this class, biographies should focus on people of some note or fame, since researching people who are not at least mildly well-known could be difficult. But again, as with histories, there are specific and irrefutable facts that can help provide an overview of someone’s life, such as dates that President Lincoln was born (February 12, 1809) and died (April 15, 1865) and the years he was in office as president (1861-1865).

This might be a good place to address research and support. The basic dates of Abraham Lincoln’s life could be found in multiple sources and you would not have to cite the source in that case. But you use the work of a specific historian to explain how Lincoln

could win the presidency in the tumultuous years before the Civil War, which would need a citation of that author and the publication.

Type 3: Concepts

(Example: democracy; freedom of speech). Speeches about concepts are less concrete than speeches about objects or people, as they focus on ideas or notions that may be abstract or multifaceted. A concept can be familiar to us, like equality, or could literally be a foreign concept like *qi* (or *chi*), which is the Chinese conception of the energy that flows through our bodies. It is possible to provide facts on a concept or idea, although in some cases the information may be less precise. For example, while no one can definitively point to a specific date or individual who first developed the concept of democracy, it is known to have been conceived in ancient Greece (Raaflaub, Ober, & Wallace, 2007). By looking at the civilizations and cultures that adopted forms of democracy throughout history, it is possible to provide an audience with a better understanding of how the idea has been shaped into what it has become today.

With concepts, you will want to do two things. First, define the aspects of the concept using methods, like classification and differentiation. Secondly, make your concept concrete, real, and specific for your audience with vivid examples. Use the strategies discussed in this book for making content relevant and proxemic (physically and emotionally close) to your audience to help make abstract concepts more concrete.

If your concept connects to a disputed subject or a matter of concern for society, you **must** provide **objective and balanced information** concerning this issue. Speakers must view themselves as objective reporters rather than commentators to avoid tipping the balance of the speech from informative to persuasive. Rather than advocating for a particular position, the speaker should seek to teach or raise the awareness of the audience on both sides of the issue.

Type 4: Events

Speeches about events focus on past occasions or ongoing occurrences. A particular day in history, an annual observation, or a seldom occurring event can each serve as interesting informative topics. As with speeches about people, it's important to provide a backstory for the event, but avoid rehashing commonly known information.

Type 5: Processes

(Examples of process speech topics would be baking chocolate chip cookies, throwing a baseball; how a nuclear reactor works; how a bill works its way through Congress).

Process speeches are sometimes referred to as demonstration or "how-to" speeches because they often entail demonstrating something. These speeches require you to provide steps that will help your audience understand how to accomplish a specific task or process. However, How To speeches can be tricky in that there are rarely universally agreed upon (i.e. irrefutable) ways to do anything. If your professor asked the students in his or her public speaking class to each bring in a recipe for baking chocolate chip cookies, would all of them be the same recipe?

Probably not, but they would all be similar and, most importantly, they would all give you chocolate chip cookies as the result. Students giving a demonstration speech will want to avoid saying "You should bake the cookies for 12 minutes" since that is not how everyone does it. Instead, the student should say something like:

> *"You can bake the cookies for 10 minutes."*
>
> *"One option is to bake the cookies for 10 minutes."*
>
> *"This particular recipe calls for the cookies to be baked for 10 minutes."*

Each of the previous three statements is absolutely a fact that no one can argue or disagree with. While some people may say 12 minutes is too long or too short (depending on how soft or hard they like their cookies), no one can reasonably argue that these statements are not true.

On the other hand, there is a second type of process speech that focuses not on how the audience can achieve a result, such as changing the oil in their cars or cooking something, but on how a process is achieved. The goal is understanding and not performance. After a speech on how to change a car tire, the audience members could probably do it (they might not want to, but

they would know the steps). However, after a speech on how a bill goes through Congress, the audience would understand this important part of democracy but not be ready to serve in Congress.

Informative speeches about processes provide a step-by-step account of a procedure or natural occurrence. Speakers may walk an audience through, or demonstrate, a series of actions that take place to complete a procedure, such as making homemade cheese. Speakers can also present information about naturally occurring processes like cell division or fermentation.



Figure **15.2.3**: Informative speeches about processes provide steps of a procedure, such as how to make homemade cheese. Joel Kramer – curdle – CC BY 2.0.

Type 6: Categories or Divisions

Sometimes an informative speech topic doesn't lend itself to a specific type of approach, and in those cases, the topics tend to fall into a "general" category of informative speeches. For example, if a student wanted to give an informative speech on the four "C's" of diamonds (cut, carat, color, and clarity), they certainly wouldn't approach it as if they were providing the history of diamonds, nor would they necessarily be informing anyone on "how to" shop for or buy diamonds or how diamonds are mined. The approach, in this case, would simply be to inform an audience of the four "C's" and what they mean. Other examples of this type of informative speech would be positions in playing volleyball or the customs to know when traveling in China.

Conclusion

As stated above, identifying the type of informative speech being given can help in several ways (conducting research, writing the introduction and conclusion), but perhaps the biggest benefit is that the type of informative speech being given will help determine, to some degree, the organizational pattern that will need to be used. For example, a How-To speech must be in chronological order. There really isn't a way (or reason) to present a How-To speech other than how the process is done in a time sequence. That is to say, for a speech on how to bake chocolate chip cookies, getting the ingredients (Main Point 1) must come before mixing the ingredients (Main Point 2), which must come before baking them (Main Point 3). Putting them in any other order will only confuse the audience

Similarly, most Histories and Biographies will be organized chronologically, but not always. It makes sense to explain the history of baseball from when it was first developed to where it is today, but certain approaches to Histories and Biographies can make that irrelevant. For an informative speech on Benjamin Franklin, a student might choose as his or her three main points: 1) His time as a printer, 2) His time as an inventor, 3) His time as a diplomat. These main points are not in strict chronological order because Franklin was a printer, inventor, and diplomat at the same time during periods of his whole life. However, this example would still be one way to inform an audience about him without using the chronological organizational pattern.

As for general informative speeches, since the topics that can be included in this category are very diverse and cover a range of subject matter, the way they are organized will be varied as well. However, if the topic is "types of" something or "kinds of"

something, the organizational pattern would be topical; if it were the layout of a location, such as the White House, it would be spatial (organized based on the locations of the main points).

Key Takeaways

- Informative speeches teach an audience through objective factual information and can emerge from one or more of the following categories: objects and places, people, concepts, events, processes, and categories or divisions.
- Effective informative speaking requires good research skills, as speakers must include novel information, relevant and proxemic examples, and "take-away" information that audience members will find engaging and useful.
- More important than categorizing your informative speech is organizing the speech.

Exercise

1. Choose one broad subject and come up with a speech topic for each of the six categories. Then explain the organizational method you would use for each.

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15.3: Organizing and Supporting an Informative Speech

Learning Objectives

1. Identify strategies for researching and supporting informative speeches.
2. Explain the different methods of informing.
3. Look at the way to organize and outline your informative speeches.

You can already see that informing isn't as easy as we may initially think. To effectively teach, a speaker must present quality information in an organized and accessible way. Once you have chosen an informative speech topic and put your research skills to the test in order to locate novel and engaging information, it's time to organize and support your speech.

Organizational Patterns

Three organizational patterns that are particularly useful for informative speaking are topical, chronological, and spatial. As you'll recall, to organize a speech topically, you break a larger topic down into logical subdivisions. An informative speech about labor unions could focus on unions in three different areas of employment, three historically significant strikes, or three significant legal/legislative decisions. Speeches organized chronologically trace the development of a topic or overview the steps in a process. An informative speech could trace the rise of the economic crisis in Greece or explain the steps in creating a home compost pile. Speeches organized spatially convey the layout or physical characteristics of a location or concept. An informative speech about the layout of a fire station or an astrology wheel would follow a spatial organization pattern.

Methods of Informing

There are some specific ways to go about developing ideas within informative speeches. Speakers often inform an audience using definitions, descriptions, demonstrations, and explanations. It is likely that a speaker will combine these methods of informing within one speech, but a speech can also be primarily organized using one of these methods.

Informing through Definition

Informing through definition entails defining concepts clearly and concisely and is an important skill for informative speaking. There are several ways a speaker can inform through definition: synonyms and antonyms, use or function, example, and etymology (Verderber, 1991). Defining a concept using a synonym or an antonym is a short and effective way to convey meaning. Synonyms are words that have the same or similar meanings, and antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. In a speech about how to effectively inform an audience, I would claim that using concrete words helps keep an audience engaged. I could enhance your understanding of what *concrete* means by defining it with synonyms like *tangible* and *relatable*. Or I could define *concrete* using antonyms like *abstract* and *theoretical*.

Identifying the use or function of an object, item, or idea is also a short way of defining it. We may think we already know the use and function of most of the things we interact with regularly. This is true in obvious cases like cars, elevators, and smartphones. But there are many objects and ideas that we may rely on and interact with but not know the use or function. For example, QR codes (or quick response codes) are popping up in magazines, at airports, and even on t-shirts (Vuong, 2011). Many people may notice them but not know what they do. As a speaker, you could define QR codes by their function by informing the audience that QR codes allow businesses, organizations, and individuals to get information to consumers/receivers through a barcode-like format that can be easily scanned by most smartphones.



Figure **15.3.1**: An informative speaker could teach audience members about QR codes by defining them based on their use or function. Douglas Muth – My QR Code – CC BY-SA 2.0.

A speaker can also define a topic using examples, which are cited cases that are representative of a larger concept. In an informative speech about anachronisms in movies and literature, a speaker might provide the following examples: the film *Titanic* shows people on lifeboats using flashlights to look for survivors from the sunken ship (such flashlights weren't invented until two years later) (The Past in Pictures, 2012); Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* includes a reference to a clock, even though no mechanical clocks existed during Caesar's time (Scholasticus K., 2012). Examples are a good way to repackage information that's already been presented to help an audience retain and understand the content of a speech. Later we'll learn more about how repackaging information enhances informative speaking.

Etymology refers to the history of a word. Defining by etymology entails providing an overview of how a word came to its current meaning. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is the best source for finding etymology and often contains interesting facts that can be presented as novel information to better engage your audience. For example, the word *assassin*, which refers to a person who intentionally murders another, literally means "hashish-eater" and comes from the Arabic word *hashshashin*. The current meaning emerged during the Crusades as a result of the practices of a sect of Muslims who would get high on hashish before killing Christian leaders—in essence, assassinating them (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012).

Informing through Description

As the saying goes, "Pictures are worth a thousand words." Informing through description entails creating verbal pictures for your audience. Description is also an important part of informative speeches that use a spatial organizational pattern since you need to convey the layout of a space or concept. Good descriptions are based on good observations, as they convey what is taken in through the senses and answer these types of questions: What did that look like? Smell like? Sound like? Feel like? Taste like? If descriptions are vivid and well written, they can actually invoke a sensory reaction in your audience. Just as your mouth probably begins to salivate when I suggest that you imagine biting into a fresh, bright yellow, freshly cut, juicy lemon wedge, so can your audience be transported to a setting or situation through your descriptions. I once had a student set up his speech about the history of streaking by using the following description: "Imagine that you are walking across campus to your evening class. You look up to see a parade of hundreds upon hundreds of your naked peers jogging by wearing little more than shoes."

Informing through Demonstration

When informing through demonstration, a speaker gives verbal directions about how to do something while also physically demonstrating the steps. Early morning infomercials are good examples of demonstrative speaking, even though they are also trying to persuade us to buy their "miracle product." Whether straightforward or complex, it's crucial that a speaker be familiar with the content of their speech and the physical steps necessary for the demonstration. Speaking while completing a task requires advanced psycho-motor skills that most people can't wing and therefore need to practice. Tasks suddenly become much more difficult than we expect when we have an audience. Have you ever had to type while people are reading along with you? Even though we type all the time, even one extra set of eyes seems to make our fingers more clumsy than usual.

Television chefs are excellent examples of speakers who frequently inform through demonstration. While many of them make the process of speaking while cooking looks effortless, it took much practice over many years to make viewers think it is effortless.



Figure **15.3.2**: Television chefs inform through demonstration. Although they make it seem easy, it is complex and difficult. Gordonramsaysubmissions – Gordon Ramsay 7 – CC BY 2.0.

Part of this practice also involves meeting time limits. Since television segments are limited and chefs may be demonstrating and speaking live, they have to be able to adapt as needed. Demonstration speeches are notorious for going over time, especially if speakers haven't practiced with their visual aids/props. Be prepared to condense or edit as needed to meet your time limit. The reality competition show, *The Next Food Network Star*, captures these difficulties, as many experienced cooks who have the content

knowledge and know-how to physically complete their tasks fall apart when faced with a camera challenge because they just assumed they could speak and cook at the same time.

Tips for Demonstration Speeches

1. Include personal stories and connections to the topic, in addition to the "how-to" information, to help engage your audience.
2. Ask for audience volunteers (if appropriate) to make the demonstration more interactive.
3. Include a question-and-answer period at the end (if possible) so audience members can ask questions and seek clarification.
4. Follow an orderly progression. Do not skip around or backtrack when reviewing the steps.
5. Use clear signposts like *first*, *second*, and *third*.
6. Use orienting material like internal previews and reviews, and transitions.
7. Group steps together in categories, if needed, to help make the information more digestible.
8. Assess the nonverbal feedback of your audience. Review or slow down if audience members look lost or confused.
9. Practice with your visual aids/props many times. Things suddenly become more difficult and complicated than you expect when an audience is present.
10. Practice for time and have contingency plans if you need to edit some information out to avoid going over your time limit.

Informing through Explanation

Informing through explanation entails sharing how something works, how something came to be, or why something happened. This method of informing may be useful when a topic is too complex or abstract to demonstrate. When presenting complex information make sure to break the topic up into manageable units, avoid information overload, and include examples that make the content relevant to the audience. Informing through explanation works well with speeches about processes, events, and issues. For example, a speaker could explain the context surrounding the Lincoln-Douglas debates or the process that takes place during presidential primaries.

"Getting Plugged In"

TED Talks as a Model of Effective Informative Speaking

Over the past few years, I have heard more and more public speaking teachers mention their use of TED speeches in their classes. What started in 1984 as a conference to gather people involved in Technology, Entertainment, and Design has now turned into a worldwide phenomenon that is known for its excellent speeches and presentations, many of which are informative in nature.[1] The motto of TED is "Ideas worth spreading," which is in keeping with the role that we should occupy as informative speakers. We should choose topics that are worth speaking about and then work to present them in such a way that audience members leave with "take-away" information that is informative and useful. TED fits in with the purpose of the "Getting Plugged In" feature in this book because it has been technology-focused from the start. For example, Andrew Blum's speech focuses on the infrastructure of the Internet, and Pranav Mistry's speech focuses on a new technology he developed that allows for more interaction between the physical world and the world of data. Even speakers who don't focus on technology still skillfully use technology in their presentations, as is the case with David Gallo's speech about exotic underwater life. Here are links to all these speeches:

- Andrew Blum's speech: What Is the Internet, Really?
  http://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_blum_what_is_the_internet_really.html
- Pranav Mistry's speech: The Thrilling Potential of Sixth Sense Technology.
  http://www.ted.com/talks/pranav_mistry_the_thrilling_potential_of_sixthsense_technology.html
- David Gallo's speech: Underwater Astonishments.
  http://www.ted.com/talks/david_gallo_shows_underwater_astonishments.html

1. What can you learn from the TED model and/or TED speakers that will help you be a better informative speaker?
2. In what innovative and/or informative ways do the speakers reference or incorporate technology in their speeches?

Example Outlines

Sample Speech 1

Title: Going Green in the World of Education

General Purpose: To inform

Specific Purpose: By the end of my speech, the audience will be able to describe some ways in which schools are going green.

Thesis Statement: The green movement has transformed school buildings, how teachers teach, and the environment in which students learn.

Introduction

Attention Getter: Did you know that attending or working at a green school can lead students and teachers to have fewer health problems? Did you know that allowing more daylight into school buildings increases academic performance and can lessen attention and concentration challenges? Well, the research I will cite in my speech supports both of these claims, and these are just two of the many reasons why more schools, both grade schools, and colleges, are going green.

Introduction of Topic: Today, I'm going to inform you about the green movement that is affecting many schools.

Credibility and Relevance: Because of my own desire to go into the field of education, I decided to research how schools are going green in the United States. But it's not just current and/or future teachers that will be affected by this trend. As students at Eastern Illinois University, you are already asked to make "greener" choices. Whether it's the little signs in the dorm rooms that ask you to turn off your lights when you leave the room, the reusable water bottles that were given out on move-in day, or even our new Renewable Energy Center, the list goes on and on. Additionally, younger people in our lives, whether they be future children or younger siblings, or relatives, will likely be affected by this continuing trend.

Preview Statement: In order to better understand what makes a "green school," we need to learn about how K–12 schools are going green, how college campuses are going green, and how these changes affect students and teachers.

Transition: I'll begin with how K–12 schools are going green.

Body

I. According to the "About Us" section on their official website, the US Green Building Council was established in 1993 with the mission to promote sustainability in the building and construction industry, and it is this organization that is responsible for the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, which is a well-respected green building certification system.

A. While homes, neighborhoods, and businesses can also pursue LEED certification, I'll focus today on K–12 schools and college campuses.

1. It's important to note that principles of "going green" can be applied to the planning of a building from its first inception or be retroactively applied to existing buildings.

a. A 2011 article by Ash in Education Week notes that the pathway to creating a greener school is flexible based on the community and its needs.

i. In order to garner support for green initiatives, the article recommends that local leaders like superintendents, mayors, and college administrators become involved in the green movement.

ii. Once local leaders are involved, the community, students, parents, faculty, and staff can be involved by serving on a task force, hosting a summit or conference, and implementing lessons about sustainability into everyday conversations and school curriculum.

b. The US Green Building Council's website also includes a tool kit with a lot of information about how to "green" existing schools.

2. Much of the efforts to green schools have focused on K–12 schools and districts, but what makes a school green?

a. According to the US Green Building Council's Center for Green Schools, green school buildings conserve energy and natural resources.

i. For example, Fossil Ridge High School in Fort Collins, Colorado, was built in 2006 and received LEED certification because it has automatic light sensors to conserve electricity and uses wind energy to offset nonrenewable energy use.

ii. To conserve water, the school uses a pond for irrigation, has artificial turf on athletic fields, and installed low-flow toilets and faucets.

iii. According to the 2006 report by certified energy manager Gregory Kats titled "Greening America's Schools," a LEED-certified school uses 30–50 percent less energy, 30 percent less water, and reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 40 percent compared to a conventional school.

b. The Center for Green Schools also presents case studies that show how green school buildings also create healthier learning environments.

i. Many new building materials, carpeting, and furniture contain chemicals that are released into the air, which reduces indoor air quality.

ii. So green schools purposefully purchase materials that are low in these chemicals.

iii. Natural light and fresh air have also been shown to promote a healthier learning environment, so green buildings allow more daylight in and include functioning windows.

Transition: As you can see, K–12 schools are becoming greener; college campuses are also starting to go green.

II. Examples from the University of Denver and Eastern Illinois University show some of the potentials for greener campuses around the country.

A. The University of Denver is home to the nation's first "green" law school.

1. According to the Sturm College of Law's website, the building was designed to use 40 percent less energy than a conventional building through the use of movement-sensor lighting; high-performance insulation in the walls, floors, and roof; and infrared sensors on water faucets and toilets.

2. Electric car recharging stations were also included in the parking garage, and the building has extra bike racks and even showers that students and faculty can use to freshen up if they bike or walk to school or work.

B. Eastern Illinois University has also made strides toward a more green campus.

1. Some of the dining halls on campus have gone "trayless," which according to a 2009 article by Calder in the journal Independent School has the potential to dramatically reduce the amount of water and chemical use, since there are no longer trays to wash, and also helps reduce food waste since people take less food without a tray.

2. The biggest change on campus has been the opening of the Renewable Energy Center in 2011, which according to EIU's website is one of the largest biomass renewable energy projects in the country.

a. The Renewable Energy Center uses slow-burn technology to use wood chips that are a byproduct of the lumber industry that would normally be discarded.

b. This helps reduce our dependency on our old coal-fired power plant, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

c. The project was the first known power plant to be registered with the US Green Building Council and is on track to receive LEED certification.

Transition: All these efforts to go green in K–12 schools and on college campuses will obviously affect students and teachers at the schools.

III. The green movement affects students and teachers in a variety of ways.

A. Research shows that going green positively affects a student's health.

1. Many schools are literally going green by including more green spaces such as recreation areas, gardens, and greenhouses, which according to a 2010 article in the Journal of Environmental Education by University of Colorado professor Susan Strife has been shown to benefit a child's cognitive skills, especially in the areas of increased concentration and attention capacity.

2. Additionally, the report I cited earlier, "Greening America's Schools," states that the improved air quality in green schools can lead to a 38 percent reduction in asthma incidents and that students in "green schools" had 51 percent less chance of catching a cold or the flu compared to children in conventional schools.

B. Standard steps taken to green schools can also help students academically.

1. The report "Greening America's Schools" notes that a recent synthesis of fifty-three studies found that more daylight in the school building leads to higher academic achievement.

2. The report also provides data that show how a healthier environment in green schools leads to better attendance and that in Washington, DC, and Chicago, schools improved their performance on standardized tests by 3–4 percent.

C. Going green can influence teachers' lesson plans as well their job satisfaction and physical health.

1. There are several options for teachers who want to "green" their curriculum.

a. According to the article in Education Week that I cited earlier, the Sustainability Education Clearinghouse is a free online tool that provides K–12 educators with the ability to share sustainability-oriented lesson ideas.

b. The Center for Green Schools also provides resources for all levels of teachers, from kindergarten to college, that can be used in the classroom.

2. The report "Greening America's Schools" claims that the overall improved working environment that a green school provides leads to higher teacher retention and less teacher turnover.

3. Just as students see health benefits from green schools, so do teachers, as the same report shows that teachers in these schools get sick less, resulting in a decrease of sick days by 7 percent.

Conclusion

Transition to conclusion and summary of importance: In summary, the going-green era has impacted every aspect of education in our school systems.

Review of main points: From K–12 schools to college campuses like ours, to the students and teachers in the schools, the green movement is changing the way we think about education and our environment.

Closing statement: As Glenn Cook, the editor in chief of the *American School Board Journal*, states on the Center for Green Schools's website, "The green schools movement is the biggest thing to happen to education since the introduction of technology to the classroom."

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Sample Speech 2

Informative Speech on Lord Byron

Introduction

I. Attention Grabber: Imagine an eleven-year-old boy who has been beaten and sexually abused repeatedly by the very person who is supposed to take care of him.

II. Reveal Topic: This is one of the many hurdles that George Gordon, better known as Lord Byron, overcame during his childhood. Lord Byron was also a talented poet with the ability to transform his life into the words of his poetry. Byron became a serious poet by the age of fifteen and he was first published in 1807 at the age of nineteen. Lord Byron was a staunch believer in freedom and equality, so he gave most of his fortune, and in the end, his very life, supporting the Greek war for independence.

III. Credibility: I learned all about Lord Byron when I took Humanities 1201 last semester.

IV. Today, I will discuss his childhood, poetry, and legacy.

Body

I. Lord Byron was born on January 22, 1788, to Captain John Byron and Catherine Gordon Byron.

A. According to Paul Trueblood, the author of Lord Byron, Lord Byron's father only married Catherine for her dowry, which he quickly went through, leaving his wife and child nearly penniless.

B. By the age of two, Lord Byron and his mother had moved to Aberdeen in Scotland and shortly thereafter, his father died in France at the age of thirty-six.

C. Lord Byron was born with a clubbed right foot, which is a deformity that caused his foot to turn sideways instead of remaining straight, and his mother had no money to seek treatment for this painful and embarrassing condition.

1. He would become very upset and fight anyone who even spoke of his lameness.

2. Despite his handicap, Lord Byron was very active and liked competing with the other boys.

D. At the age of ten, his grand-uncle died leaving him the title as the sixth Baron Byron of Rochdale.

1. With this title, he also inherited Newstead Abbey, a dilapidated estate that was in great need of repair.

2. Because the Abbey was in Nottinghamshire England, he and his mother moved there and stayed at the abbey until it was rented out to pay for the necessary repairs.

3. During this time, May Gray, Byron's nurse had already begun physically and sexually abusing him.

4. A year passed before he finally told his guardian, John Hanson, about May's abuse; she was fired immediately.

5. Unfortunately the damage had already been done.

6. In the book Lord Byron, it is stated that years later he wrote "My passions were developed very early- so early, that few would believe me if I were to state the period, and the facts which accompanied it."

E. Although Lord Byron had many obstacles to overcome during his childhood, he became a world-renowned poet by the age of 24.

II. Lord Byron experienced the same emotions we all do, but he was able to express those emotions in the form of his poetry and share them with the world.

A. According to Horace Gregory, The author of Poems of George Gordon, Lord Byron, the years from 1816 through 1824 is when Lord Byron was most known throughout Europe.

B. But according to Paul Trueblood, Childe Harold was published in 1812 and became one of the best-selling works of literature in the 19th century.

1. Childe Harold was written while Lord Byron was traveling through Europe after graduating from Trinity College.

2. Many authors such as Trueblood, and Garrett, the author of George Gordon, Lord Byron, express their opinion that Childe Harold is an autobiography about Byron and his travels.

C. Lord Byron often wrote about the ones he loved the most, such as the poem “She Walks in Beauty” written about his cousin Anne Wilmont, and “Stanzas for Music” written for his half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

D. He was also an avid reader of the Old Testament and would write poetry about stories from the Bible that he loved.

1. One such story was about the last king of Babylon.

2. This poem was called the “Vision of Belshazzar,” and is very much like the bible version in the book of Daniel.

E. Although Lord Byron is mostly known for his talents as a poet, he was also an advocate for the Greek war for independence.

III. Lord Byron, after his self-imposed exile from England, took the side of the Greek’s in their war for freedom from Turkish rule.

A. Byron arrived in Greece in 1823 during a civil war.

1. The Greek’s were too busy fighting amongst themselves to come together to form a formidable army against the Turks.

2. According to Martin Garrett, Lord Byron donated money to refit the Greek’s fleet of ships but did not immediately get involved in the situation.

3. He had doubts as to if or when the Greek’s would ever come together and agree long enough to make any kind of a difference in their war effort.

4. Eventually the Greek’s united and began their campaign for the Greek War of Independence.

5. He began pouring more and more of his fortune into the Greek army and finally accepted a position to oversee a small group of men sailing to Missolonghi.

B. Lord Byron set sail for Missolonghi in Western Greece in 1824.

1. He took a commanding position over a small number of the Greek army despite his lack of military training.

2. He had also made plans to attack a Turkish-held fortress but became very ill before the plans were ever carried through.

C. Lord Byron died on April 19, 1824, at the age of 36 due to the inexperienced doctors who continued to bleed him while he suffered from a severe fever.

1. After Lord Byron’s death, the Greek War of Independence, due to his support, received more foreign aid which led to their eventual victory in 1832.

2. Lord Byron is hailed as a national hero by the Greek nation.

3. Many tributes such as statues and road names have been devoted to Lord Byron since the time of his death.

Conclusion

I. In conclusion, Lord Byron overcame great physical hardships to become a world-renowned poet, and is seen as a hero to the Greek nation, and is mourned by them still today. I have chosen not to focus on Lord Byron's more liberal way of life, but rather to focus on his accomplishments in life. He was a man who owed no loyalty to Greece, yet gave his life to support their cause.

II. Most of the world will remember Lord Byron primarily through his written attributes, but Greece will always remember him as the "Trumpet Voice of Liberty."

Key Takeaways

- The four primary methods of informing are through definition, description, demonstration, or explanation.
  - Informing through definition entails defining concepts clearly and concisely using synonyms and antonyms, use or function, example, or etymology.
  - Informing through description entails creating detailed verbal pictures for your audience.
  - Informing through demonstration entails sharing verbal directions about how to do something while also physically demonstrating the steps.
  - Informing through explanation entails sharing how something works, how something came to be, or why something happened.

Exercises

1. Of the four methods of informing (through definition, description, demonstration, or explanation), which do you think is most effective for you? Why?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

16: Persuasive Speaking

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Define persuasion;
- Define ethos, logos, and pathos;
- Explain the barriers to persuading an audience;
- Construct a clear, reasonable proposition for a short classroom speech;
- Compose an outline for a well-supported persuasive speech;
- Analyze the audience to determine appropriate emotional and personal appeals.

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16.1: Persuasion aka CHANGE MY MIND!

16.2: A Definition of Persuasion

16.3: Approaching Audiences

16.4: Persuasive Strategies

16.4.1: Fallacies

16.5: Constructing a Persuasive Speech

16.5.1: Monroe's Motivated Sequence extended

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16.1: Persuasion aka CHANGE MY MIND!



When your instructor announced on the syllabus or in class that you would be required to give a persuasive speech for this class, what was your reaction? “Oh, good, I’ve got a great idea,” or, “Oh, no!”? For many people, there is something a little uncomfortable about the word “persuasion.” It often gets paired with ideas of seduction, manipulation, force, lack of choice, or inducement as well as more positive concepts such as encouragement, influence, urging, or logical arguments. You might get suspicious if you think someone is trying to persuade you. You might not appreciate someone telling you to change your viewpoints. On the other hand, you might not think you have any beliefs, attitudes, values, or positions that are worth advocating for in front of an audience.

However, if you think of persuasion simply as a formal speech with the purpose of getting people to do something they do not want to do, then you will miss the value of learning persuasion and its accompanying skills of appeal, argument, and logic. Persuasion is something you do every day, in various forms. Convincing a friend to go see the latest movie instead of staying in to watch TV; giving your instructor a reason to give you an extension on an assignment (do not try that for this speech, though!); **writing a cover letter and resume and going through an interview for a job**—all of these and so many more are examples of persuasion. In fact, it is hard to think of life without the everyday give-and-take of persuasion.

You may also be thinking, “I’ve given an informative speech. What’s the difference?” While this chapter will refer to all of the content of the preceding chapters as it walks you through the steps of composing your persuasive speech, there is a difference. Although your persuasive speech will involve information—probably even as much as in your informative speech—the key difference is the word “change.” Think of it like this:

INFORMATION + CHANGE = PERSUASION

You will be using the information for the purpose of changing something. First, we try to change the audience’s beliefs, attitudes, and actions, and second, possibly the context they act upon. In the next section, we will investigate the persuasive act and then move on to the barriers to persuasion.

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16.2: A Definition of Persuasion

Persuasion can be defined in two ways, for two purposes. The first (Lucas, 2015) is “the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people’s beliefs or actions” (p. 306). This is a good, simple straightforward definition to start with, although it does not encompass the complexity of persuasion. This definition does introduce us to what could be called a “scaled” way of thinking about persuasion and change.

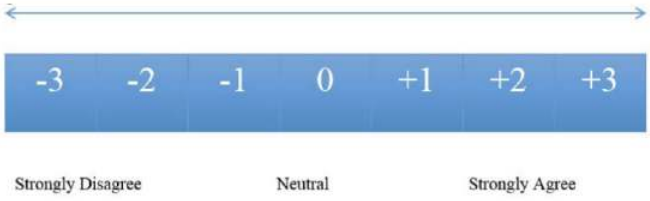


Figure 13.1 - Persuasion Continuum

Think of persuasion as a continuum or line going in both directions (see Figure 13.1). Your audience members, either as a group or individually, are sitting somewhere on that line in reference to your central idea statement, or what we are going to call a **proposition** in this chapter. In your speech, you are proposing the truth or validity of an idea, one which the audience may not find true or acceptable. Sometimes the word “claim” is used for proposition or central idea statement in a persuasive speech because you are claiming an idea is true or an action is valuable.

For example, your proposition might be, “The main cause of climate change is human activity.” In this case you are not denying that natural forces, such as volcanoes, can affect the climate, but you are claiming that climate change is mainly due to pollution and other harmful things humans have done to the environment. To be an effective persuasive speaker, one of your first jobs after coming up with this topic would be to determine where your audience “sits” on the continuum in Figure 13.1.

> *+3 means strongly agree to the point of making lifestyle choices to lessen climate change (such as riding a bike instead of driving a car, recycling, eating certain kinds of foods, and advocating for government policy changes).*
>
> *+2 means agree but not to the point of acting upon it or only acting on it in small ways.*
>
> *+1 as mildly in favor of your proposition; that is, they think it’s probably true but the issue doesn’t affect them personally.*
>
> *0 means neutral, no opinion, or feeling too uninformed to make a decision.*
>
> *-1 means mildly opposed to the proposition but willing to listen to those with whom they disagree.*
>
> *-2 means disagreement to the point of dismissing the idea pretty quickly.*
>
> *-3 means strong opposition to the point that the concept of climate change itself is not even listened to or acknowledged as a valid subject.*

Since everyone in the audience is somewhere on this line or continuum, persuasion in this case means moving them to the right, somewhere closer to +3. Thinking about persuasion this way has three values:

- You can visualize and quantify where your audience “sits.”
- You can accept the fact that any movement toward +3 or to the right is a win.
- You can see that trying to change an audience from -3 to +3 in one speech is just about impossible. Therefore, you will be able to take a reasonable approach. In this case, if you knew most of the audience was at -2 or -3, your speech would be about the science behind climate change in order to open their minds to its possible existence. However, that audience is not ready to hear about its being caused mainly by humans or what action should be taken to reverse it.

You might also ask if it is possible to persuade to the negative, for example, to argue against something or try to move the audience to be opposed to something. In this case, you would be trying to move your audience to the left on the continuum rather than to the right. Yes, it is possible to do so, but it might confuse the audience. Also, you might want to think in terms of phrasing your proposition so that it is favorable as well as reasonable. For example, “Elderly people should not be licensed to drive” could be replaced with “Drivers over the age of 75 in our state of should be required to pass a vision and health test every two years to renew

a driver's license." The first one is not clear (what is "elderly?"), reasonable (no license at all?), or positive (based on restriction) in approach. *The second is specific, reasonable, doable, and positive.*

It should also be added that the proposition is assumed to be controversial. By that it is meant that some people in the audience disagree with your proposition or at least have no opinion; they are not "on your side." It would be foolish to give a speech when everyone in the audience totally agrees with you at the beginning of the speech. For example, trying to convince your classroom audience that attending college is a good idea is a waste of everyone's time since, for one reason or another, everyone in your audience has already made that decision. That is not persuasive.

Those who disagree with your proposition but are willing to listen could be called the **target audience**. These are the members of your audience on whom you are truly focusing your persuasion. At the same time, the audience members not part of your target are those who are extremely opposed to your position to the point that they probably will not give you a fair hearing. Finally, some members of your audience may already agree with you, although they don't know why.

To go back to our original definition, "the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people's beliefs or actions," and each of these purposes implies a different approach.

- **Creating is moving an audience from 0 to +1, +2, or +3**. You only really "create" something when it does not already exist, meaning the audience's attitude will be a 0 since they have no opinion. In creating, you have to first engage the audience that there is a vital issue at stake. Then you must provide arguments in favor of your claim to give the audience a basis for belief.
- **Reinforcing is moving the audience from +1 toward +3 in the hope that they take action** (since the real test of belief is whether people act on it). In reinforcing, the audience already agrees with your proposal but needs steps and pushes (nudges) to become active.
- **Changing is moving from -1 or –2 to +1 or higher.** In changing, you must first be credible, provide evidence for your side but also show why the audience's current beliefs are mistaken or wrong in some way.

However, this simple definition from Lucas, while it gets to the core of "change" that is inherent in persuasion, could be improved with some attention to the ethical component and the "how" of persuasion. For that purpose, let's look at Perloff's (2003) definition of **persuasion**:

> *A symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice. (p. 8)*

There are several important factors in this definition. First, notice that persuasion is symbolic, that is, uses language or other symbols (even graphics can be symbols), rather than force or other means. Second, notice that it is an attempt, not always fully successful. Third, there is an "*atmosphere of free choice*," in that the persons being persuaded can choose not to believe or act. And fourth, notice that the persuader is "trying to convince others to change." Modern psychological research has confirmed that the persuader does not change the audience directly. The process that the human mind goes through while it listens to a persuasive message is like a silent, **mental dialogue** the audience is having with the speaker's ideas. The audience members as individuals eventually convince themselves to change based on the "symbols" used by the speaker. According to Lucas, you must anticipate possible objections the audience will raise to your point of view and answer them in your speech. You cannot convert skeptical listeners unless you deal directly with the reasons for their skepticism

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

Further, the basis of your persuasion is language; even though "a picture is worth a thousand words" you want to focus on communicating through words. Also, Perloff's definition distinguishes between "attitude" and "behavior," meaning that an audience may be persuaded to think, to feel, or to act. Finally, persuasion is a process. Successful persuasion actually takes a while. One speech can be effective, but additional messages influence the listener in the long run.

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16.3: Approaching Audiences

When choosing a topic for your persuasive speech, it is crucial to consider the composition of your audience. Because persuasive speeches are intended to influence or reinforce an audience's thoughts or behaviors, speakers must consider what and how the audience thinks, feels, and does. Your audience might be ambivalent about your topic, or they may be strongly opposed, in strong agreement, or somewhere along the spectrum. In persuasive speeches, it matters where they fall on this continuum. For instance, if you want to argue that abortion should be illegal and your audience is composed of pro-life advocates, your speech might seem like you are preaching to the choir. But if your audience is made up of staunch pro-choice activists, your speech would be raising a significant objection to a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and actions the audience was already committed to.

Some questions you might ask before giving a speech include, "Who is hosting the speech?" Often this can provide a great deal of information about who will be in the audience. Audience members at a National Rifle Association gathering probably do not need to be convinced that the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution— the right to keep and bear arms—is worth upholding. You should also ask, "Is the audience fairly similar?" In a public speaking class, you may be able to gauge that through your interactions with your fellow classmates before you make your way to the podium; but in other settings, this may not be the case. If an organization is sponsoring or has invited you to speak, this is a question that can be directed to organizational staff with access to demographic information. Some demographics that may be useful as you craft your speech include age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or cultural background, socioeconomic status, religion, and political affiliation. Each of these characteristics is known to influence a listener's beliefs, attitudes, values, and actions.



Receptive Audiences

Persuasive speakers will not generally address an audience that already fully agrees with them and is behaving in the way they would like, because that audience no longer needs to be persuaded. However, you may find yourself in situations that allow you to appeal to a **receptive audience** that is open to the point you are trying to make. For example, parents are generally interested in keeping their children safe. If you seek to persuade them that they should work with their kids to prevent them from being taken advantage of on social networking sites, they are likely to welcome what you have to say. Although they are already convinced that it is important to keep their children safe, this audience may not yet be persuaded that they have the need or ability to keep their kids safe in an online environment. In order to persuade this receptive audience, you should first attempt to foster **identification** with them by highlighting things you have in common. If you are a parent you might say something like, "I have two children and one of my biggest concerns is making sure they are safe." If you are not a parent you might say, "one of the things I appreciate most about my parents is that I know they are always trying to keep me safe." With these statements, you not only relate to the audience but also demonstrate that you share a common concern.

If you would persuade, you must appeal to interest rather than intellect.~ Benjamin Franklin



Next, offer a clear statement of purpose and tell the audience what you would like them to do in response to your message. Offer practical steps that they can take even if the steps must be carried out later (this is called *Immediate Action*). Having them act on your message before leaving reinforces their already favorable response to what you are asking (Beebe & Beebe, 2003).

I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. ~ Elie Wiesel

Neutral Audiences

Most of the groups that a persuasive speaker addresses are neutral audiences. These audiences are not passionate about the topic or speaker, often because they do not have enough information or because they are not aware that they should be concerned. Beebe & Beebe (2003) explain that the challenge in addressing a neutral audience is to foster their interest in your proposition. Begin by gaining their attention. To do this you might offer a story or statistic that relates the topic directly to the dominant demographic in the audience. If you are trying to convince first-year college students to avoid credit card solicitors on campus you might start with something like, "I know those t-shirts the credit card vendors are handing out are stylish and, best of all, free! But that t-shirt could cost you thousands of dollars before you even graduate." Rather than beginning with a diatribe on the evils of debt, which many of them may not yet have experienced, you relate to their desire for a free t-shirt and a common belief they are likely to share, that "free" should not translate to "expensive." If you cannot relate the topic directly to the audience, another approach is to relate the topic to someone they care about, like a family member or friend. Keep in mind that, while the receptive audience may be eager to respond immediately, the neutral audience may simply be more concerned about the topic or more inclined to consider the behavior change you are advocating (Beebe & Beebe, 2003). In this case, consider offering resources for more information, or a few minor steps they can take when they are ready.

He who dreads hostility too much is unfit to rule. ~ Lucius Annaeus Seneca



Hostile Audiences

Unfortunately, some audiences may be resistant or even hostile to your persuasive speech. A hostile audience may take issue with your topic or with you as a speaker. In this case, your primary goal is to persuade the audience to listen to what you have to say (Beebe & Beebe, 2003). Once they are willing to listen, then you will have the ability to change their minds in the future. However, if the audience is opposed to your proposition, there are a few steps that you can take to encourage them to at least hear you out. If the audience is not likely to agree with your proposition, wait until later in the speech to offer it. Opening with a clear statement of purpose, which a receptive audience welcomes, will make an unreceptive audience more hostile to your goals. For example, if you begin by telling business owners that you think they should pay workers more, they are likely to think of all the reasons that will threaten their livelihood rather than listening to your message. Instead, begin by highlighting issues on which you agree. You might open with a discussion of the challenges businesses face in attempting to retain quality workers and increase productivity.

Once you have identified areas of agreement, you can offer your proposition as a way of addressing your shared goals. To promote a wage increase, explain that a study of more than 10,000 workers and managers in a variety of industries demonstrated that companies who pay their workers more were also more motivated to invest in new technology, enhance their management techniques, better train workers, and better deliver their services, all of which lead to higher productivity and increased profits (Applebaum & Bernhardt, 2004). Focusing on areas of agreement will make the audience more receptive to your proposition, but they will still hold some reservations. Acknowledge those reservations (through a mental dialogue) and demonstrate that you have given them ample consideration. Cite credible evidence that supports your proposition in light of those reservations. Showing that you understand and respect their opposing position is the most important step toward encouraging a hostile audience to at least hear you out.

I have spent many years of my life in opposition, and I rather like the role. ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

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16.4: Persuasive Strategies

Ethos

In addition to understanding how your audience feels about the topic you are addressing, you will need to take steps to help them see you as credible and interesting. The audience's perception of you as a speaker is influential in determining whether or not they will choose to accept your proposition. Aristotle called this element of the speech **ethos**, where closely relates to the English words ethics/ethical. He taught speakers to establish credibility with the audience by appearing to have good moral character, common sense, and concern for the audience's well-being.



While there are many things speakers can do to build their ethos throughout the speech, "assessments of ethos often reflect superficial first impressions," and these first impressions linger long after the speech has concluded (Zarefsky, 2005, p.14). This means that what you wear and how you behave, even before opening your mouth, can go far in shaping your ethos. Be sure to dress appropriately for the occasion and setting in which you speak. Also work to appear confident, but not arrogant, and be sure to maintain enthusiasm about your topic throughout the speech. Give great attention to the crafting of your opening sentences because they will set the tone for what your audience should expect of your personality as you proceed.

I covered two presidents, LBJ and Nixon, who could no longer convince, persuade, or govern, once people had decided they had no credibility; but we seem to be more tolerant now of what I think we should not tolerate. ~ Helen Thomas

Logos

Another way to enhance your ethos, and your chances of persuading the audience, is to use sound arguments. In a persuasive speech, the **argument** will focus on the reasons for supporting your specific purpose statement. This argumentative approach is what Aristotle referred to as **logos**, or the logical means of proving an argument (Braet, 1992).

When offering an argument you begin by making an assertion that requires a logical leap based on the available evidence (Campbell & Huxman, 2009). One of the most popular ways of understanding how this process works was developed by British philosopher Stephen Toulmin (Herrick, 2011). Toulmin explained that basic arguments tend to share three common elements: claim, data, and warrant. The **claim** is an assertion that you want the audience to accept. **Data** refers to the preliminary evidence on which the claim is based. For example, if I saw large gray clouds in the sky, I might make the claim that "it is going to rain today." The gray clouds (data) are linked to rain (claim) by the **warrant**, an often unstated general connection, that large gray clouds tend to produce rain. The warrant is a connector that, if stated, would likely begin with "since" or "because." In our rain example, if we explicitly stated all three elements, the argument would go something like this: There are large gray clouds in the sky today (data). Since large gray clouds tend to produce rain (warrant), it is going to rain today (claim). However, in our regular encounters with argumentation, we tend to only offer the claim and (occasionally) the warrant.

To strengthen the basic argument, you will need **backing** for the claim. Backing provides foundational support for the claim (Herrick, 2011) by offering examples, statistics, testimony, or other information which further substantiates the argument. To substantiate the rain argument we have

just considered, you could explain that the color of a cloud is determined by how much light the water in the cloud is reflecting. A thin cloud has tiny drops of water and ice crystals which scatter light, making it appear white. Clouds appear gray when they are filled with large water droplets which are less able to reflect light (Brill, 2003).

Logic is the beginning of wisdom, not the end. ~ Leonard Nimoy

Table 16.4.1 The Toulmin Model Basic Argument	
Basic Argument	
data I had a hard time finding a place to park on campus today.	claim The school needs more parking spaces.
warrant If I can't find a place to park, there must be a shortage of spaces.	
Argument With Backing	
data Obesity is a serious problem in the U.S.	claim U.S. citizens should be encouraged to eat less processed foods.
warrant Processed foods contribute to obesity more than natural, or unprocessed, foods.	
backing "As a rule, processed foods are more 'energy dense' than fresh foods: they contain less water and fiber but more added fat and sugar, which makes them both less filling and more fattening" (Pollan, 2007).	

The elements that Toulmin identified (see Table 16.1) may be arranged in a variety of ways to make the most logical argument. As you reason through your argument you may proceed inductively, deductively, or causally, toward your claim. **Inductive reasoning** moves from specific examples to a more general claim. For example, if you read online reviews of a restaurant chain called Walt's Wine & Dine and you noticed that someone reported feeling sick after eating at a Walt's, and another person reported that the Walt's they visited was understaffed, and another commented that the tables in the Walt's they ate at had crumbs left on them, you might conclude (or claim) that the restaurant chain is unsanitary. To test the validity of a general claim, Beebe and Beebe (2003) encourage speakers to consider whether there are "enough specific instances to support the conclusion," whether the specific instances are typical, and whether the instances are recent (p.384).



The opposite of inductive reasoning is deductive reasoning, moving from a general principle to a claim regarding a specific instance. In order to move from general to specific we tend to use syllogisms. A **syllogism** begins with a major (or general) premise, then moves to a minor premise, then concludes with a specific claim. For example, if you know that all dogs bark (major premise), and your neighbor has a dog (minor premise), you could then conclude that your neighbor's dog barks (specific claim). To verify the accuracy of your specific claim, you must verify the truth and applicability of the major premise. What evidence do you have that all dogs bark? Is it possible that only most dogs bark? Next, you must also verify the accuracy of the minor premise. If the major premise is truly generalizable, and both premises are accurate, your specific claim should also be accurate.



Your reasoning may also proceed causally. **Causal reasoning** examines related events to determine which one caused the other. You may begin with a cause and attempt to determine its effect. For example, when the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, scientists explained that because many animals in the Gulf were nesting and reproducing at the time, the spill could wipe out "an entire generation of hundreds of species" (Donovan, 2010, para. 2). Their argument reasoned that the spill (cause) would result in species loss (effect). Two years later, the causal reasoning might be reversed. If we were seeing species loss in the Gulf (effect), we could reason that it was a result of the oil spill (cause). Both of these claims rely on the evidence available at the time. To make the first claim, scientists not only offered evidence that animals were nesting and reproducing, but they also looked at the effects of an oil spill that occurred 21 years earlier in Alaska (Donovan, 2010). To make the second claim, scientists could examine dead animals washing up on the coast to determine whether their deaths were caused by oil.

Pathos

While we have focused heavily on logical reasoning, we must also recognize the strong role that emotions play in the persuasive process. Aristotle called this element of the speech **pathos**. Pathos draws on the emotions, sympathies, and prejudices of the audience to appeal to their non-rational side (Beebe & Beebe 2003; Reike, Sillars, & Peterson, 2009). Human beings are constantly in some emotional state, which means that tapping into an audience's emotions can be vital to persuading them to accept your proposition (Dillard & Meijnders, 2002).

One of the most helpful strategies in appealing to your audience's emotions is to use clear examples that illustrate your point called **emotional appeals**. Emotional Appeals can be crafted verbally, nonverbally, or visually. To offer a verbal illustration, you could tell a compelling story. For example, when fundraising for breast cancer research, Nancy Brinker, creator of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, has plenty of compelling statistics and examples to offer. Yet, she regularly talks about her sister, explaining:

Susan G. Komen fought breast cancer with her heart, body and soul. Throughout her diagnosis, treatments, and endless days in the hospital, she spent her time thinking of ways to make life better for other women battling breast cancer instead of worrying about her own situation. That concern for others continued even as Susan neared the end of her fight (Komen National, n.d.).



Brinker promised her sister that she would continue her fight against breast cancer. This story compels donors to join her fight.

Speakers can also tap into emotions using nonverbal behaviors to model the desired emotion for their audience. In the summer of 2012, the U.S. House of Representatives debated holding the Attorney General in contempt for refusing to release documents concerning a controversial gun-tracking operation. Arguing for a contempt vote, South Carolina Representative Trey Gowdy did not simply state his claim, instead he raised his voice, slowed his pace, and used hand motions to convey anger with what he perceived as deception on the part of the Attorney General (Gowdy, 2012). His use of volume, tone, pace, and hand gestures enhanced the message and built anger in his audience.

Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel. It is to bring another out of his bad sense into your good sense ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

In addition to verbal and nonverbal illustrations, visual imagery can enhance the emotional appeal of a message. For example, we have all heard about the dangers of drugs, and there are multiple campaigns that attempt to prevent people from even trying them. However, many young adults experiment with drugs under the assumption that they are immune from the negative effects if they

only use the drug recreationally. To counter this assumption regarding methamphe- tamines, the Montana Meth project combines controversial statements with graphic images on billboards to evoke fear of the drug (see www.methproject. org /ads/print/ for some disturbing examples). Young adults may have heard repeated warnings that meth is addictive and that it has the potential to cause sores, rotten teeth, and extreme weight loss, but Montana Meth Project's visual display is more compelling because it turns the audience's stomach, making the message memorable. This image, combined with the slogan, "not even once," conveys the persuasive point without the need for other forms of evidence and rational argument.

Appeals to fear, like those in the Montana Meth Project ads, have proven effective in motivating people to change a variety of behaviors. However, speakers must be careful with their use of this emotion. Fear appeals tend to be more effective when they appeal to a high-level fear, such as death, and they are more effective when offered by speakers with a high level of perceived credibility (Beebe & Beebe, 2003). Fear appeals are also more persuasive when the speaker can convince the audience they have the ability to avert the threat. If audiences doubt their ability to avoid or minimize the threat, the appeal may backfire (Witte & Allen, 2000).

I would rather try to persuade a man to go along, because once I have persuaded him, he will stick. If I scare him, he will stay just as long as he is scared, and then he is gone. ~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

David Brooks (2011) argues that, "emotions are not separate from reason, but they are the foundation of reason because they tell us what to value" (para. 2). Those values are at the core of fostering a credible ethos. All of Aristotle's strategies, ethos, logos, and pathos, are interdependent. The most persuasive speakers will combine these strategies to varying degrees based on their specific purpose and audience.

In addition to considering their topic and persuasive strategy, speakers must take care to ensure that their message is ethical. Persuasion is often confused with another kind of communication that has similar ends, but different methods—coercion. Like persuasion, **coercion** is a process whereby thoughts or behaviors are altered. But in coercive acts, deceptive or harmful methods propel the intended changes, not reason. Strong and Cook (1992) contrasted the two: "persuasion uses argument to compel power to give way to reason while coercion uses force to compel reason to give way to power" (p. 7). The "force" that Strong and Cook mention frequently manifests as promises for reward or punishment, but sometimes it arises as physical or emotional harm. Think of almost any international crime film you have seen, and you are likely to remember a scene where someone was compelled to out their compatriots by way of force. Jack Bauer, the protagonist in the American television series 24, became an infamous character by doing whatever it took to get captured criminals to talk. Although dramatic as an example, those scenes where someone is tortured in an effort to produce evidence offer a familiar reference when thinking about coercion. To avoid coercing an audience, speakers should use logical and emotional appeals responsibly.

The pendulum of the mind alternates between sense and nonsense, not between right and wrong. ~ Carl Jung

16.4.1: Fallacies

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16.4.1: Fallacies

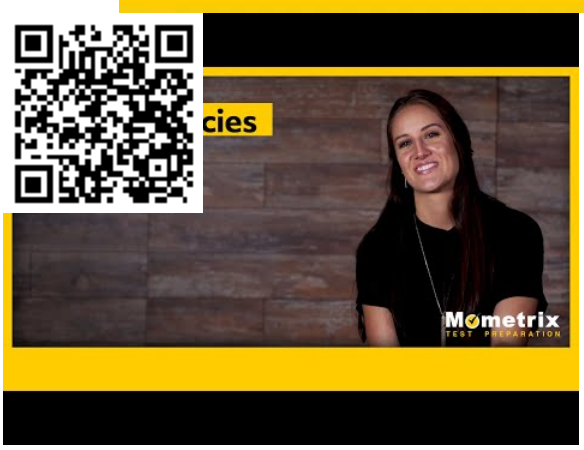


Figure **16.4.1.1**: Top 10 Logical Fallacies. Source: Mometrix Academy (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IawIjqOJBU8&t=8s)

Persuasive speakers must be careful to avoid using **fallacies** in their reasoning. Fallacies are errors in reasoning that occur when a speaker fails to use appropriate or applicable evidence for their argument. There are a wide variety of fallacies, and it is not possible to list them all here. However, speakers should watch for four common categories of fallacies: “fallacies of faulty assumption,” which occur when the speaker reasons based on a problematic assumption; “fallacies directed to the person,” which occur when the speaker focuses on the attributes of an individual opponent rather than the relevant arguments; “fallacies of case presentation,” which occur when the speaker mischaracterizes the issue; and “fallacies of suggestion,” which occur when the speaker implies or suggests an argument without fully developing it.

There are some positive steps you can take to avoid these pitfalls of persuasive speaking and ensure that you are presenting your message in the most ethical manner. We have already discussed some of these, such as offering credible evidence for your arguments and showing concern for the audience’s well-being. However, you should also offer a transparent goal for your speech. Even with a hostile audience, where you may wait until later in the speech to provide the specific purpose statement, you should be forthcoming about your specific purpose. In fact, be truthful with your audience throughout the speech.

Table	Examples of Fallacies	
Fallacies of Faulty Assumption		
False Cause	This fallacy occurs when one assumes that two events that happened in chronological order are connected (Post hoc, ergo propter hoc)	It is cloudy outside, and I feel sick. Cloudy days make me sick. The school board voted to buy new picnic tables for the lunchroom. Many students were out sick the following day. The students must be upset about the picnic tables.
Bandwagon	This fallacy occurs when one assumes that the popular opinion is the correct path or the truth.	Everyone takes out a loan to buy a car, so you should too. None of the cool kids wear helmets when they ride bikes. You should take yours off.
Begging the Question	This fallacy occurs when one declares the conclusion inside the premise of their argument, i.e. a type of circular argument.	Lion King is an excellent film because it has excellent animation. Marijuana is good for you because it is natural.
Hasty Generalization	This fallacy occurs when one declares a conclusion without sufficient evidence.	College dropouts always make excellent business leaders. Just look at Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, and Steve Jobs. They all dropped out and went on to create powerful companies.
Slippery Slope	This fallacy occurs when one assumes extreme consequences and an unalterable conclusion without sufficient evidence.	NYC wants to legislate the Sugary Drinks Portion Cap Rule, limiting drinks to less than 24 oz for health reasons. Where will the denial of our freedom of choice end? Meat servings? Imposing curfews? Mandatory mask-wearing?
Straw Man	This fallacy occurs when one argues against a false or distorted version of the opposition's claim.	Parent: Your curfew is at 10 pm tonight. Teenager: But the party doesn't even start until 9:00. Parent: It's a school night, so you need to be home by 10:00. Teenager: You just want me to be unpopular! You don't care about my happiness!
Fallacies Directed to the Person		
Ad Hominem	This fallacy occurs when one attacks the opposition itself versus the claims or argument at hand.	We should reject President Obama’s health care legislation because it is socialism. We should ignore Donald Trump’s opposition to tax hikes because he’s just rich and selfish.
Poisoning the Well	This fallacy occurs when one attacks the opposition or its claims before the opposition is allowed to speak.	Before the defense makes their closing statement, keep in mind that their client has not said one truthful word throughout the trial. My opponent is going to try to manipulate you into thinking her plan is better for the

Table 16.4.1.2 Examples of Fallacies

Fallacies of Faulty Assumption		
		city.
Appeal to Flattery	This fallacy occurs when one attempts to use compliments in order for one to side with them.	First, I wanted to tell you that this is my favorite class. I tell all my friends how much I love it. I just think I deserve a better grade on my exam. You are such a generous person, I know you'll want to donate to this cause.
Fallacies of Case Presentation		
Non Sequitur	This fallacy occurs when one's argument does not follow or connect logically to its given premise (i.e. not sequential).	I don't plan to vote today because I am moving next week. You should clean your room because I am going to do the laundry.
Red Herring	This fallacy occurs when one distracts or attempts to mislead the audience from the argument at hand.	I should not be fined for parking in a red zone when there are so many people out there committing real crimes like robbery and murder. War is wrong, but in times of crisis, we should support the president.
Appeal to Misplaced Authority	This fallacy occurs when one uses testimony from an authority who is not an authority on the subject at hand.	This diet is the best one for people with my health condition, Oprah said so. I want to visit the Museum of Modern Art. My English professor says they have the best collection anywhere!
Fallacies of Suggestion		
Paralepsis	This fallacy occurs when one claims to omit something or say they will not dwell on something, but because they bring it up, they are emphasizing it.	I'm not saying he cheated; he just did uncharacteristically well on that exam. If she wants to work for a crook, that's her business.
Either-Or	This fallacy occurs when one provides only two options from which to choose, and the options are mutually exclusive, and in fact, many compromises exist. (i.e. false dilemma)	Either you're with us or against us. Love it or leave it.
Arrangement	This fallacy occurs when one creates a false impression by ordering, associating, or grouping items of evidence in a misleading way.	I have so much to do today. I have to get my car fixed, finish a paper, take a nap, and pick my mom up from the airport. So many highly respected musicians will be there: Paul McCartney, Elton John, LMFAO, Billy Joel . . .

It is appropriate to use fictional scenarios to demonstrate your point but tell the audience that is what you are doing. You can accomplish this by introducing fictional examples with the phrase, "hypothetically," or "imagine," to signal that you are making it up (Beebe & Beebe, 2003). Additionally, be sure to offer a mix of logical and emotional appeals. Blending these strategies ensures that you have evidence to back up emotional claims and that you are sensitive to the audiences' emotional reactions to your logical claims. Attending to both aspects will help you be more ethical and more persuasive.

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16.5: Constructing a Persuasive Speech

In a sense, constructing your persuasive speech is the culmination of the skills you have learned already. In another sense, you are challenged to think somewhat differently. While the steps of analyzing your audience, formulating your purpose and central idea, applying evidence, considering ethics, framing the ideas in appropriate language, and then practicing delivery will of course apply, you will need to consider some expanded options about each of these steps.

Formulating a Proposition

As mentioned before, when thinking about a central idea statement in a persuasive speech, we use the terms "proposition". Persuasive speeches have one of three types of propositions, which determine your overall approach. Before you move on, you need to determine what type of proposition you should have (based on the audience, context, issues involved in the topic, and assignment for the class).

Proposition of Fact

Speeches with this type of proposition attempt to establish the truth of a statement. The core of the proposition is not whether something is morally right and wrong or what should be done about the topic, only that a statement is supported by evidence or not. These propositions are not facts such as "the chemical symbol for water is H20" or "Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008 with 53% of the vote." Propositions or claims of fact are statements over which persons disagree and there is evidence on both sides, although probably more on one than the other. Some examples of propositions of fact are:

- *Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money.*
- *John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald working alone.*
- *Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.*
- *Climate change has been caused by human activity.*
- *Granting tuition tax credits to the parents of children who attend private schools will perpetuate educational inequality.*
- *Watching violence on television causes violent behavior in children.*
- *William Shakespeare did not write most of the plays attributed to him.*
- *John Doe committed the crime of which he is accused.*

Notice that in none of these are any values—good or bad—mentioned. Perpetuating segregation is not portrayed as good or bad, only as an effect of a policy. Of course, most people view educational inequality negatively, just as they view life-saving medical procedures positively. But the point of these propositions is to prove with evidence the truth of a statement, not its inherent value or what the audience should do about it. In fact, in some propositions of fact, no action response would even be possible, such as the proposition listed above that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy.

Propositions of Value

It is likely that you or some of your classmates will give speeches with propositions of value. When the proposition has a word such as "good," "bad," "best," "worst," "just," "unjust," "ethical," "unethical," "moral," "immoral," "beneficial," "harmful," "advantageous," or "disadvantageous," it is a proposition of value. Some examples include:

- *Hybrid cars are the best form of automobile transportation available today.*
- *Homeschooling is more beneficial for children than traditional schooling.*
- *The War in Iraq was not justified.*
- *Capital punishment is morally wrong.*
- *Mascots that involve Native American names, characters, and symbols are demeaning.*
- *A vegan diet is the healthiest one for adults.*

Propositions of value require a first step: defining the "value" word. If a war is unjustified, what makes a war "just" or "justified" in the first place? That is a fairly philosophical question. What makes a form of transportation "best" or "better" than another? Isn't that a matter of personal approach? For different people, "best" might mean "safest," "least expensive," "most environmentally responsible," "stylish," "powerful," or "prestigious." Obviously, in the case of the first proposition above, it means

"environmentally responsible." It would be the first job of the speaker, after introducing the speech and stating the proposition, to explain what "best form of automobile transportation" means. Then the proposition would be defended with separate arguments.

Propositions of Policy

These propositions are easy to identify because they almost always have the word "should" in them. These propositions call for a change in policy or practice (including those in a government, community, or school), or they can call for the audience to adopt a certain behavior. Speeches with propositions of policy can be those that call for passive acceptance and agreement from the audience and those that try to instigate the audience to action, to actually do something immediately or in the long-term.

- *Our state should require mandatory recertification of lawyers every ten years.*
- *The federal government should act to ensure clean water standards for all citizens.*
- *The federal government should not allow the use of technology to choose the sex of an unborn child.*
- *The state of Georgia should require drivers over the age of 75 to take a vision test and present a certificate of good health from a doctor before renewing their licenses.*
- *Wyeth Daniels should be the next governor of the state.*
- *Young people should monitor their blood pressure regularly to avoid health problems later in life.*

As mentioned before, the proposition determines the approach to the speech, especially the organization. Also as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the exact phrasing of the proposition should be carefully done to be reasonable, positive, and appropriate for the context and audience. In this next section, we will examine organizational factors for speeches with propositions of fact, value, and policy.

Organization Based on Type of Proposition

Organization for a proposition of fact

If your proposition is one of fact, you will do best to use a topical organization. Essentially that means that you will have two to four discrete, separate arguments in support of the proposition. For example:

Proposition: Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money.

I. Solar energy can be economical to install.

A. The government awards grants.

B. The government gives tax credits.

II. Solar energy reduces power bills.

III. Solar energy requires less money for maintenance.

IV. Solar energy works when the power grid goes down.

Here is a first draft of another outline for a proposition of fact:

Proposition: Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.

I. Research of the past shows many successes from animal experimentation.

II. Research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons.

III. Computer models for research have limitations.

However, these outlines are just preliminary drafts because preparing a speech of fact requires a great deal of research and understanding of the issues. A speech with a proposition of fact will almost always need an argument or section related to the "reservations," refuting the arguments that the audience may be preparing in their minds, their mental dialogue. So the second example needs revision, such as:

I. The first argument in favor of animal experimentation is the record of successful discoveries from animal research.

II. A second reason to support animal experimentation is that research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons.

III. Animal experimentation is needed because computer models for research have limitations.

IV. Many people today have concerns about animal experimentation.

A. Some believe that all experimentation is equal.

1. There is experimentation for legitimate medical research.

2. There is experimentation for cosmetics or shampoos.

B. Others argue that the animals are mistreated.

1. There are protocols for the treatment of animals in experimentation.

2. Legitimate medical experimentation follows the protocols.

C. Some believe the persuasion of certain advocacy groups like PETA.

1. Many of the groups that protest animal experimentation have extreme views.

2. Some give untrue representations.

To complete this outline, along with the introduction and conclusion, there would need to be quotations, statistics, and facts with sources provided to support both the pro-arguments in Main Points I-III and the refutation to the misconceptions about animal experimentation in Sub-points A-C under Point IV.

Organization for a proposition of value

A persuasive speech that incorporates a proposition of value will have a slightly different structure. As mentioned earlier, a proposition of value must first define the "value" word for clarity and provide a basis for the other arguments of the speech. The second or middle section would present the defense or "pro" arguments for the proposition based on the definition. The third section would include a refutation of the counterarguments or "reservations." The following outline draft shows a student trying to structure a speech with a value proposition. Keep in mind it is abbreviated for illustrative purposes, and thus incomplete as an example of what you would submit to your instructor, who will expect more detailed outlines for your speeches.

Proposition: Hybrid cars are the best form of automotive transportation available today.

I. Automotive transportation that is best meets three standards. **(Definition)**

A. It is reliable and durable.

B. It is fuel-efficient and thus cost-efficient.

C. It is therefore environmentally responsible.

II. Studies show that hybrid cars are durable and reliable. **(Pro-Argument 1)**

A. Hybrid cars have 99 problems per 100 cars versus 133 problems per 100 conventional cars, according to TrueDelta, a car analysis website much like Consumer Reports.

B. J.D. Powers reports hybrids also experience 11 fewer engine and transmission issues than gas-powered vehicles, per 100 vehicles.

III. Hybrid cars are fuel-efficient. **(Pro-Argument 2)**

A. The Toyota Prius gets 48 mpg on the highway and 51 mpg in the city.

B. The Ford Fusion hybrid gets 47 mpg in the city and in the country.

IV. Hybrid cars are environmentally responsible. **(Pro-Argument 3)**

A. They only emit 51.6 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.

B. Conventional cars emit 74.9 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.

C. The hybrid produces 69% of the harmful gas exhaust that a conventional car does.

V. Of course, hybrid cars are relatively new to the market and some have questions about them. **(Reservations)**

A. Don't the batteries wear out and aren't they expensive to replace?

1. Evidence to address this misconception.
2. Evidence to address this misconception.

B. Aren't hybrid cars only good for certain types of driving and drivers?

1. Evidence to address this misconception.
2. Evidence to address this misconception.

C. Aren't electric cars better?

1. Evidence to address this misconception.
2. Evidence to address this misconception.

Organization for a proposition of policy

The most common types of outline organization for speeches with propositions of policy are problem-solution or problem-cause-solution. Typically we do not feel any motivation to change unless we are convinced that some harm, problem, need, or deficiency exists, and even more, that it affects us personally. As the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?"As mentioned before, some policy speeches look for passive agreement or acceptance of the proposition. Some instructors call this type of policy speech a "think" speech since the persuasion is just about changing the way your audience thinks about a policy.

On the other hand, other policy speeches seek to move the audience to do something to change a situation or to get involved in a cause, and these are sometimes called a "do" speech since the audience is asked to do something. This second type of policy speech (the "do" speech) is sometimes called a "speech to actuate." Although a simple problem-solution organization with only two main points is permissible for a speech of actuation, you will probably do well to utilize the more detailed format called Monroe's Motivated Sequence.

This format, designed by Alan Monroe (1951), who wrote a popular speaking textbook for many years, is based on John Dewey's reflective thinking process. It seeks to go in-depth with the many questions an audience would have in the process of listening to a persuasive speech. Monroe's Motivated Sequence involves five steps, which should not be confused with the main points of the outline. Some steps in Monroe's Motivated Sequence may take two points.

1. **Attention**. This is the introduction, where the speaker brings attention to the importance of the topic as well as his or her own credibility and connection to the topic. This step will include the central idea and preview.
2. **Need**. Here the problem is defined and defended. This step may be divided into two main points, such as the problem and the causes of it, since logically a solution should address the underlying causes as well as the external effects of a problem. It is important to make the audience see the severity of the problem, and how it affects them, their family, or their community. The harm or need can be physical, financial, psychological, legal, emotional, educational, social, or a combination. It will have to be supported by evidence.
3. **Satisfaction**. A need calls for satisfaction in the same way a problem requires a solution. This step could also, in some cases, take up two main points. Not only does the speaker present the solution and describe it, but they must also defend that it works and will address the causes of the problem as well as the symptoms.
4. **Visualization**. This step looks to the future either positively or negatively. If positive, the benefits from enacting or choosing the solution are shown. If negative, the disadvantages of not doing anything to solve the problem are shown. There may be times when it is acceptable to skip this step, especially if time is limited. The purpose of visualization is to motivate the audience by revealing future benefits or through fear appeals by showing future harms.
5. **Action**. This can be the conclusion, although if the speaker really wants to spend time on moving the audience to action, the action step should be a full main point and the conclusion saved for summary and a dramatic ending. In the action step, the goal is to give specific steps for the audience to take as soon as possible to move toward solving the problem. Whereas the satisfaction step explains the solution overall, the action step gives concrete ways to begin making the solution happen.

The more concrete you can make the action step, the better. Research shows that people are more likely to act if they know how accessible the action can be. For example, if you want students to be vaccinated against the chickenpox virus (which can cause a serious disease called shingles in adults), you can give them directions to and hours for a clinic or health center where vaccinations at a free or discounted price can be obtained.

In some cases for speeches of policy, no huge problem needs solving. Or, there is a problem, but the audience already knows about it and is convinced that the problem exists and is important. In those cases, a format called "comparative advantages" is used, which focuses on how one possible solution is better than other possible ones. The organizational pattern for this kind of proposition might be topical:

I. This policy is better because…

II. This policy is better because…

III. This policy is better because…

If this sounds a little like a commercial that is because advertisements often use comparative advantages to show that one product is better than another. Here is an example:

Proposition: Owning the Barnes and Noble Nook is more advantageous than owning the Amazon Kindle.

I. The Nook allows owners to trade and loan books to other owners or people who have downloaded the Nook software, while the Kindle does not.

II. The Nook has a color-touch screen, while the Kindle's screen is black and grey and non-interactive.

III. The Nook's memory can be expanded through microSD, while the Kindle's memory cannot be upgraded.

Building Upon Your Persuasive Speech's Arguments

Once you have constructed the key arguments and order of points (remembering that if you use topical order, to put your strongest or most persuasive point last), it is time to be sure your points are well supported. In a persuasive speech, there are some things to consider about evidence.

First, your evidence should be from sources that the audience will find credible. If you can find the same essential information from two sources but know that the audience will find the information more credible from one source than another, use and cite the information from the more credible one. For example, if you find the same statistical data on Wikipedia and the U.S. Department of Labor's website, cite the U.S. Department of Labor (your instructor will probably not accept the Wikipedia site anyway). Audiences also accept information from sources they consider unbiased or indifferent. Gallup polls, for example, have been considered reliable sources of survey data because, unlike some organizations, Gallup does not have a cause (political or otherwise) it is supporting.

Secondly, your evidence should be new to the audience. In other words, the best evidence is that which is from credible sources and the audience has not heard before (Reinard, 1988; McCroskey, 1969). If they have heard it before and discounted it, they will not consider your argument well supported. An example is telling people who smoke that smoking will cause lung cancer. Everyone in the U.S. has heard that thousands of times, but 14% of the population still smokes, which is about one in seven (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017)). Many of those who smoke have not heard the information that really motivates them to quit yet, and of course, quitting is very difficult. Additionally, new evidence is more attention-getting, and you will appear more credible if you tell the audience something new (as long as you cite it well) than if you use the "same old, same old" evidence they have heard before.

Third, in order to be effective and ethical, your supporting evidence should be relevant and not used out of context, and fourth, it should be timely and not out of date.

After choosing the evidence and apportioning it to the correct parts of the speech, you will want to consider the use of metaphors, quotations, rhetorical devices, and narratives that will enhance the language and "listenability" of your speech. Narratives are especially good for introduction and conclusions, to get attention, and to leave the audience with something dramatic. You might refer to the narrative in the introduction again in the conclusion to give the speech a sense of finality.

Next, you will want to decide if you should use any type of presentation aid for the speech. The decision to use visuals such as PowerPoint slides or a video clip in a persuasive speech should take into consideration the effect of the visuals on the audience and the time allotted for the speech (as well as your instructor's specifications). The charts, graphs, or photographs you use should be focused and credibly done.

One of your authors remembers a speech by a student about using seat belts (which is, by the way, an overdone topic). What made the speech effective in this case were photographs of two totaled cars, both of which the student had been driving when they crashed. The devastation of the wrecks and his ability to stand before us and give the speech because he had worn his seat belt were effective (although it didn't say much for his driving ability). If you wanted an audience to donate to disaster relief after an earthquake in a foreign country, a few photographs of the destruction would be effective, and perhaps a map of the area would be helpful. But in this case, less is more. Too many visual aids will likely distract from your overall speech claim.

Finally, since you've already had experience in class giving at least one major speech prior to this one, your delivery for the persuasive speech should be especially strong. Since delivery does affect credibility (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990), you want to be able to connect visually as you make your appeals. You want to be physically involved and have vocal variety when you tell dramatic narratives that emphasize the human angle on your topic. If you do use presentation slides, you want them to work seamlessly, using black screens when the visuals are not necessary.

Conclusion

Your persuasive speech in class, as well as in real life, is an opportunity to share a passion or cause that you believe will matter to society and help the audience live a better life. Even if you are initially uncomfortable with the idea of persuasion, we use it all the time in different ways. Choose your topic based on your own commitment and experience, look for quality evidence, craft your proposition so that it will be clear and audience appropriate, and put the finishing touches on it with an eye toward enhancing your logos, ethos, and pathos.

Something to Think About





Go to YouTube and look for “Persuasive Speeches by College Students.” There are quite a few. Here’s one example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNr7Fx-SM1Y. Do you find this speech persuasive? Why or why not? Based on the content of this chapter, what did the speaker do correctly or perhaps not so correctly that affected his or her persuasiveness?

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16.5.1: Monroe's Motivated Sequence extended

Learning Objective

1. Examine thoroughly the steps utilized in Monroe's motivated sequence.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

The purpose of Monroe's motivated sequence is to help speakers plan main points, supporting materials, and motivational appeals to form a useful organizational pattern for persuasive speeches that will lead to an immediate action rather than passive agreement.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence lists the basic steps of Monroe's motivated sequence and the subsequent reaction a speaker desires from his or her audience.

Steps	Audience Response
Attention — Getting Attention	I want to listen to the speaker.
Need — Showing the Need, Describing the Problem	Something needs to be done about the problem.
Satisfaction — Satisfying the Need, Presenting the Solution	In order to satisfy the need or fix the problem this is what I need to do.
Visualization — Visualizing the Results	I can see myself enjoying the benefits of taking action.
Action — Requesting Audience Action or Approval	I will act in a specific way or approve a decision or behavior.

Attention

The first step in Monroe's motivated sequence is the attention step, in which a speaker attempts to get the audience's attention. To gain an audience's attention, we recommend that you think through three specific parts of the attention step. First, you need to have a strong attention-getting device. Second, you need to make sure you introduce your topic clearly. If your audience doesn't know what your topic is quickly, they are more likely to stop listening. Third, you need to explain to your audience why they should care about your topic. Next, you will want to establish your credibility with the topic to the audience. And finally, you will want to preview what you will discuss in the speech to guide your audience.

Needs

In the need step of Monroe's motivated sequence, the speaker establishes that there is a specific need or problem. In Monroe's conceptualization of need, he talks about four specific parts of the need: statement, illustration, ramification, and pointing. First, a speaker needs to give a clear and concise statement of the problem. This part of a speech should be crystal clear for an audience. Second, the speaker needs to provide one or more examples to illustrate the need. The illustration is an attempt to make the problem concrete for the audience. Next, a speaker needs to provide some kind of evidence (e.g., statistics, examples, testimony) that shows the ramifications or consequences of the problem. Lastly, a speaker needs to point to the audience and show exactly how the problem relates to them personally.

Satisfaction

In the third step of Monroe's motivated sequence, the satisfaction step, the speaker sets out to satisfy the need or solve the problem. Within this step, Monroe (1935) proposed a five-step plan for satisfying a need:

1. Statement
2. Explanation
3. Theoretical demonstration
4. Reference to practical experience

5. Meeting objections

First, you need to clearly state the attitude, value, belief, or action you want your audience to accept. The purpose of this statement is to clearly tell your audience what your ultimate goal is. Second, you want to make sure that you clearly explain to your audience why they should accept the attitude, value, belief, or action you proposed. Just telling your audience they should do something isn't strong enough to actually get them to change. Instead, you really need to provide a solid argument for why they should accept your proposed solution. Third, you need to show how the solution you have proposed meets the need or problem. Monroe calls this link between your solution and the need for a theoretical demonstration because you cannot prove that your solution will work. Instead, you theorize based on research and good judgment that your solution will meet the need or solve the problem. Fourth, to help with this theoretical demonstration, you need to reference practical experience, which should include examples demonstrating that your proposal has worked elsewhere. Research, statistics, and expert testimony are all great ways of referencing practical experience. Lastly, Monroe recommends that a speaker responds to possible objections. As a persuasive speaker, one of your jobs is to think through your speech and see what counterarguments could be made against your speech and then rebut those arguments within your speech. When you offer rebuttals for arguments against your speech, it shows your audience that you've done your homework and educated yourself about multiple sides of the issue.

Visualization

The next step of Monroe's motivated sequence is the visualization step, in which you ask the audience to visualize a future where the need has been met or the problem solved. In essence, the visualization stage is where a speaker can show the audience why accepting a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior can positively affect the future. When helping people to picture the future, the more concrete your visualization is, the easier it will be for your audience to see the possible future and be persuaded by it. You also need to make sure that you clearly show how accepting your solution will directly benefit your audience.

According to Monroe, visualization can be conducted in one of three ways: positive, negative, or contrast. The positive method of visualization is where a speaker shows how adopting a proposal leads to a better future (e.g., recycle, and we'll have a cleaner and safer planet). Conversely, the negative method of visualization is where a speaker shows how not adopting the proposal will lead to a worse future (e.g., don't recycle, and our world will become polluted and uninhabitable). Monroe also acknowledged that visualization can include a combination of both positive and negative visualization. In essence, you show your audience both possible outcomes and have them decide which one they would rather have.

Action

The final step in Monroe's motivated sequence is the action step, in which a speaker asks an audience to approve the speaker's proposal. For understanding purposes, we break the action into two distinct parts: audience action and approval. Audience action refers to direct physical behaviors a speaker wants from an audience (e.g., flossing their teeth twice a day, signing a petition, wearing seat belts). Approval, on the other hand, involves an audience's consent or agreement with a speaker's proposed attitude, value, or belief.

When preparing an action step, it is important to make sure that the action, whether audience action or approval, is realistic for your audience. Asking your peers in a college classroom to donate one thousand dollars to charity isn't realistic. Asking your peers to donate one dollar is considerably more realistic. In a persuasive speech based on Monroe's motivated sequence, the action step will end with the speech's concluding device. As discussed elsewhere in this text, you need to make sure that you conclude in a vivid way so that the speech ends on a high point and the audience has a sense of energy as well as a sense of closure.

Now that we've walked through Monroe's motivated sequence, let's look at how you could use Monroe's motivated sequence to outline a persuasive speech:
Specific Purpose: To persuade my classroom peers that the United States should have stronger laws governing the use of for-profit medical experiments.

Main Points:

- **Attention:** Want to make nine thousand dollars for just three weeks of work lying around and not doing much? Then be a human guinea pig. Admittedly, you'll have to have a tube down your throat most of those three weeks, but you'll earn three thousand dollars a week.

- **Need:** Every day many uneducated and lower socioeconomic-status citizens are preyed on by medical and pharmaceutical companies for use in for-profit medical and drug experiments. Do you want one of your family members to fall prey to this evil scheme?
- **Satisfaction:** The United States should have stronger laws governing the use of for-profit medical experiments to ensure that uneducated and lower-socioeconomic-status citizens are protected.
- **Visualization:** If we enact tougher experiment oversight, we can ensure that medical and pharmaceutical research is conducted in a way that adheres to basic values of American decency. If we do not enact tougher experiment oversight, we could find ourselves in a world where the lines between research subject, guinea pig, and patient become increasingly blurred.
- **Action:** In order to prevent the atrocities associated with for-profit medical and pharmaceutical experiments, please sign this petition asking the US Department of Health and Human Services to pass stricter regulations on this preying industry that is out of control.

This example shows how you can take a basic speech topic and use Monroe's motivated sequence to clearly and easily outline your speech efficiently and effectively. We've included a simple checklist to help you make sure you hit all the important components of Monroe's motivated sequence.

Step in the Sequence	Yes	No
Attention Step		
Gained audience's attention	☐	☐
Introduced the topic clearly	☐	☐
Showed the importance of the topic to the audience	☐	☐
Need Step		
Step in the Sequence	**Yes**	**No**
Need is summarized in a clear statement	☐	☐
Need is adequately illustrated	☐	☐
Need has clear ramifications	☐	☐
Need clearly points the audience	☐	☐
Satisfaction Step		
Plan is clearly stated	☐	☐
Plan is plainly explained	☐	☐
Plan and solution are theoretically demonstrated	☐	☐
Plan has clear reference to practical experience	☐	☐
Plan can meet possible objections	☐	☐
Visualization Step		
Practicality of plan shown	☐	☐
Benefits of plan are tangible	☐	☐
Benefits of plan relate to the audience	☐	☐
Specific type of visualization chosen (positive method, negative method, method of contrast)	☐	☐
Action Step		
Call of specific action by the audience	☐	☐
Action is realistic for the audience	☐	☐
Concluding device is vivid	☐	☐

Key Takeaway

- Alan H. Monroe's (1935) motivated sequence is a commonly used speech format that is used by many people to effectively organize persuasive messages. The pattern consists of five basic stages: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action. In the first stage, a speaker gets an audience's attention. In the second stage, the speaker shows an audience that a need exists. In the third stage, the speaker shows how his or her persuasive proposal could satisfy the need. The fourth stage shows how the future could be if the persuasive proposal is or is not adopted. Lastly, the speaker urges the audience to take some kind of action to help enact the speaker's persuasive proposal.

Exercises

1. Create a speech using Monroe's motivated sequence to persuade people to recycle.
2. Create a speech using the problem-cause-solution method for a problem you see on your college or university campus.
3. Create a comparative advantages speech comparing two brands of toothpaste.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

17: Speaking to Entertain (Special Occasion Speaking)

Often the speaking opportunities life brings our way have nothing to do specifically with informing or persuading an audience; instead, we are asked to speak to entertain. Whether you are standing up to give an award speech or a toast, knowing how to deliver speeches in a variety of different contexts is the nature of entertaining speaking. In this chapter, we are going to explore what entertaining speeches are; we will also examine two specific types of entertaining speeches: special-occasion speeches and keynote speeches.

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Southwest Tennessee Community College

17: Speaking to Entertain (Special Occasion Speaking)

Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner

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17.2: Understanding Special Occasion Speeches

Often the speaking opportunities life brings our way has nothing to do with specifically informing or persuading an audience; instead, we are commonly asked to speak during special occasions in our lives. Whether you are standing up to give a speech at an awards ceremony or a toast at a wedding, knowing how to deliver speeches in a variety of different contexts is the nature of special occasion speaking.

In broad terms, a **special occasion** speech addresses the context of the event and the audience's emotions on a specific occasion. Like informative or persuasive speeches, special occasion speeches should communicate a clear message, but the manner of speaking used is typically different. The word "special" in the term "special occasion speeches" is somewhat subjective in that while some speaking engagements truly are special (e.g., a toast at a wedding, an acceptance speech at an awards banquet, a eulogy for a loved one), they can also be given at more mundane events, such as the public relations speeches given by CEOs from big companies give every day. The goal is to stir an audience's emotions and make them feel a certain way in response to the situation or occasion.

To help us think through how to be effective in delivering special occasion speeches, let's look at four key ingredients: preparation, adaptation to the occasion, adaptation to the audience, and mindfulness about the time.

Be Prepared

First, and foremost, the biggest mistake you can make is to be under-prepared or simply not prepare at all. We've stressed the need for preparation throughout this text, so just because you're giving a wedding toast or a eulogy doesn't mean you shouldn't think through the speech before you stand up and speak out. If the situation is impromptu, even jotting some basic notes on a napkin is better than not having any plan for what you are going to say.

Adapt to the Occasion

Not all content is appropriate for all occasions. Remember that being a competent speaker is about being both personally effective and socially appropriate. If you are asked to deliver a speech commemorating an event make sure that you understand the purpose of the event and its formality, some decisions about adapting to the occasion are not obvious. Consider the following examples:

- You are the maid of honor giving a toast at the wedding of your younger sister.
- You are receiving a Most Valuable Player award in your favorite sport.
- You are a sales representative speaking to a group of clients after a mistake has been discovered.
- You are a cancer survivor speaking at a high school student assembly.
- You are giving an after-dinner speech to the members of your fraternity.

How might you adapt your message and speaking style to successfully convey your message to these various audiences?

Different occasions will call for different levels of social appropriateness. One of the biggest mistakes entertaining speakers can make is to deliver one generic speech to different groups without adapting the speech to the specific occasion. In fact, professional speakers always make sure that their speeches are tailored for different occasions by getting information about the occasion from their hosts. When we tailor speeches for special occasions, people are more likely to remember those speeches than if we give a generic speech.

Adapt to Your Audience

Once again, we cannot stress the importance of audience adaptation enough in this text. Different audiences will respond differently to speech material, so the more you know about your audience, the more likely you'll succeed in your speech. Imagine going to a conference for teachers of public speaking. The keynote speaker stood and delivered a speech on the importance of public speaking. While the speaker was good and funny, the speech really fell flat. The keynote speaker basically told the public speaking teachers that they should take public speaking courses because public speaking is important. Right speech, wrong audience!

Be Mindful of the Time

The last major consideration for delivering special occasion speeches successfully is to be mindful of your time. Different speech situations have their own conventions and rules with regard to time. Acceptance speeches and toasts, for example, should be relatively short (typically under two minutes). A speech of introduction should be extremely brief—just long enough to tell the audience what they need to know about the person being introduced in a style that prepares them to appreciate that person's remarks. In contrast, commencement speeches, eulogies, and speeches to commemorate events can run ten to twenty minutes in length, depending on the context.

It's also important to recognize that audiences on different occasions will expect speeches of various lengths. For example, although it's true that graduation commencement speakers generally speak for ten to twenty minutes, the closer that speaker heads toward twenty minutes the more fidgety the audience becomes. To hold the audience's attention, a commencement speaker would do well to make the closing minutes of the speech the most engaging and inspiring portion of the speech. If you're not sure about the expected time frame for a speech, ask the person who has invited you to speak.

Key Takeaways

- Entertaining speeches are speeches designed to captivate an audience's attention and regale or amuse them while delivering a clear message. Speakers engage in entertaining speeches generally at special occasions (e.g., weddings, funerals) or are asked to deliver a keynote address.
- Entertaining speeches should include four key considerations: preparation, adaptation to the occasion, adaptation to the audience, and mindfulness of the time. As with all speeches, speakers need to prepare the speech. Second, speakers need to think about the specific occasion. Third, speakers need to adapt their speeches to a specific audience. Lastly, speakers need to think about how long they should speak.

Exercises

1. Type in the word "roast" into YouTube and watch a few minutes of a roast. Did the speaker clearly exhibit the four clear ingredients of an entertaining speech?
2. Watch several toasts and acceptance speeches on YouTube. Can you identify specific ways in which each speaker adapts the speech to the occasion and the audience?

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17.3: Types of Special Occasion Speeches

Unlike the informative and persuasive speeches you were required to give, special occasion speeches are much broader and allow for a wider range of topics, events, and approaches to be employed. Since you are like to give many special occasion speeches in your life, we want to cover everything you might need to know to give a good one.

Speeches of Introduction

The first type of special occasion speech is the **speech of introduction**, a mini-speech that introduces another speaker and their speech. Just like any other speech, a speech of introduction should be a complete speech and have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion—and you should try to do it all in under two minutes. This brings up another "few things are worse" scenario: an introductory speaker who rambles on for too long or who talks about themself instead of focusing on the person being introduced.

For an introduction, think of a hook that will make your audience interested in the upcoming speaker. Did you read a news article related to the speaker's topic? Have you been impressed by a presentation you've heard the speaker give in the past? You need to find something that can grab the audience's attention and make them excited about hearing the main speaker.

The body of your speech of introduction should be devoted to telling the audience three things:

1. about the speaker's topic,
2. why the speaker is qualified,
3. and why the audience should listen,

Notice we now have our three main points. First, tell your audience in general terms about the overarching topic of the speech. Most of the time as an introducer, you'll only have a speech title and maybe a paragraph of information to help guide this part of your speech. That's all right. You don't need to know all the ins and outs of the main speaker's speech; you just need to know enough to whet the audience's appetite. Next, you need to tell the audience why the speaker is a credible presenter on the topic. Has the speaker written books or articles on the subject? Has the speaker had special life events that make him or her qualified? Lastly, you give a brief explanation to the audience why they should care about the upcoming speech. The outline can be adjusted; for example, you can give the biographical information first, but these three areas should be covered.

The final part of a good introduction is the conclusion, which is generally designed to welcome the speaker to the platform. Many introducers will conclude by saying something like, "I am looking forward to hearing how [Speaker's Name]'s advice and wisdom can help all of us today, so please join me in welcoming [Speaker Name]." At this point, you as the person introducing the speaker are "handing off" the speaking duties to someone else, so it is not uncommon to end your speech of introduction by clapping as the speaker comes on stage or shaking the speaker's hand.



In this video, Audra McDonald gives her 2014 Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play.

Award Speeches

Presentation, Acceptance, and Dedication are all speeches you make when someone or something is getting an award or honor.

Speeches of Presentation

The second type of special occasion speech is the **speech of presentation**. A speech of presentation is a brief speech given to accompany a prize or honor. Speeches of presentation can be as simple as saying, "This year's recipient of the Lavache Public Speaking prize is Ryann Curley," or could last up to five minutes as the speaker explains why the honoree was chosen for the award. An interesting example of a speech presenting an award is this one by Zoe Saldana for J.J. Abrams (https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=x03cGSszr8Q).

When preparing a speech of presentation, it's always important to ask how long the speech should be. Once you know the time limit, then you can set out to create the speech itself. First, you should explain what the award or honor is and why the presentation is important. Second, you can explain what the recipient has accomplished in order for the award to be bestowed. Did the person win a race? Did the person write an important piece of literature? Did the person mediate conflict? Whatever the recipient has done, you need to clearly highlight their work. Lastly, if the race or competition was conducted in a public forum and numerous people didn't win, you may want to recognize those people for their efforts as well. While you don't want to steal the show away from the winner, you may want to highlight the work of the other competitors or nominees.

Speeches of Acceptance



The complement to a speech of presentation is the **speech of acceptance**. The speech of acceptance is a speech given by the recipient of a prize or honor. There are three typical components of a speech of acceptance: 1) thank the givers of the award or honor, 2) thank those who helped you achieve your goal, and 3) put the award or honor into perspective. First, you want to thank the people who have given you the award or honor and possibly those who voted for you. We see this done every year during the Oscars, "First, I'd like to thank the Academy and all the Academy voters."

Second, you want to give credit to those who helped you achieve the award or honor. No person accomplishes things in life on his or her own. We all have family members, friends, and colleagues who support us and help us achieve what we do in life, and a speech of acceptance is a great time to graciously recognize those individuals. Lastly, put the award in perspective. Tell the people

listening to your speech why the award is meaningful to you. If you know you are up for an award have one ready. A good rule to remember is: Be thankful, be gracious, be short.

Speeches of Dedication

A third special occasion speech is the **speech of dedication**. A speech of dedication is delivered when a new store opens, a building is named after someone, a plaque is placed on a wall, a new library is completed, and so on. These speeches are designed to highlight the importance of the project and possibly those to whom the project has been dedicated.

When preparing a speech of dedication, start by explaining how you are involved in the dedication. If the person to whom the dedication is being made is a relative, tell the audience about your relationship and your relative's accomplishments. Second, you want to explain what is being dedicated. If the dedication is a new building or a pre-existing building, you want to explain the importance of the structure, who was involved in the project and/or who the structure may be named after.

Motivational Speeches

A **motivational speech** is designed not only to make an audience experience emotional arousal (fear, sadness, joy, excitement) but also to motivate the audience to do something with that emotional arousal. Whereas a traditional persuasive speech may want listeners to purchase product X or agree with idea Y, a motivational speech helps to inspire people in a broader fashion, often without a clearly articulated end result in mind. As such, motivational speaking is a highly specialized form of persuasive speaking commonly delivered in schools, businesses, religious houses of worship, and club or group contexts. The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking (Slutsky & Aun, 1997) lists four types of motivational speeches: hero, survivor, religious, and success.

The **hero speech** is a motivational speech given by someone who is considered a hero in society (e.g., military speakers, political figures, and professional athletes). Just type "motivational speech" into YouTube and you'll find many motivational speeches given by individuals who can be considered heroes or role models.

The **survivor speech** is a speech given by someone who has survived a personal tragedy or who has faced and overcome serious adversity. In the following clip, cancer survivor Becky M. Olsen discusses being a cancer survivor (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuo1u_C9_3g). Becky Olsen goes all over the country talking with and motivating cancer survivors to beat the odds.

The **religious speech** is fairly self-explanatory; it is designed to incorporate religious ideals into a motivational package to inspire an audience into thinking about or changing aspects of their religious lives.

The final type of motivational speech is the **success speech**, which is given by someone who has succeeded in some aspect of life and is giving back by telling others how they too can be successful.



Toasts

A **toast** is a speech designed to congratulate, appreciate, or remember. First, toasts can be delivered for the purpose of congratulating someone for an honor, a new job, or getting married. You can also toast someone to show your appreciation for something he or she has done. Lastly, we toast people to remember them and what they have accomplished.

When preparing a toast, the first goal is always to keep your remarks brief. Toasts are generally given during the middle of some kind of festivities (e.g., wedding, retirement party, farewell party), and you don't want your toast to take away from those festivities

for too long. Second, the goal of a toast is to focus attention on the person or persons being toasted—not on the speaker.

As such, while you are speaking, you need to focus your attention on the people being toasted, both by physically looking at them and by keeping your message about them. Depending on the situation you should avoid inside jokes between you and the people being toasted because toasts are public and should be accessible for everyone who hears them. To conclude a toast, simply say something like, “Please join me in recognizing Gina for her achievement” and lift your glass. When you lift your glass, this will signal to others to do the same and then you can all take a drink, which is the end of your speech.

Roasts

A **roast** is a very interesting and peculiar speech because it is designed to both praise and good-naturedly insult a person being honored. Because of this combination of purposes, it is not hard to argue that the roast is a challenging type of speech to write given the difficult task of simultaneously praising and insulting the person. Generally, roasts are given at the conclusion of a banquet in honor of someone’s life achievements. The television station Comedy Central *[Link contains foul language]* has been conducting roasts of various celebrities for a few years, and if you’ve ever watched one, you know that the “roasters” say some harsh things about the “roastees” even though they are friends.

During a roast, the roaster will stand behind a lectern while the roastee is seated somewhere where he or she is clearly on display for the audience to see, thus allowing the audience to take in his or her reactions. Since half the fun of a good roast is watching the roastee’s reactions during the roast, it’s important to have the roastee clearly visible to the audience.

How does one prepare for a roast? First, you want to really think about the person who is being roasted. Does he or she have any strange habits or amusing stories in their past that you can discuss? When you think through these questions, you want to make sure that you cross anything off your list that is truly private information or will really hurt the person. The goal of a roast is to poke at him, not massacre him.

Second, when selecting which aspects to poke fun at, you need to make sure that the items you choose are widely known by your audience. Roasts work when the majority of people in the audience can relate to the jokes being made. If you have an inside joke with the roastee, bringing it up during roast may be great fun for the two of you, but it will leave your audience unimpressed. Lastly, end on a positive note. While the jokes are definitely the fun part of a roast, you should leave the roastee and the audience knowing that you truly do care about and appreciate the person.



Eulogies

A **eulogy** is a speech given in honor of someone who has died (Don’t confuse “eulogy” with “elegy,” a poem or song of mourning). Not to sound depressing, but since everyone who is alive will someday die, the chance of your being asked to give a eulogy someday for a friend or family member is significant. However, when the time comes to deliver a eulogy, it’s good to know what you’re doing and to adequately prepare your remarks.

When preparing a eulogy, first you need to know as much information about the deceased as possible. The more information you have about the person, the more personal you can make the eulogy. While you can rely on your own information if you were close to the deceased, it is always a good idea to ask friends and relatives of the deceased for their memories, as these may add important facets that may not have occurred to you. Of course, if you were not very close to the deceased, you will need to ask friends and family for information. Second, although eulogies are delivered on the serious and sad occasion of a funeral or memorial service for the deceased, it is very helpful to look for at least one point to be lighter or humorous. In some cultures, in fact, the friends and family attending the funeral expect the eulogy to be highly entertaining and amusing.

Take, for example, Tom Arnold’s eulogy of Saturday Night Live actor Chris Farley. During his speech at Farley’s funeral, Arnold noted, “Chris was concerned about his size, and so he made sure that all of us who knew him well saw him naked at least once” (Glionna, 1998). Picturing the heavy-set comedian naked surely brought some humor to the somber proceedings, but Arnold knew Farley (and his audience) well enough to know that the story would be appropriate.

Knowing the deceased and the audience is vital when deciding on the type and amount of humor to use in a eulogy. It's doubtful statements like Tom Arnold's would fit many eulogies. But it would be appropriate to tell a funny story about Uncle Joe's love for his rattletrap car or Aunt Mary's love of tacky Christmas sweaters. Ultimately, the goal of the humor or lighter aspects of a eulogy is to relieve the tension that is created by the serious nature of the occasion.

If you are ever asked to give a eulogy, that means you were probably close to the deceased and are experiencing shock, sadness, and disbelief at your loved one's passing. The last thing that you will want to do (or be in a mental state to do) is figuring out how to structure your eulogy. To that end, here are three parts of a eulogy (i.e. main points) you can use to write one without worrying about being original with structure or organizational patterns: praise, lament, and consolation.

Praise

The first thing you want to do when remembering someone who has passed away is reminding the audience what made that person so special. So you will want to praise them and their accomplishments. This can include notable achievements (being an award winner; helping with charities), personal qualities ("she was always willing to listen to your problems and help in any way she could"), or anecdotes and stories (being a great mother; how she drove to college to visit you when you were homesick).

Lament

The second thing you want to do in a eulogy is to lament the loss. To **lament** means to express grief or sorrow, which is what everyone at a funeral has gathered to do. You will want to acknowledge that everyone is sad and that the deceased's passing will be difficult to get through. Here you might mention all the things that will no longer happen as a result of the death. "Now that Grandpa is gone, there won't be any more Sunday dinners where he cooks chicken on the grill or bakes his famous macaroni and cheese."

Console

The final step (or main point) in a eulogy is to **console** the audience or to offer comfort in a time of grief. What you must remember (and many people often forget) is that a eulogy is not a speech for the person who has died; it is a speech for the people who are still living to try to help them deal with the loss. You will want to end your eulogy on a positive note. Offer some hope that someday, things will get better. If the deceased was a religious person, this is where you might want to incorporate elements of that belief system. Some examples would include ideas like:

> *"Jim has gone home to be with the Lord and is looking down on us fondly today."*
>
> *"We may miss Aunt Linda deeply, but our memories of her will live on forever, and her impact on this world will not soon be forgotten."*

Using the Praise-Lament-Console format for eulogies gives you a simple system where you can fill in the sections with 1) why was the person good, 2) why you will miss him or her, and 3) how you and the audience will get through this loss. It sometimes also helps to think of the three points in terms of Past-Present-Future: you will praise the deceased for what he did when he was alive (the past), lament the loss you are feeling now (the present), and console your audience by letting them know that things will be all right (the future).

Speeches of Farewell or Commencement

A **speech of farewell** allows someone to say good-bye to one part of his or her life as he or she is moving on to the next part of life. Maybe you've accepted a new job and are leaving your current job, or you're graduating from college and entering the workforce. Periods of transition are often marked by speeches of farewell. When preparing a speech of farewell, the goal should be to thank the people in your current position and let them know how much you appreciate them as you make the move to your next position in life. Second, you want to express to your audience how much the experience has meant to you. A farewell speech is a time to commemorate and think about the good times you've had. As such, you should avoid negativity during this speech. Lastly, you want to make sure that you end on a high note.

A **speech of commencement** (or, as it is more commonly known, a "commencement speech") is designed to recognize and celebrate the achievements of a graduating class or other groups of people. These typically take place at graduation ceremonies. Nearly every one of us has sat through commencement speeches at some point in our lives. And if you're like us, you've heard



good ones and bad ones. Numerous celebrities and politicians have been asked to deliver commencement speeches at colleges and universities. National Public Radio (NPR) has compiled a list of 150 of the most famous commencement speeches dating back to 1774. You can watch a speech by famed professor Angela Davis at Pitzer College in 2012. It has the perfect balance of humor and inspiration, which are two of the main ingredients of a great commencement speech featuring these motivational words of wisdom: "If you live long enough a defeat will turn into a victory."

If you're ever asked to deliver a commencement speech, there are some key points to think through when deciding on your speech's content.

- If there is a specific theme for the graduation, make sure that your commencement speech addresses that theme. If there is no specific theme, come up with one for your speech. Some common commencement speech themes are commitment, competitiveness, competence, confidence, decision making, discipline, ethics, failure (and overcoming failure), faith, generosity, integrity, involvement, leadership, learning, persistence, personal improvement, professionalism, reality, responsibility, and self-respect.
- Talk about your life and how graduates can learn from your experiences to avoid pitfalls or take advantage of life. How can your life inspire the graduates in their future endeavors?
- Make the speech humorous. Commencement speeches should be entertaining and make an audience laugh.
- Be brief! Nothing is more painful than a commencement speaker who drones on and on. Remember, the graduates are there to get their diplomas; their families are there to watch the graduates walk across the stage.
- Remember, while you may be the speaker, you've been asked to impart wisdom and advice for the people graduating and moving on with their lives, so keep it focused on them.
- Place the commencement speech into the broader context of the graduates' lives. Show the graduates how the advice and wisdom you are offering can be utilized to make their own lives better.

Overall, it's important to make sure that you have fun when delivering a commencement speech. Remember, it's a huge honor and responsibility to be asked to deliver a commencement speech, so take the time to really think through and prepare your speech.

After-Dinner Speeches

Our final special occasion speech is the After-dinner speech.

After-dinner speeches are humorous speeches that make a serious point. These speeches get their name from the fact that they historically follow a meal of some kind. After-dinner speakers are generally asked to speak (or hired to speak) because they have the ability both to speak effectively and to make people laugh. First and foremost, after-dinner speeches are speeches and not stand-up comedy routines. All the basic conventions of public speaking previously discussed in this text apply to after-dinner speeches, but the overarching goal of these speeches is to be entertaining and to create an atmosphere of amusement.

After-dinner speaking is an extremely difficult type of speaking to do well because it is an entertaining speech that depends on the successful delivery of humor. People train for years to develop comic timing, or the verbal and nonverbal delivery used to enhance the comedic value of a message. But after-dinner speaking is difficult, not impossible. What follows is the method we recommend for developing a successful after-dinner speech.

First, use all that you have learned about informative or persuasive speeches to prepare a real informative or persuasive speech roughly two-thirds the length of what the final speech will become. That is, if you're going to be giving a ten-minute speech, then



your “real” informative or persuasive speech should be six or seven minutes in length. This is the “serious message” portion of the speech where you will try to make a point of educating your audience.

Next, go back through the speech and look for opportunities to insert humorous remarks. Once you’ve looked through your speech and examined places for verbal humor, think about any physical humor or props that would enhance your speech. Physical humor is great if you can pull it off without being self-conscious. One of the biggest mistakes any humorist makes is to become too aware of what his or her body is doing because it’s then harder to be free and funny. As for props, after-dinner speakers have been known to use everything from oversized inflatable baseball bats to rubber clown noses. The goal for a funny prop is that it adds to the humor of the speech without distracting from its message.

Last, and probably most important, try the humor out on real, live people. This is important for three reasons. First, the success of humor depends heavily on delivery, and especially timing in delivery. You will need the practice to polish your delivery so that your humor comes across. If you can’t make it through one of your jokes without cracking up, you will need to either incorporate the self-crackup into your delivery or forgo using that joke.

Second, just because you find something unbelievably funny in your head doesn’t mean that it will make anyone else laugh. Often, humor that we have written down on paper just doesn’t translate when orally presented. You may have a humorous story that you love reading on paper, but find that it just seems to drone on once you start telling it out loud. Furthermore, remember there is a difference between written and verbal language, and this also translates to how humor is interpreted. Third, you need to make sure the humor you choose will be appropriate for a specific audience. What one audience finds funny another may find offensive. Humor is the double-edged sword of public speaking. On one side, it is an amazing and powerful speaking tool, but on the other side, few things will alienate an audience more than offensive humor. If you’re ever uncertain about whether a piece of humor will offend your audience, don’t use it.

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