ADVANCED PUBLIC SPEAKING



Lynn Meade
University of Arkansas



Advanced Public Speaking (Meade)

This text is disseminated via the Open Education Resource (OER) LibreTexts Project (https://LibreTexts.org) and like the thousands of other texts available within this powerful platform, it is freely available for reading, printing, and "consuming."

The LibreTexts mission is to bring together students, faculty, and scholars in a collaborative effort to provide an accessible, and comprehensive platform that empowers our community to develop, curate, adapt, and adopt openly licensed resources and technologies; through these efforts we can reduce the financial burden born from traditional educational resource costs, ensuring education is more accessible for students and communities worldwide.

Most, but not all, pages in the library have licenses that may allow individuals to make changes, save, and print this book. Carefully consult the applicable license(s) before pursuing such effects. Instructors can adopt existing LibreTexts texts or Remix them to quickly build course-specific resources to meet the needs of their students. Unlike traditional textbooks, LibreTexts' web based origins allow powerful integration of advanced features and new technologies to support learning.



LibreTexts is the adaptable, user-friendly non-profit open education resource platform that educators trust for creating, customizing, and sharing accessible, interactive textbooks, adaptive homework, and ancillary materials. We collaborate with individuals and organizations to champion open education initiatives, support institutional publishing programs, drive curriculum development projects, and more.

The LibreTexts libraries are Powered by NICE CXone Expert and was supported by the Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Project, the California Education Learning Lab, the UC Davis Office of the Provost, the UC Davis Library, the California State University Affordable Learning Solutions Program, and Merlot. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1246120, 1525057, and 1413739.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation nor the US Department of Education.

Have questions or comments? For information about adoptions or adaptions contact info@LibreTexts.org or visit our main website at https://LibreTexts.org.

This text was compiled on 06/13/2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

1: Writing a Speech

- 1.1: Public Speaking--So What, Who Cares?
- 1.2: Engage Your Audience- Don't Spit Random Words at Generic People
- 1.3: Brainstorming- Moving the Cheese Out of the Way So You Can Find Your Best Ideas
- 1.4: Opening a Speech- Get Their Attention from the Start!
- 1.5: Closing a Speech- End with Power and Let Them Know It is Time to Clap
- 1.6: The Power of Story- The Secret Ingredient to Making Any Speech Memorable
- 1.7: Giving and Receiving Feedback- It is Harder Than You Think
- 1.8: Organizing a Speech and Harnessing the Power of Three
- 1.9: Transitions- Bridging Ideas for a Seamless Presentation
- 1.10: Research- Finding and Citing Your Research
- 1.11: Ceremonial Speaking- Identification, Magnification, Narration
- 1.12: Professional Speechwriting- Using Colorful Language in Your Speech
- 1.13: Professional Speechwriting- Metaphor, Simile, and Theme
- 1.14: Professional Speechwriting- Vivid and Sensory Words Make Your Speech Come Alive

2: Presenting a Speech

- 2.1: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Brain
- 2.2: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Body
- 2.3: Delivery Advice- Do Not Imagine the Audience Naked! Managing Eye Contact, Movement, and Gestures
- 2.4: Using a Microphone Effectively- Turn It Off Before Going to the Bathroom
- 2.5: Why Your Voice is the Most Important Part of Your Speech- If They Can't Hear You It is Only a Frustrating Exercise in Lip Reading
- 2.6: Speaking to a Camera- Making Eye Contact is Key
- 2.7: Delivery Methods- Which One Should I Use?
- 2.8: Speaking from a Manuscript- How to Read and not Look Like You Are Reading

3: Presentation Aids for Speech

- 3.1: Props- It is More Than Just Setting Stuff on a Table
- 3.2: Don't Ruin a Great Presentation with Terrible Slides
- 3.3: Data Visualization- Using Statistics, Numbers, and Charts Without Boring Your Audience

4: Speeches

- 4.1: Persuasive Speechmaking- Pitching Your Idea and Making it Stick
- 4.2: Career Speech- Tell Them Who You Are and Why You Matter to Them
- 4.3: Elevator and Career Fair Pitch- Standing Out While Still Fitting In
- 4.4: Toast Speech
- 4.5: Award Speech- And the Winner is...
- 4.6: Graduation Speeches- Speeches You Give in Pointy Hats
- 4.7: Eulogy-Good Words
- 4.8: Introducing a Speaker
- 4.9: Tribute Speech- Celebrate the Occasion, the Person, or the Monument
- 4.10: Informative Speech

5: Considerations for Speech

- 5.1: Things That Do Not Belong In Your Speech- Curse Words, ISTS, Slang, and Bafflegab
- 5.2: Rhetorical History- Interview with Two Old Dead Greek Guys
- 5.3: Fallacies--Warning! Deceptive, Hateful Speech Coming Your Way
- 5.4: The Science of Persuasion- A Little Theory Goes a Long Way

Index

Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Writing a Speech

1.1: Public Speaking--So What, Who Cares?
1.2: Engage Your Audience- Don't Spit Random Words at Generic People
1.3: Brainstorming- Moving the Cheese Out of the Way So You Can Find Your Best Ideas
1.4: Opening a Speech- Get Their Attention from the Start!
1.5: Closing a Speech- End with Power and Let Them Know It is Time to Clap
1.6: The Power of Story- The Secret Ingredient to Making Any Speech Memorable
1.7: Giving and Receiving Feedback- It is Harder Than You Think
1.8: Organizing a Speech and Harnessing the Power of Three
1.9: Transitions- Bridging Ideas for a Seamless Presentation
1.10: Research- Finding and Citing Your Research
1.11: Ceremonial Speaking- Identification, Magnification, Narration
1.12: Professional Speechwriting- Using Colorful Language in Your Speech
1.13: Professional Speechwriting- Metaphor, Simile, and Theme
1.14: Professional Speechwriting- Vivid and Sensory Words Make Your Speech Come Alive

---

This page titled 1: Writing a Speech is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.1: Public Speaking--So What, Who Cares?



If you can't communicate and talk to other people
and get across your ideas,
you're giving up your potential.
– Warren Buffet, American business magnate

? Try This

- Work in a group of 4-5 people.
- Make a list of all the possible ways you might use public speaking now and in the future.

Why Does Public Speaking Matter?

If you are a student, public speaking may be the most important class you take. Really! I believe it is the most important because it makes your other classes "work." Some of you expect public speaking will be part of your future–maybe you are going into sales, or teaching, or politics, or even ministry, and you will be expected to give speeches on a regular basis.

The rest of you may be thinking graduation will mark the end of your public speaking days. I doubt you will make it through life without giving speeches. After all, if you are good at your job, you will likely be asked to train others to do your job–that's public speaking. If you know a lot about your topic, you will likely go to a conference where you talk about what you know–that's public speaking. Many of you will find yourselves at a meeting in front of a group of colleagues explaining your proposal–that's public speaking. Others of you will be managers giving out awards to your associates as part of a ceremony–that's public speaking. All of you will likely be called on to give a toast at a wedding or retirement party–that's public speaking. All of you will likely speak at a funeral of a loved one—that's public speaking. In addition, you will have to do a job interview, and these days many of them are conducted as group interviews or even as presentations–that's public speaking.
Like it or not, most of you will do public speaking. It is for these reasons I say, your ability to give a speech well can make all your other training work for you. It can help you in your relationships as you use your skills to celebrate with others.

Let me remind you of a few more reasons having good presentation skills is important to you.

> *If I went back to college again,*
> *I'd concentrate on two areas:*
> *learning to write and to speak before an audience.*
> *Nothing in life is more important*
> *than the ability to communicate effectively.*
> *President Gerald Ford*

Employers Seek Good Communicators

> *Getting ahead of the next curve requires courage and communication:*
> *Courage to determine the next bold move, and communication*
> *to keep the troops committed to the value of moving forward.*
> *Rallying stakeholders to move together in a common course of action*

> *is all part of the innovation and survival process.*
> *Leaders at every level in an organization*
> *need to be skillful at creating resonance*
> *if that organization is to control its own destiny.*
> *— Nancy Duarte, Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences*

Employers want to hire people who are good communicators. Learning to develop your public speaking skills will help you to be employable and to succeed in your future career. The National Association of Colleges and Employers does an annual survey of the top attributes employers want to see on resumes and communication skills are consistently high on the list.

ATTRIBUTE	% OF RESPONDENTS
Problem-solving skills	91.2%
Ability to work in a team	86.3%
Strong work ethic	80.4%
Communication skills (written)	77.5%
Leadership	72.5%
Communication skills (verbal)	69.6%
Initiative	69.6%
Detail-oriented	67.6%
Technical skills	65.7%
Flexibility/adaptability	62.7%
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)	62.7%
Computer skills	54.9%
Organizational ability	47.1%
Creativity	23.5%

Source: *Job Outlook 2020*, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Graduates Say Public Speaking Skills Helped with Career Improvement

Public speaking is not just essential to get the job but to keep and advance in a job. Surveys of college graduates reported oral and written communication skills, public speaking, group leadership, and motivating and managing others were most essential for career improvement. In a Gallup Alumni survey, graduates reported they wished they had more communication training to help them once they have graduated.

Public Speaking is a Part of Your Civic Responsibility

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
concerned citizens can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.
Margaret Mead, American Cultural Anthropologist

Speaking up for what you believe in is an important part of being in a democracy. This is not all about you. The opportunities you have been given and the education you are receiving can be used to help others. Boyer, in an article titled *Civic Education for Responsible Citizens*, suggests at the heart of a good education is civic engagement. Students should “develop responsible ways of thinking, believing and acting.”

You Can Make a Difference

Rather than tell you why you should speak up, I would rather show you how others have spoken out and made a difference.

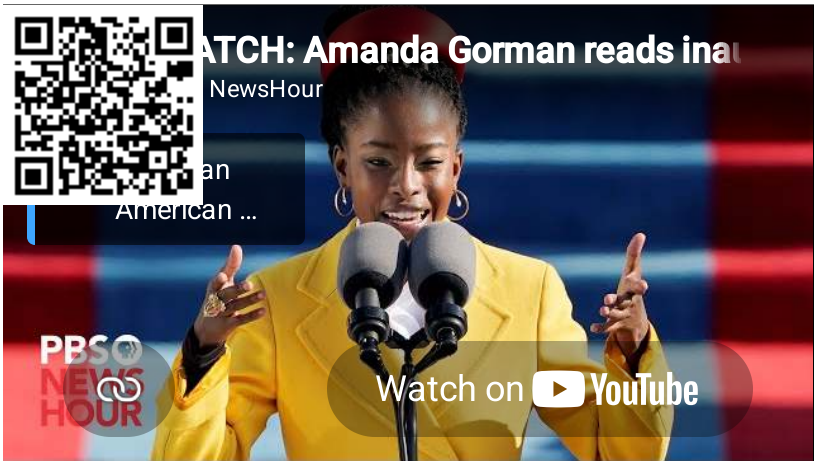
Watch this excerpt from Greta Thunburg. At age 16, she spoke at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019. To watch the full speech https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMrtLsQbaok



At age 19, Zach Wahls stood before the Iowa House Judiciary Committee to talk about his experience of growing up with same-sex parents.



Amanda Gorman at 22-years-old read her poem, *The Hill We Climb* at the inauguration of US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.



Presentational Literacy Helps You Share Your Ideas

Chris Anderson, from TED Talks, reminds us of the campfires of old have become the fires of the internet where ideas can spread. More than ever presentational literacy is important.

(Heads up, there is an embedded ad in this video)



Public Speaking Allows You To Tell Your Story

Each of us has a story to tell.

Think about a tough time you went through and how you came out stronger having been through that experience.
What if you could take that experience and use it to help others push through?

Think about how you had to learn something the hard way.
What if you could tell others about what you learned so they don't make the same mistake?

Think about a historic event you witnessed: 911, Global Pandemic, Race Riots.
What if you could tell others what you witnessed so they could see history as more than words on a page?

A lot of public speaking is just people telling their stories. Here examples.

> Go to National Public Radio's This I Believe and find a story.
>
> Go to the Moth, the Art and Craft of Storytelling, and watch one of the speeches. This club in New York City had now gone international. (Think of a coffeehouse meets poetry slam meets comedy club.)

Professional Speakers Can Make Good Money

Some people make a career around public speaking. Just for fun, follow one of these links to a speaker bureau and see how some are using their public speaking skills and earning a substantial income in the process.

- *https://www.eaglestalent.com/*
- *https://www.executivespeakers.com/*

Public Speaking Can Help You Grow as a Person

When most people think about public speaking, they think about what they are giving to others. Very few people think of public speaking in terms of what they get. You will find when you deliver a speech, you gain knowledge, you gain confidence, and you gain a wonderful feeling of accomplishment.

Speech coach Martin McDermott helps his students think about what they will gain by asking them, "What will go right when you speak?"

- I will learn about public speaking, a workplace skill in great demand.
- I will stand up to one of the greatest fears human beings face.
- My audience will learn something valuable from me they can apply to their lives.
- I will experience power and self-confidence I didn't know I had.
- I will see myself in a new and more positive light.
- I will share interesting parts of myself, and others will come to know and like me.
- I will discover a hidden talent for speaking.
- I will grow as a person.

? What is the Purpose of Public Speaking?

The many fathers of rhetoric debated this heavily. Quintilian, a Roman rhetorician said citizens have five duties when it came to public speaking:

- Defend truth.
- Protect the innocent.
- Prevent criminal behavior.
- Inspire the military.
- Inspire the public.

Do you think this list is still applicable?

Are there any things you would add?

Are there any things you would take away?

So What Who Cares?

One of the things you should do as you write a speech is to ask, "So what who cares?" Who is going to listen to your speech and why they should care about what you are saying? When I wrote this book, I asked myself the same question. I asked, "Why would anyone care about public speaking."

So what, who cares? You should care because public speaking is not a class you take, it is what you do to get your message across. It is not about getting a grade or having a checkmark on your degree plan, it is about learning to develop important skills that will help you accomplish your goals. It is not about you as a professional, having to give a speech, it is about you having an opportunity to share your message. It is not about you as a teacher having to teach, but about students who need to learn.

So what, who cares. Hopefully, you care. Hopefully, you care enough about yourself to try to be the best version of yourself.

What happens from this point on, is up to you.

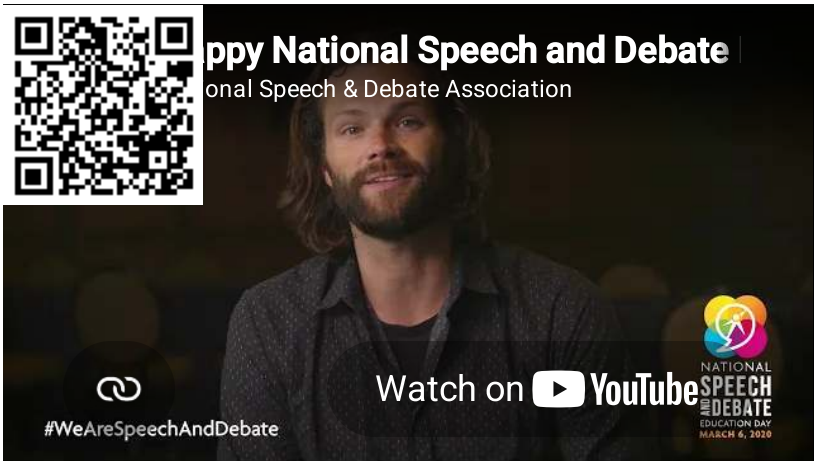
Be skillful in speech,
that you may be strong.
Merikare, Egyptian Pharoah

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Public speaking is a skill that is not only helpful while you are in college but will likely be helpful in job attainment and career advancement.
- Doing public speaking will help you grow in knowledge and gain confidence.

Bonus Features



Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Anderson, A. (2021). We can help you master public speaking. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcoch-Mpgls Standard Youtube License.

Aras, K. (2012). *The nuts and bolts of public speaking: Practical tools for powerful presentations*. Retrieved from http://www.thecommunicationfactory.com/seminars/skills/PublicSpeaking.php ↵

Boyer, E. L. (1990). Civic education for responsible citizens. *Educational Leadership, 48(*3), 4-7. http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_199011_boyer.pdf

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. (2001). *de Oratore. The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (2nd ed.). Ed. Bizzell, Patricia, & Herzberg, Bruce.

Colby, A, Ehrlich, T. Beaumont, E. & Stephens, J. (2011). Educating undergraduates for responsible citizenship. *Change, 35* (6) (2003): 40-48. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091380309604127

Elder, L. & Paul, R. (2008). Critical thinking: Strategies for improving student learning, Part II. *Journal of Developmental Education, 32* (2). 34-35. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ868666.pdf

Gallup (2014). Measuring college and university outcomes. Measuring College and University Outcomes (gallup.com)

Gorman, A. (2021). The Hill We Climb. Biden-Harris Inauguration. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055ilIiN4 Standard YouTube License.

Quintilian. *Quintilian's Institutes of Oratory* J. S. Watson. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1856. Print.

McDermott, M. (2014). *Speak with courage.* Bedford St Martin.

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2020). The top attributes employers want to see on resumes. https://www.naceweb.org/about-us/press/2020/the-top-attributes-employers-want-to-see-on-resumes/

National Speech & Debate Association. (2020). Happy National Speech and Debate Education Day from Jared Padalecki. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YW8B4azcKA8 Standard YouTube License.

Snippe, E. (2016). 101 quotes to inspire speakers. https://speakerhub.com/blog/101-quotes

Thunberg, G. (2019). Emotional Greta Thunberg attacks world leaders: “How dare you?” [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVlRompc1yE Standard YouTube License.

Thunberg, G. (2019). Greta Thunberg to world leaders: ‘How dare you? You have stolen my dreams and my childhood.’ [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMrtLsQbaok Standard YouTube License.

Wieges, J. C. (2011). Civic engagement in the public speaking classroom. [Dissertation, Iowa State University]. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1198&context=etd

Zekeri, A.A. (2004). College curriculum competencies and skills former students found essential to their careers. *College Student Journal*, *38*, 412-422. (no doi).

University of Minnesota Library Open Resource Textbook. (2013). Speaking in personal and civic contexts in communication in the real world: An introduction to communication studies. https://open.lib.umn.edu/communication/chapter/12-1-speaking-in-personal-and-civic-contexts/

Wahls, Z. (2011). Zach Wahls speaks about family. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSQQK2Vuf9Q&feature=emb_logo Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Speech is Silver © Brian Talbot is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.1: Public Speaking--So What, Who Cares? is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.2: Engage Your Audience- Don't Spit Random Words at Generic People



The success of your presentation
will be judged not by the knowledge you send
but by what the listener receives.
Lilly Walters, Secrets of Successful Speakers

There are four words that can change everything about how you look at public speaking. These four words can alter how you look at nervousness, how you design your content, the way you present, and the way the audience receives the message. What are these words? “It is not about you.”

It is Not About You

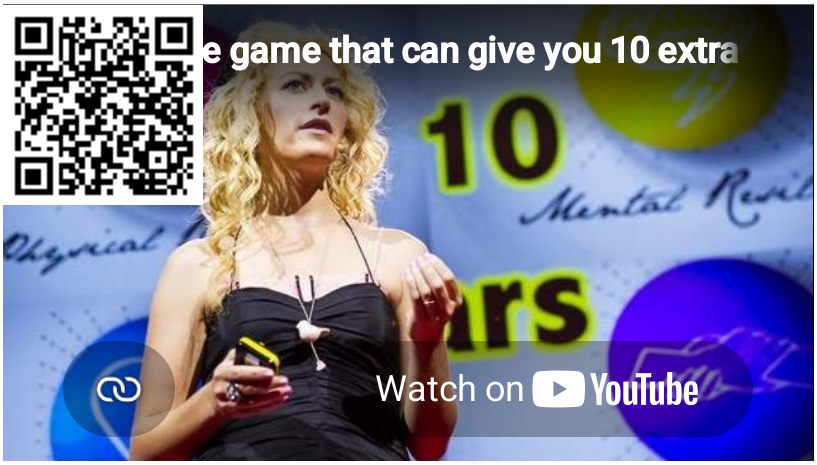
It is not about you. So, there you have it–the secret to success in speaking wrapped up in five little words. It is not about you; it is about your audience. Most of the time, speakers think, “*I* have this great message *I* need to tell people” or “*I* need to inform them of what *I* know.” In each case, it is about “I”. To be a successful speaker, you have to change your way of thinking. A speech is not about *you*, the speaker, it is about *them*, the audience. It is about the fact they need something, and you can provide it for them. They may need information, they may need to be inspired, they may need to know about a product that will improve their lives, they may need to celebrate a special moment. They have needs and when your message meets those needs, your audience will be transformed. Chris Anderson of TED talks says, The truth about “speaking your truth” is this: “If the audience doesn’t understand how your truth applies to them, or what they get by learning about your dreams, they’ll tune out or quickly forget what you’ve said.” The more you think about your audience and explore who they are and what they need, the more you can tailor your speech.

> *Treat your audience as guests*
> *who’ve consented to give you*
> *some of their precious time and attention.*
> *Don’t abuse their gift*
> *by making them feel like captives*
> *who are compelled to listen to you.*
> *Vivian Buchan, Make Presentations with Confidence*

Give Your Audience Something of Value: Audience Before Content

A speech is a gift you give the audience. Chris Anderson, the curator of TED Talks, says, “Focusing on what you should give, should be the foundation of your talk.” From the moment, you are tasked with giving a speech, you should ask yourself what gift you have to give. One way to think about it is the acronym ABC-audience before content. One professional speaker helps herself to think about what she *gives* by imagining herself handing out one-hundred-dollar bills to each audience member. This helps her remember her speech should *give* each person something of value.

Game designer Jane McGonigal tells her audience she is giving them something valuable. She suggests she will give them seven and a half extra minutes to their life. Watch her introduction to hear for yourself.



I'm a gamer, so I like to have goals. I like special missions and secret objectives. So here's my special mission for this talk: I'm going to try to increase the life span of every single person in this room by seven and a half minutes. Literally, you will live seven and a half minutes longer than you would have otherwise, just because you watched this talk.

Speech is about serving your audience instead of serving your agenda. One group of speech coaches, Ginger Public Speaking, emphasize being servant speakers. They illustrate the difference between *taking* and *serving* this way:

> ***Normal public speaking can focus more on taking from an audience:***
>
> - *I need them to listen to me.*
> - *I need them to look interested in what I'm saying.*
> - *I need them to laugh at my jokes.*
> - *I need them to affirm my expertise.*
> - *I need them to know how good I am.*
>
> ***Servant speaking is all about building a community:***

- *I want to give my community what they most need to hear.*
- *I believe my message will bring benefit to those listening.*
- *I want the people listening to me to feel a part OF something not apart FROM something.*

Every speech, every time, is about connecting with the audience. Think about who they are and the perspective they bring. Think about their wants, their needs, their desires, and their perspective. Public speaking is about serving, it is about giving a gift. Watch this short video where Chris Anderson talks about the gift of an idea.



> *Did you notice three out of four of the key features that Chris Anderson mentions have to do with the audience?*

> *1. Limit your talk to just one major idea.*
> *2. Give them a reason to care.*
> *3. Build your ideas based on what the audience already knows.*
> *4. Make your idea worth sharing. Who does this idea benefit?*
>
> *The information in this video is for a specific context–how to give a TED Talk–but many of the lessons apply to public speaking in general.*



Getting into the Mind of Your Audience

"Speakers do not give speeches to audiences; they jointly create meaning with audiences," according to scholars Sprague, Stuart, and Bodary, to create meaning, you need to think about what your audience already knows. You need to get into the mind of your audience. The key to good speaking is to put an idea in the mind of your audience. For this to work, you need to think about them and their worldview. To do this, you need to research your audience as well as your topic.

Frank Luntz knows all about how to get in the mind of an audience, it's what he does for a living. He is an American political and communications consultant and he polls audiences to find out their beliefs. He specializes in helping speakers find what words best resonate with audiences. He says:

> *You can have the best message in the world, but the person on the receiving end will always understand it through the prism of his or her own emotions, preconceptions, prejudices, and preexisting beliefs. It's not enough to be correct or reasonable or even brilliant. The key to successful communication is to take the imaginative leap of stuffing yourself into your listener's shoes to know what they are thinking and feeling in the deepest recesses of their mind and heart. How that person perceives what you say is even more real, at least in a practical sense, than how you perceive yourself.*

This means not just looking at an audience in terms of demographics, but rather, what are their goals, why should they care, what do they need?

Ask Yourself, What Do They Need?

Many of you are reading this book because you are in a public speaking class. If so, you are thinking, "What do I have to do to make an "A" on this speech?" or "What is the least I can do to get my college credit?" Notice that both approaches focus on "I." Realize when you give your presentation, there will be an audience of college students that *need* something. What do they need? They need not be bored. They need to think it was worth it to come to class. They need to learn things. They need to be inspired. If it is a persuasion speech, don't think about what you need to persuade them to do, think about them and how their lives will be

improved if they listen to your speech and act on the important issue you presented. If you are giving a ceremonial speech, think about how you can make them feel a part of something–make them feel included.

The goal of effective communication
should be for listeners to say
'Me too!' versus 'So what?'
– Jim Rohn, motivational speaker

I want to share with you a few scenarios from my own experience. Read carefully and consider what the audience needs.

INFORMATION:
I spoke to the monthly meeting of Kiwanis about a nonprofit I managed.

What did my audience need?

- To enjoy themselves among friends after the meal.
- To know about what is happening in their community.
- To feel like their involvement in the club was meaningful.
- To feel like they could do things that will make a difference.
- To feel like they are a part of something important.

Why did they come to the speech?

> *Because they are part of a club that has weekly luncheons with community speakers. They are there to be with like-minded individuals, they are there to find ways to get involved, and they are there to network.*

CELEBRATION:
I spoke to a sorority at their annual banquet that honored the academic achievements of the group.

What did my audience need?

- To feel bonded with others in their sorority.
- To feel proud of their achievements.
- To feel motivated to succeed and make good grades in college.
- To feel like the university cares about their success and recognizes their hard work.

Why did they come to the speech?

> *They liked being part of a group where they make friends and celebrate accomplishments. They were required to attend, or they would be fined. They knew me or one of the other speakers that day.*

PERSUASION:
I spoke to a major corporation about why they needed to buy diesel engine parts from the company I worked with.

> *What did my audience need?*
>
> - *To know about the product and how it might benefit them.*
> - *To be able to understand the details of the product enough to make an informed decision.*
> - *To feel empowered to make an informed choice.*
> - *To feel good about their decision.*
> - *To be able to get back to work in a timely fashion.*
> - *To feel like they were doing what was right for their company and their customers.*

Why did they come to the speech?

> *They benefited from finding good products for their company. It was their job. Saving their company money while buying a good product makes them look good.*

TRAINING:
I spoke at a teaching camp to a group of college faculty and gave them tips for teaching.

What did my audience need?

> - *To know about specific ways to improve teaching.*
> - *To feel good about being a teacher.*
> - *To understand the teaching tip in a way they could apply it.*
> - *To connect with and feel encouraged by other teachers.*

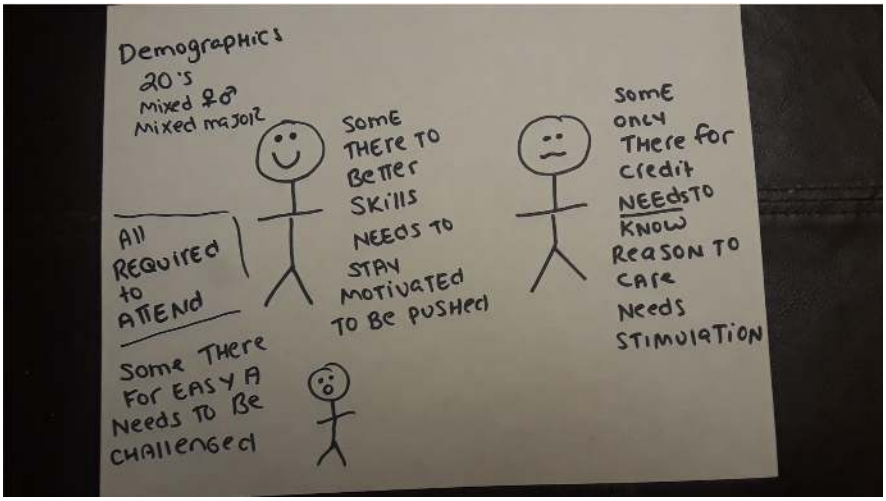
Why did they come to camp?

> *It is an optional camp, so they came specifically to learn to be a better teacher. They came to spend time with friends.*

Do this anytime you have a speech to give. Put yourself in the mind of the audience and write their needs and motivations.

Write down what they need and why they are at the event. It is easy to think about the tangible reasons they attended, but it is helpful to think about the emotional reasons they are there. Are they there to bond with friends? Are they there to be inspired? Are they there because they have to be? What reward do they get for coming? Notice in some of my examples, I have things like "to feel good," "to know more," "to connect."

> *Make yourself a graphic of the target audience members. As you write your speech, keep looking at this reference so you keep the audience's needs in mind. Here is one I made for students I have in my public speaking class.*



Nancy Duarte, the author of *The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*, suggests you ask yourself these questions about your audience.

1. **Lifestyle:** What does a walk in their shoes look like?
2. **Knowledge:** What do they already know and not know about your topic?
3. **Motivation and Desire:** What are their wants and desires? What motivates them?
4. **Values:** What is important to them? How does their use of time and money reveal their priorities?
5. **Influence:** What influences their behaviors and thoughts?
6. **Respect:** What makes them feel respected? How do they give and receive respect?



Your audience may get tired after eating a big meal.

Consider the Situational Needs

Consider the setting of your speech. After a big lunch, people may be tired. If they have listened to other speeches before yours, they may be fatigued from sitting and listening so long. If they have been listening for a while, consider having them engage briefly with another audience member. If you know they have been sitting, consider how you can have them move a little. If the room is stuffy, or loud, or if they were forced to come and listen, acknowledge how much you appreciate their presence.

Consider the Audience's Needs

People don't remember what we think is important.
They remember what they think is important.
John Maxwell, leadership expert

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is one tool you can use to help you analyze audience needs. Work through the pyramid and see if you can relate each level to your topic in some way. I find it is particularly helpful to use it as a brainstorming tool when constructing speeches. In short, psychologist Abraham Maslow suggested people are motivated by their needs and they seek to satisfy their needs. For our purposes, we won't delve into the larger theory but rather acknowledge that people seek to satisfy their needs. The more you identify and talk to their need and demonstrate how those needs can be satisfied, the more likely they are to have a positive response to your topic (and more likely to be persuaded).



Consider the many needs of your audience

Let's work through an example of this. Imagine you are doing a speech to persuade people to take a self-defense course at a local gym.

- **PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS**: People need to sleep: I can remind listeners that they sleep better once they exercise. They will sleep better knowing they can protect themselves. Taking a self-defense class will help them get a good night's sleep.
- **SAFETY NEEDS**: People need to feel safe: I can remind them of crime statistics to make them feel unsafe so they take the class to regain a sense of safety.
- **BELONGING NEEDS:** People need to belong: I can encourage them to take the class with a group of friends or I can remind them of times they missed spending time with friends because they were uncomfortable being out late at night alone. Take a self-defense class will give them the confidence they need to go out with friends.

- **ESTEEM NEEDS**: People need to feel good about themselves: I can remind them how bad it feels to not be able to fend for themselves and tell them how good it feels to have the confidence to know how to defend themselves. Learning new skills makes you feel good. Independence feels good.
- **COGNITIVE NEEDS:** People have the need to know, so I can tell them about the science of some of the techniques and why they work.
- **SELF-ACTUALIZATION NEEDS:** People need to feel safe, they need to know and belong, so they can work to fulfill their life's goals. A college student who is afraid to walk to their night class, might skip class and then fall short of their personal goal of graduating.

Designing a presentation without an audience in mind
is like writing a love letter and addressing it:
To Whom It May Concern.
– Ken Haemer, Presentation Design Manager

Recipe for Listenability



Listenability: What does that mean in plain English?

By using easily understood phrases and words and giving the audience a reason to listen you are making your speech listenable.

Think of your speech in terms of listenability. Communication scholar D.L. Rubin says, "Listenable discourse is characterized by linguistic and rhetorical structures that ease the particular cognitive burdens listeners face." (What do you think about that quote, appropriate to the audience of this book or unnecessarily wordy and full of big words? Was it a listenable quote–I don't think so.)

In plain English, make your speech easy to listen to. How do you do that? Glad you asked, let me share with you a few ways.

Find Common Ground

Seek to establish a connection with your audience right away. Find common ground or draw from common experiences. If you are talking to a civic organization read their mission statement and seek commonalities. Work in the common ground such as, "Like you, I am passionate about finding a better solution for the homeless in our area." Recognize similarities if they represent a cause that matters to you, if you have a hometown team in common, if you all ate a catered lunch, or if you all walked uphill to get to class. It is no coincidence when speakers come onto a college campus, they almost always mention one of these: The mascot, the sports team, a place on campus, a famous eating establishment, or a campus hero. These details draw the audience in to listen. People appreciate a speaker who took the time to think about them it will increase both liking and credibility.

When I teach a public speaking class, I always dedicate a day to helping my students understand the audience and how to relate. I ask questions and we put the answers on the board. For example, I ask, "How many like camping?" "How many like cats?" "How many are politically involved?" We put the answers to the questions on the board for everyone to see. Once the board is covered, I explain they should take a picture of this and reference it in all of their speeches. For example, they might say, "I noticed only 20% of the class is politically involved, which is why I decided to persuade you to take a political science class during your time at college" or they might say, "Most of the class said they liked camping. Now I know you like camping, I want to tell you about why you need to go camping along the Buffalo River."

Sometimes a speaker will use the same speech with different audiences and common ground has to change. Julie Miyeon Sohn, Toastmaster's competitor, reflected on what she learned about adapting to an audience. Her failure to adapt caused her not to win at the World Championship of Public Speaking:

> *"One thing I would do differently is changing how I select my speech topic. My story about learning English was well received in Korea because the Korean audience had all had a similar experience to mine. However, I failed to connect with the audience at the semi-final because the story was not very relatable to the international audience. I would change my story to something more universal so that everyone can relate to it regardless of their race, nationality, and age."*

In order to find common ground, you need to take time to get to know the audience. In addition to the traditional research, one speaker suggests reading up on the news before you speak and draw references to things most people might know. Make sure the examples you give are now by most audience members. Speaker Nancy Duarte shares her common ground mishaps:

> *I referred to an airline, (an example of amazing customer service, Open Skies) to an audience of American business executives, forgetting that an airline with only one route (NY-Paris) wasn't something many of them would know.*

Even if most of your audience knows about your common ground reference, they may have differing opinions about it. Nancy Duarte says,

> *I learned this the hard way with the same audience, telling them, proudly, how a former customer had asked me for referral to a therapist (everyone goes to therapists in NY!), which provoked guffaws from brawny macho Midwesterners.*

Finding common ground with your audience, not only gets their attention, but it helps them get on the same wavelength–literally. Princeton neuroscientist Uri Hasson says the more commonality between a storyteller and listener, the more brain imaging shows that the brains sync up. Let that sink in. When you find common ground through story, it shows up on a brain scan. Your audience's brain scan lights up in the same places yours does–that is incredible. Thinking about your audience and then finding common ground is crucial to your success.

The royal road to a man's heart
is to talk to him about the things he treasures most.
Dale Carnegie, Author, Speaker

To Be Listenable, Reference Someone in the Group

When possible, go to a speaking event early and talk to several people. Engage them in friendly conversation and then ask them questions related to your topic. During your presentation, point them out and say, "Derek was telling me that…." The audience's attention zooms in when you acknowledge someone from the group. If you don't have time to visit beforehand, you can always reference the host who invited you. Mentioning anyone they know can draw the audience's attention.

To Be Listenable, Tell Them How It Applies to Them

To keep the audience's attention, talk about what they care about the most–themselves. Get the audience on your side by telling them why this speech is relevant to them. Don't just assume they know, help them make those connections. Typically, highly engaged, and knowledgeable audiences, need only a light reminder of the topic's application. For those that are not very knowledgeable or not motivated listeners, you need to tell them specifically how it applies and why. One easy way to do this is to say, "So what, who cares…" Another way is to simply ask the audience, "Why do you think this should matter to you?" Then, answer the question.

Laura Tempesta, Sports Bra Expert, Inventor & Founder of Bravolution, gave a TED Talk about bras and cleverly found a way to relate to the whole audience. Watch to see how she engages the WHOLE audience and makes them want to listen.



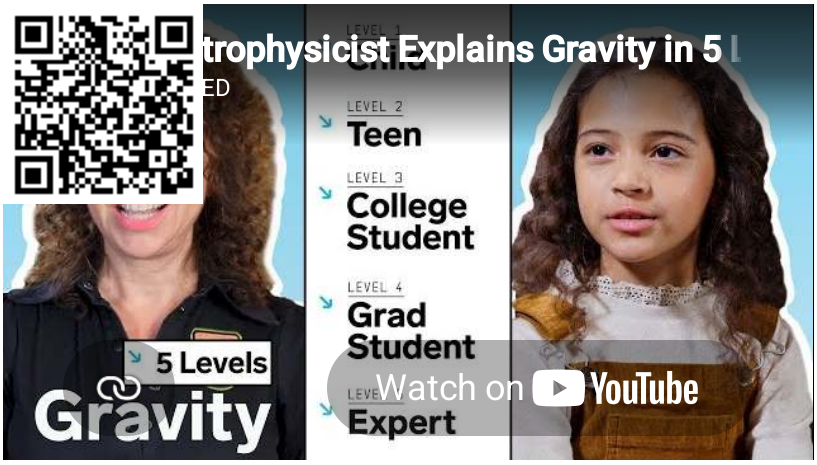
So, let's take a look at the design of the bra and the limits it imposes. And for those of you who don't wear bras, I'm assuming you've encountered a few along the way and are familiar with the technology. Laura Tempesta

To Be Listenable, Use the Language of Your Audience

Author, William Butler Yeats said, "Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people." Make sure that the words you use match the vocabulary and the knowledge level of the audience. Throughout your speech, define your terms clearly and carefully. Be careful not to use jargon or "insider" language that will exclude listeners who aren't "in the know." While working for a nonprofit, I was invited to come onto the university campus to speak to campus groups interested in volunteering. To identify with the audience, I told them I was a COMM major. After my presentation, someone came up to me and said, "Ms. Meade, what is a COMM?" I explained it was shorthand for Communication Major. We laughed at my mistake, I apologized for assuming everyone knew what it meant, and then he offered to join my organization. It goes to show you, even within the group (in my case people on a college campus), you can't assume people know the specialty language. It also goes to show you that you can mess up and still make a friend (if you acknowledge your mistake gracefully).

I am often to be a judge for a unique speech competition. Graduate students have three minutes to explain their research in a way anyone can understand. They have to make it plain enough a layperson can understand what they are doing and what the results mean. Many graduate students have been working in complex theories and specialty language for so long they have a hard time realizing not everyone knows what these concepts mean. It is important you learn to know how to adapt your message to audiences with differing levels of knowledge and complexity.

Watch this Wired video where an astrophysicist explains gravity in five levels of difficulty. (You don't have to watch the whole video, just watch a little bit of how she talks to each person to get the point). This is an excellent example of talking about the same topic to different audience members.



Finding the right vocabulary and the right tone for the right audience takes a lot of thought and practice. Alan Alda and the Center for Communicating Science issued a "flame challenge" and they asked scientists to explain a flame to 11-year-olds.

To watch more on this https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS6rOCdy-uo

> *Here is perhaps the simplest case*
> *of persuasion.*
> *You persuade a person only*
> *insofar as you can talk their language*
> *by speech, gesture, tonality, order,*
> *image, attitude, idea,*
> *identifying your ways with theirs.*
> *Kenneth Burke, American literary theorist*

Use Inclusive Language

Inclusive language means many things. It means speaking to the knowledge level and education level of your audience. It also means designing sentences where you invite them to be a part.

> *NO: I know **most people** worry about what goes into**their** food.*
>
> *YES: I know most of **us** worry about what goes into **our** food.*

The use of "us" and "our," makes the sentence more personal and friendly. As much as possible, use personal pronouns with your audience. As Shel Leanne points out in the book, *Say It Like Obama: The Power of Speaking with Purpose and Vision*, these words help to "send the message that the speaker and those listening are on the same team, in the same boat, facing the same fate."

Give the Audience a Map of the Journey so they Won't Get Lost

Tell them what you are going to say, say it, and then tell them what you said. Along the way, help them stay on track by telling them where they are headed. "Now that we talked about this history of this, I want to share with you the future of the product."

Always keep the focus on what is the point of your speech. Nancy Duarte, presentation expert suggests, "Every bit of content you share should propel the audience towards that destination."

Take the Audience's Perspective

Your speech is a journey, and you are taking your audience on that journey with you. Chris Anderson, TED Talk curator says, "It is your job to know about your fellow travelers. What do they need from the journey and how can you help them, so they enjoy the trip and they don't get lost?" Delve into the audience's mind, what is their perspective of your topic?

> ***Consider This***
> *When the country music singer, Garth Brooks arrives as the venue, he sits in many of the seats that are pointing at the stage and asks, "What am I doing for this person." As a speaker, it is good to sit in the many (symbolic) seats of your audience and ask, "What am I doing for this person?"*

Ask for Audience Participation

Actively involving your audience helps them stay alert and attentive. All too often, speakers seem to spit random words at generic people. The audience is supposed to passively sit back and take in whatever comes their way. An audience is made up of people who need to be considered, addressed, and engaged and it is your challenge to figure out how to connect. Consider using one of the following when engaging your audience:

- Ask rhetorical questions.
- Take an informal poll.
- Ask for a volunteer.
- Have them write something down.

- Ask them to talk with their neighbor about a topic.
- Have everyone yell the answer at the same time.
- Tell them there will be a “test” at the end.

Watch Toastmaster’s World Championship Speech by Darren Tay Wen Jie to see how he relates to the audience.



✔ Look at All the Ways He Connected with the Audience

Darren Tay said in a Business Insider interview that he emphasized the importance of making audience members feel like he was talking directly to them. One way he does this is by asking rhetorical questions of the audience: “If you are all wondering whether the underwear Greg used was clean, I had the same question.” Look at this list of all the ways he connects with the audience in this speech.

- He opens by staring at them directly.
- If *you* are all wondering whether the underwear Greg used was clean, I had the same question.
- Mr. contest chair, fellow toastmasters, and anyone including those watching worldwide. If *you* are looking at Calvin Klein here, stop staring! My eyes are up here.
- “I gonna knock you in my teeth and punch you in the guts and laugh at your sorry behind. He didn’t quite use the word- behind. I just cleaned up the words because *this is a toastmaster program.*
- And, have *you* ever wondered why a bully needs to tell you the exact sequence that they gonna bully you?
- *My friends*, whenever I heard those words, my hands would tremble. *Have you ever felt so fearful,* that you cannot eat or sleep?
- *My friends, as much as we* tried to deny it, *we* are our toughest and strongest bully. *We* beat ourselves up and put ourselves down. *Have you ever f*elt that you are not good enough? I thought that way.
- I’m standing on stage now in front of two *thousand of you a*nd more are watching worldwide but I am not afraid anymore. I am in control because I am acknowledging it, I am stepping out of it, observing it, and watching it weaken and fade. My friends, *let’s all not run away f*rom our inner bullies anymore. *Let us* all face our inner bullies and acknowledge its presence and fight. *Let us all* be together as a family supporting one another because we can all outsmart and (outlast).

Asses and Elephants

Making Assumptions Makes an Ass out of U and Me (ASSuME)

Make a list of the known demographics of your audience and create a profile. Make a list of what you know about them and what you assume about them. Be honest, but don’t let that profile lead you astray. Don’t create unrealistic stereotypes and expectations based on the way you profiled them. For example, just because your audience is made up of seventy-year-old women, does not mean that they have the same values as your conservative grandma. Most of us naturally default to grouping things based on what we already know–don’t assume.

While persuading the class to skydive, one student said, “I know you may not be interested Dr. Meade, but you can tell your sons about it.” Just for the record, I went skydiving the next year– my sons still haven’t been. In another speech, I had a student say, “Now that I have shown you how to make taco casserole, you can take this recipe home with you to make it. Guys, you can take it to your girlfriend.” The guys were upset because she didn’t think they were interested or capable.

In the first example, they made assumptions about abilities and interests based on age, and in the other example, they made assumptions based on gender roles. Don’t assume.

Let’s Talk About the Elephant in the Room

What do you call people? Frankly, this is a tricky topic. It is like the elephant in the room that everyone can see but no one wants to mention. African American/Black/Native American/Indian/Transexual/Non-binary–there are so many different words in the “people dictionary”. What is acceptable and what is offensive seems to change regularly. If I am honest (and I try to be), I get nervous about what to call people, because I’m afraid I will mess up and someone will get upset when I didn’t mean any ill intent. Then I think, why do people get their feeling hurt over the littlest things? Well, if you are on the receiving end, they are not *little* things. I try to remember when someone said hurtful things to me and then it is easier to remember why it matters. Even if the person who hurt my feelings wasn’t trying to be mean, it still hurt. When I was hurt by those words, I was too busy with my own thoughts to hear anything else they had to say.

Hurt people do not listen. If the point of my speech is to be heard and I said something that causes my audience not to listen, I hurt not only them but my own cause.

I once spoke before an interfaith board of directors. I had a list of the names and organizations that were represented, and I thought I had done all my research. During my presentation, I talked about the need for volunteers in the community, I talked about how each of their groups represented a belief that people should help each other, and then I asked them to “Go back to your churches and ask if they will allow me to come out and give a talk about how your church can get involved with helping others.” After my presentation, a member of the board came up to me and said, “Lynn, not all of us go to church, some of us go to synagogue.” I thanked her for correcting me and I learned to use the phrase “faith groups” instead of the word “churches” when talking to an interfaith audience. Because I was gracious in accepting my mistake, we developed a great working relationship for years to come. Before speaking to a group– do your research. If you mess up (and if you are human, you will mess up eventually), be gracious to those who pointed out your mistake, learn from your mistake, and accept responsibility.

Do no harm. Create no barrier. When taking the audience-centered approach, consider what the audience needs so they can listen. Do your research to learn the preferred name for a group and the vocabulary of the group because it respects the audience. Audience members who feel respected are more likely to listen.



Randy Pausch says if there is an elephant in the room you should introduce it.

The elephant in the Room

Elephant in the room is an idiom that means to point out an obvious truth or fact.

Did you see what I did here?

I didn’t ASSuME that you knew what that phrase means, I gave you a definition.

Your Credibility is Linked to the Audience’s Opinion of You

Every time you speak, you are building credibility, maintaining credibility, or diminishing credibility, according to Ryan Sheets, Director of the Business Communication Lab at the University of Arkansas, your credibility (ethos) is linked to what the audience thinks of you. An audience expects you to not only have knowledge but also to be trustworthy and sincere. What they think about

you translates to how much they will listen to your message. That opinion is formed by looking at the way you are dressed, how you carry yourself, the words you say, and the way you address them.

Your credibility is tied up in their opinion of you and whether they think you care about them.

Thinking About the Audience Makes You Less Anxious

When you realize speech is not about you having something to say but rather, you are giving the audience something of value, it changes things. Not only will you give a better speech, but you will benefit yourself as well. When you think about the needs of the audience, you become less nervous. Focusing on their needs and the topic helps you focus on providing a service rather than delivering a performance.

> - *Instead of thinking, "I am so nervous,"*
>   *try thinking "the audience really will benefit from knowing this."*
> - *Instead of thinking, "I will persuade them to do this"*
>   *change your thinking to "their life will be better if they try this."*

If you pick a topic you are passionate about and if you believe in it, you will begin to care more about the importance of the topic and less about your own personal discomfort. If you feel a little nervous, think about how your information can improve lives or change people's perspectives. Make your topic so important that you forget to be nervous.

Quit being so self-centered. It's not about you—- it's about the audience. They need something and you have it. Writer Ambrose Redmoon said, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear."

Don't be selfish. It does little good to have all that experience and all that knowledge and keep it to yourself. Author Marianne Williamson says, "Your playing small does not serve the world." It is worth a little discomfort for the awesome privilege you have to change, educate, motivate, and persuade your audience. They need this information, and you are the one lucky enough to get to give it to them. When you spend all your time thinking about how to connect with the audience and how to help them understand what you have to offer, you have less energy to spend worrying about if you are nervous.

> *I tell myself that what I have to say in any speech*
> *is important for people to hear,*
> *and that I prepped for it,*
> *and am well versed in it.*
> *So basically knowing that what I have to say is worth hearing*
> *makes me confident in saying it.*
> *Andrew Powell, Former University of Arkansas Communication Student*

Audience Analysis Tools

There are many ways to gather information about the audience,
Here are a few of the most common and a list of the pros and cons of each

Interview

- Ask the person who invited you to tell you about the audience.
- When possible, interview a member of the audience.
- Sometimes, it is helpful to ask someone outside the group to give you their impressions of the group.

Pros	Cons
• Gives great insider information. • Often yields quotable items.	• Are time-consuming. • The interviewee always represents a limited perspective.

Survey

- Send out an electronic survey.
- Do an informal survey by those who pass by in a break room or lunchroom.
- Have the leadership administer a survey.

Pros	Cons
• Allows you to know key opinions. • Gives the audience the first impression of you as someone who wants to be prepared.	• Surveys may become a burden to people who don't want one more thing to do. • People often say what is expected rather than what they really feel.

Internet Research

- Search the internet for information about the group, the person, the venue.
- Check out professional- LinkedIn– and social media-Facebook, Instagram, Twitter– sites for information.
- Look up the mission statement of the organization.
- Find pictures of the venue.

Pros	Cons
• Gives you an overview of who they want people to think they are. • Helps you identify the priorities of an organization.	• It can be/feel a little creepy to look at family photos of someone on their Facebook and Instagram. • Mentioning you looked at their social media can freak them out.

Demographic Data

Demographic data can come from statistical sources or it can come from asking questions to the person who invited you to the venue.

- Race
- Religion
- Age
- Professional status
- Education level
- Sexual Orientation
- Beliefs

Pros	Cons
• Gives you an overview of who they want people to think they are. • Helps you identify the priorities of an organization.	• Can result in stereotypes. • Can be time-consuming.

When we think a speech is about what we have to say, we get it wrong. The whole reason you are giving the presentation is for the audience. The speech is about them, and your job is to figure out who they are and what they need before you write even the first word.

? Key Takeaways

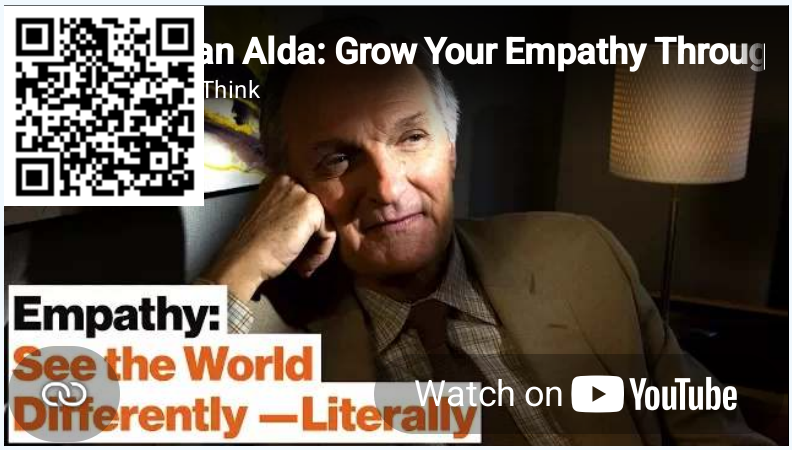
Remember This!

- The most important thing to remember is it is not about you; it is about the audience.
- Focus on making your speech listenable.
- Make a list of what your audience needs and the reasons they are listening to your speech.
- Don't stereotype or make assumptions about your audience.
- Know the right words to use for your specific audience.
- Use a variety of tools to gather information about your audience.

Extras to Help You with Understanding Audience

? Exercises

Actor and writer Alan Alda trains communicators by teaching them basic improvisational techniques. The goal is to help them to gain empathy and to learn to read people better. In this video, he explains a couple of ways to gain empathy with your audience.



From the book, *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face* by Alan Alda



Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Alda, A. (2012). Alan Alda's 'Flame Challenge' illuminates the importance of communicating science. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS6rOCdy-uo Standard Youtube License

Alda, A. (2017). *If I understood you, would I have this look on my face?* Random House.

Alan A. (2017). Grow your empathy through visual perception. Big Think. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qulq_n5zbTs Standard YouTube License

Anderson, C. (2016). TEDs secret to great public speaking by Chris Anderson. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_ted_s_secret_to_great_public_speaking?language=en Standard YouTube License

Anderson, C. (2016). *TEDtalks: The official TED guide to public speaking*. Mariner Books.

Aristotle. (2007). *On rhetoric: A theory of civil discourse*, 2nd ed. trans George Kennedy. Oxford University Press.

Broadside Blog. (2012). How to give a speech (Hint: be authentic). https://broadsideblog.wordpress.com/2012/11/15/how-to-give-a-great-speech-hint-be-authentic/

Buchan, V. (2019). *Make presentations with confidence. Barron's: A business success guide.* Barron's Educational Series.

Burke, K. (1969). A rhetoric of motives. University of California Press.
*In the Burke quote, I changed it from "his" to gender-inclusive language "theirs." A topic worth thinking about and discussing.

Cartier, F.A. (1952). The social context of listenability research. *Journal of Communication*, 2, 44-47. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1952.tb00177.x

Duarte, N. (2010). *Resonate Present visual stories that transform audiences.* Wiley.

Feloni, R. (2016). Here's a breakdown of the speech that won the 2016 World Championship of Public Speaking. https://www.businessinsider.com/toastmasters-public-speaking-champion-darren-tay-2016-8

Goble, F. (1970). *The third force: The psychology of Abraham Maslow.* Maurice Bassett Publishing.

Goldberg, B. (2020). Top 5 TED Talk cliches you should avoid. https://masterclass.ted.com/blog/5-TED-Talk-cliches-to-avoid

Harris, L. (2017). S*tand up speak out: The practice and ethics of public speaking. Creative Commons License.* https://open.lib.umn.edu/publicspeaking/

Jeary, T. (1997). *Inspire Any Audience.* River Oak Publishing

Kardes, F.R., Kim, J. & Lim, J.S. (1994). Moderation effects of prior knowledge on perceived diagnosity of beliefs derived from implicit versus explicit product claims. *Journal of Business Research, 29*, 219-224. https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963(94)90006-X

Kienzle, R. & J. Miyeon, S. (2017). Losing at the World Championship of Public Speaking. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/losing-world-championship-public-speaking-robert-bob-kienzle-kienzle/

Luntz, F. (2007). *Words that work: It's not what you say, it's what people hear.* Hyperion.

Martin, B.A.S., Lang, B. & Wong, S. (2013). Conclusion explicitness in advertising: The moderating role of need for cognition and argumentation quality on persuasion. *Journal of Advertising*, 32(4), 57-65. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2003.10639148

Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50* (4), 370-96. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Maxwell, J. (2010). *Everyone communicates few connect: What the most effective people do differently*. Thomas Nelson.

McGonigal, J. (2012). The game that can give you 10 extra years of life. [Video] YouTube. License.https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_the_game_that_can_give_you_10_extra_years_of_life/transcript?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Rubin, D.L. (1993). Listenabilty = oral-based discourse+ considerateness. In Wolvin, A.D. & Coakley, C.G. (Eds.) *Perspectives on Listening.* Ablex.

Rubin, D.L., Hafter, T. & Arata, K. (1999). Reading and listening to oral-based versus literature-based discourse. *Communication Education, 49*, 121-134. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520009379200

Sawyer, A.G. & Howard, D.J. (1991). Effects of omitting conclusions in advertisements to involved and uninvolved audiences. *Journal of Marketing Research, 28*, 467-474. https://doi.org/10.2307/3172786

Saylor Academy (2012). *Stand up, speak out: The practice and ethics of publicsSpeaking.* Saylor Academy. https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/77

Sheets, R. (2020) Walton College of Business Presentation. The University of Arkansas.

Snippe, E. (2016). 101 quotes to inspire speakers. https://speakerhub.com/blog/101-quotes

Spencer, G. (1995). *How to Argue and Win Every Time*. St. Martin

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

Strategic Business Insight. US Framework and VALS Types. http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/ustypes.shtml

Tay, D. (2016). Outsmart, Outlast. Toastmasters World Championship. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v26CcifgEq4 Standard YouTube License

Tempesta, L. (2019). You'll never look at a bra the same way again. TEDxKCWomen. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrxJ-9_qXeM Standard YouTube License.

Toastmasters (2013). Keep your audience engaged. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHl4yUQMBYA Standard YouTube License.

Toastmasters: Know your audience. [Video] YouTube. https://www.toastmasters.org/Resources/Know-Your-Audience Standard YouTube License. Walters, L. (1993). *Secrets of successful speakers: How you can motivate, captivate, and persuade.* McGraw Hill.

Wired. (2019). Astrophysicist explains gravity in 5 levels of difficulty. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcUey-DVYjk

Wolvin, A. (2017). Listenability: A Missing Link in the Basic Communication Course. *Listening Education, 1*3-21. No doi available.

Wrench, J.S., Goding, A. Ifert-Johnson, D., Attias, B.A. *Stand up, Speak out. The practice and ethics of public speaking.* Flatworld Knowledge. https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/77

Media Attributions

- Audience Listening © M-Accelerator on Unsplash is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Audience © Melanie Deziel is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Needs © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- sander-dalhuisen-nA6Xhnq2Od8-unsplash © Sander Dalhuisesn is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- hierarchy of needs © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Audience by Oliver Tacke CC © Oliver Tacke is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Elephant in the room © Bit Boy is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

---

This page titled 1.2: Engage Your Audience- Don't Spit Random Words at Generic People is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.3: Brainstorming- Moving the Cheese Out of the Way So You Can Find Your Best Ideas



The way to get to good ideas
is to get lots of ideas and
throw the bad one's away
Linus Pauling,
Nobel Prize Winner

Maybe you can relate to this scenario. You open the refrigerator looking for the mayonnaise and it is nowhere to be found. You scoot a few things around half-heartedly, and still no mayo. In desperation, you call out to your roommate, "Hey, have you seen the mayo?" They come in the room, open the frig, move the milk out of the way, bump the cheese to the side, and there it is–the mayo. And there you are relieved and a little embarrassed.

I like to think of brainstorming as looking for things in the frig of our minds (profound right?). Sometimes a good idea is there, we just have to move things around to find it. Sometimes, like in the mayo story, you have to enlist a friend and sometimes, you just have to move the cheese out of the way. I want to help you, to inspire you, and to equip you to find your good idea. To do that, I will talk about brainstorming, narrowing your topic, and how to move the cheese out of the way so you can see your great idea buried in the frig of your mind.

So, let's get started, shall we?

(GAP) Goal, Audience, Parameters

In the subway station in London, a voice comes on over the intercom: "Mind the Gap." It means, when you get on the subway train, notice there is a crack between the train and the platform, so you don't trip. Similarly, you should mind the GAP –the goal, audience, and parameters–as you build your speech so that you don't get tripped up.

Brainstorming begins by writing down the goals, the audience, and the parameters of your speech. If you are in a speech class it might be, "Inform college students of a health-related topic in five to seven minutes." If you are an invited after-dinner speaker it might be, "Give a 30-minute speech after a meal to inspire local business members to achieve a goal." Keep the GAP in front of you as you brainstorm so you don't get sidetracked.

Refuse to Be Satisfied with Your First Idea

There is a lot of pressure, I know, to come up with an idea and it can feel so satisfying to finally have one. It is a great first step, but don't let it end there. Write your idea down and keep going. Keep going because there may be another idea–a better idea– hiding

behind that idea. It is an idea that will never come out until you get the first one written and out of the way. Matthew Dicks, storytelling champion says,

> *The first idea is rarely the best idea. It may be the most convenient idea. The easiest to remember. The one you personally like the most. But rarely is the first idea the one I chose. First ideas are for the lazy. The complacent, the easily satisfied.*

Refuse to be easily satisfied.

Back to the Basics–Say Your ABC's

On a piece of paper, write your GAP: Goal, Audience, and Parameters. Now, write your ABC's with one letter per line. Your goal is to write one word that starts with each letter that could be a potential speech topic. Make sure the idea fits within your G.A.P.

If your goal is to persuade the audience of health-related behavior, your list might look like this.

Goal: Persuade the audience of a health-related behavior
Audience: College students
Parameters: 4-5 minutes

> ***A** -Apple a day keeps the doctor away*
> ***B**-Bicycle for health*
> ***C**-Colonoscopy*
> ***D**– Vitamin D for depression*
> ***E**-Eye exam*
> ***F**-Fitness class*
> ***G**-Go outside*

Look at the ABC list again, there is one that does not fit the parameters. Can you find it? It is the colonoscopy. If you are talking to a group of college students, they are mostly not in the age bracket that this topic would concern them. Yes, you could tell them to make sure the older guardian gets one, but why not go for something more relevant to college students like cardiovascular health, eating carrots, or taking vitamin C? Now you can see why it is important to keep the GAP–goal, audience-parameters– before you as you work.

Ask Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How.

All the detectives do it and you should too–ask who, what, where, when, why, and how. Start with your GAP– goals, audience, and parameters– and then brainstorm asking these key questions.

Goal: Ceremonial speech to inspire and celebrate
Audience: College students
Parameters: 8-10 minutes
Who: Grandma, Barak Obama, Edgar Allen Poe, Salvador Dali
What: The invention of the chocolate chip cookie, the farmer's market
Where: The Battle of the Budge, Paris, Crystal Bridges
When: 1492, 2020, after my first kiss, after the Boston Tea Party
Why: Because my mom loved me, because the man wanted to give of himself, to save his fellow soldier, because the climate was right
How: By walking with his walker in the garden every day, by giving of his allowance

Go Look in Your Fridge

I'm not kidding. Go look in the refrigerator. When I tell my students how to find ideas, I suggest they walk around their house, the park, the school, the ballfield, or wherever they visit and just call out things that they could give a speech on. If I open my fridge, I might be inspired by what I see to think of speech topics like these:

- Do I have to pay attention to the expiration dates of condiments?

- How long can I keep leftovers?
- What the heck is in Worcestershire sauce?
- Is butter healthier than margarine?
- Why are most people allergic to milk?
- Why does a dill pickle make you pucker?
- What is the best container to store leftovers in?

I could make up at least 100 topic ideas just from my frig alone –once you open up your mind and start looking for speech ideas, you will find them everywhere.

Check Your Social Media

This one is tricky, and you will have to time yourself or you may get stuck there. Open your social media and look at your pictures, your reposts, and your most common tweet topics. Make a list of ideas that come to you as you look. On mine, I see pictures of the Grand Canyon–there's a persuasive speech! Why you should go to the Grand Canyon. I see reposts of inspiring speakers and feel-good stories–I might research the impact of positive videos on health and mood. I might research what inspirational speakers have in common. You get the idea. Be sure to leave social media in a reasonable amount of time so you can get back to working on your speech.

Write Down Story Prompts

You have stories, lots of stories. You can use stories in business speeches, stories in academic speeches, stories in teaching, stories in job interviews, stories in classroom speeches. The problem is that you may not remember those stories when you need them the most. Get a special notebook to record your daily inspiration. Your goal should be to write down one to three short-sentence stories. Write enough details to jog your memory. You might even write down what it made you think. "Today, I thought I saw a baby hummingbird. I took a picture and looked it up and discovered it wasn't a hummingbird at all, it was a hummingbird moth. I can't figure out why I am disappointed. Why do I think it is any less wonderous now that I know it is a moth and not a bird?" This simple story could be placed in many different speeches to talk about when you think you get one thing, and you really get another.

Matthew Dicks, Moth storytelling champion, suggests you do "homework for life" and every day write down the answer to the question, "What was the most story-worthy moment of my life?"

> *In searching for stories, I discovered that my life is filled with them. Filled with precious moments that once seemed decidedly less than precious. Filled with moments that are more storyworthy than I'd ever imagined. I'd just been failing to notice them. Or discounting them. Or ignoring them. In some instances, I tried to forget them completely. Now I can see them. I can't help but see them. They are everywhere. I collect them. Record them. Craft them. I tell them onstage. I share them on the golf course and to dinner companions. But most important, I hold them close to my heart. They are my most treasured possessions. Matthew Dicks.*

Get Cheesy with It

Write down the bizarre ideas. The ones you know that you will never use, but they popped into your mind. In fact, encourage yourself to get a little crazy and a lot cheesy. By cheesy, I mean come up with an idea that is too silly, too outrageous, or too fun for the situation. I began this chapter by talking about how to find something in the refrigerator and how sometimes you can't find it because other things are in the way. This is true for an idea as well. Sometimes you can't find a good idea because the crazy, cheesy idea is blocking the path. Once you move the cheese, you are likely to find that perfect idea there waiting for you.

Sleep On It

Some of the best ideas will come in your sleep. To tap into your nocturnal creativity, it helps to do two things. One, think about your upcoming speech, the audience, and the purpose right before going to bed and then two, sleep with pen and paper beside your bed. There's a good chance that you will wake up with a speech topic on your mind. Write it down right away before it gets washed away by your morning cup of coffee.

Just Do It

I worked really hard to give you a lot of resources to help you to brainstorm your topic. All of this is just a worthless page of words if you don't put it into action. Really! You just wasted your time reading it if you aren't planning on trying any of this. If you really want to improve as a speaker start working on improving how you generate and develop ideas.

Narrow it Down

Once you have a list of ideas, it is time to narrow them down. Always go back to the G.A.P.–goal, audience, and parameters. Go down your list and mark out or refine any ideas that don't fit. Mark them out in pencil because you might need that idea another day.

Take a good look at the remaining items and really think about your audience. What would *they* like? What do *they* need? Make sure your topic selection has *them* in mind. Finally, ask yourself, "Which remaining topic excites me the most?" The best topic is one that fits the goal, audience, parameters, but most importantly, the best topic is the one that excites you.

If it takes a lot of words
to say what you have in mind,
give it more thought.
– Dennis Roth, writer



Write Down Your Big Idea

Once you have your idea, write it down in one sentence. Consider these "big ideas" from top TED Talks.

Ken Robinson: Do schools kill creativity?

Amy Cuddy: Your body language shapes who you are

Simon Sinek: How great leaders inspire action

The most valuable of all talents
is never using two words when one will do."
-Thomas Jefferson, Founding Father of the United States

Fully Develop Your Idea

Now you have picked your topic, you should explore it fully. Take your topic and write it in the middle of a paper and circle it. Write down any ideas that come to mind. I think this is best understood by seeing the process in action.

Watch this video on mind mapping. It is one of the best videos I found that clearly explains the process step by step.



Research It

Now that you have your topic and have many ways you can explore your topic, begin to refine your topic to best fit your audience. Begin researching your topic. There is an entire chapter dedicated to research that you can refer to so for now, I will talk about making your speech draft.

Write a Shi#%y First Draft

When it comes to writing, one of the best things you can do is get started. Don't wait until you have it all figured out, just work on getting it down.

Start writing. Just start getting your ideas down. Writer Ann Handley says, "show up and throw up." Don't write to be perfect, don't write expecting it will all just flow out naturally, just start writing. Writer Anne Lamont, author of *Bird by Bird*, describes her writing process.

> *Writing is not rapturous. In fact, the only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts. The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later…Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere. Start by getting something—anything—down on paper. A friend of mine says that the first draft is the down draft—you just get it down. The second draft is the up draft—you fix it up. You try to say what you have to say more accurately. And the third draft is the dental draft, where you check every tooth, to see if it's loose or cramped or decayed, or even, God help us, healthy.*

Silence Your Inner Critics

When you begin writing, you may have the little voices tell you that you aren't good enough, you aren't smart enough, and that your idea is insufficient. You need to recognize that most everyone has those voices and that your success depends on you telling them to be quiet. Realize self-doubt is normal. Be brave and take back your brain! Writer Anne Lamont, tells of her voices:

> *What I've learned to do when I sit down to work on a shitty first draft is to quiet the voices in my head. First there's the vinegar-lipped Reader Lady, who says primly, "Well, that's not very interesting, is it?" And there's the emaciated German male who writes*

> *these Orwellian memos detailing your thought crimes. And there are your parents, agonizing over your lack of loyalty and discretion; and there's William Burroughs, dozing off or shooting up because he finds you as bold and articulate as a houseplant; and so on. And there are also the dogs: let's not forget the dogs, the dogs in their pen who will surely hurtle and snarl their way out if you ever stop writing, because writing is, for some of us, the latch that keeps the door of the pen closed, keeps those crazy ravenous dogs contained. Quieting these voices is at least half the battle I fight daily.*

Your inner critic will just slow you down. Take control by sitting down and writing and silencing your inner critic.

An idea is anything that can change how people see the world.
If you can conjure up a compelling idea in people's minds,
you have done something wondrous.
You have given them a gift of incalculable value.
In a very real sense,
a little piece of you has become part of them.
Chris Anderson, TED Talks curator



Climb Over the Writers' Block

> *Don't let mental blocks control you. Set yourself free.*
> *Confront your fear and turn the mental blocks into building blocks.*
> *— Dr. Roopleen, Author of Words to Inspire the Winner in You*

A colleague of mine has a block of wood on her desk. She will tell you it is her writers' block. Whenever she is stuck, she looks at the block and remembers you can go over the block, under the block, or around the block. If you feel blocked, try one of these strategies.

1. Just write anything at all–(Shitty first drafts).
2. Start writing in the middle of the speech.
3. Dictate your ideas into your phone.
4. Sit down and commit to writing for 15 minutes before you allow yourself to do anything else.
5. Do something monotonous and allow your brain to relax–shower, vacuum, go for a walk.
6. Ask yourself, how would (your favorite speaker) write this speech. Write like you are pretending to be that person?
7. Change locations.
8. Stay off the internet, social media, email.
9. Tell yourself you will earn a reward for writing for 20 minutes.
10. Allow yourself to be bored.

Refine Your Idea

Once you have your idea and it is beginning to take shape, you need to refine it. Now you have your idea, create a thesis statement–a one to a two-sentence statement summarizing the main idea of your speech. This statement will eventually be used in your speech

preview to let the audience know where this speech is headed. Send your thesis to a few friends and then ask them what they think the speech is about. If their response indicates they have a clear picture of your topic, proceed. If not, you need to revise your thesis statement.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Is my thesis statement easy to understand?
2. Could someone read my thesis statement and have a clear picture of my speech?
3. Does my thesis statement reflect the topic and purpose of my speech?

A talk is a voyage
with purpose
and it must be charted.
The man who starts out going nowhere,
generally gets there.
– Dale Carnegie, author, businessman, presentation expert

Watch Isaak Lidsky's introduction in the speech "What Reality Are You Creating for Yourself?" and notice how he engages the audience and clearly states his thesis.



> *When Dorothy was a little girl, she was fascinated by her goldfish. Her father explained to her that fish swim by quickly wagging their tails to propel themselves through the water. Without hesitation, little Dorothy responded, "Yes, Daddy, and fish swim backwards by wagging their heads." In her mind, it was a fact as true as any other. Fish swim backwards by wagging their heads. She believed it. Our lives are full of fish swimming backwards. We make assumptions and faulty leaps of logic. We harbor bias. We know that we are right, and they are wrong. We fear the worst. We strive for unattainable perfection. We tell ourselves what we can and cannot do. In our minds, fish swim by in reverse frantically wagging their heads and we don't even notice them. Isaac Lidsky*

✔ How a World Champion of Public Speaking Prepares for Presentations



Watch this short video by Toastmaster's World champion and see if your speech fits his recommendations:

- Could you summarize your speech in 10 words or less?
- Does your title create curiosity and not give too much away?
- Did you consider how to grab attention of the audience?
- Did you limit your speech to no more than 3 to 5 points?
- Did you end it on a high note?

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Brainstorm to fully develop your speech idea.
- Always refer to the GAP: Goals, Audience, and Parameters.
- Write a clear thesis statement in one or two sentences. Make sure it clearly lets your audience know what your speech will be about.

Please share you feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

Bonus Features

✔ How to Write A Perfect Speech

Obama's Speech Writer, Cody Keenan, gives this advice on *How to Write A Perfect Speech*

1. Know what you want to say.
2. Be clear about the story you want to tell.
3. Say something bigger than the moment.
4. Be authentic.
5. Be ready to lighten the mood.
6. Know your audience.
7. Always be writing and read widely.



REFERENCES

Anderson, C. (2013). How to give a killer presentation. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2013/06/how-to-give-a-killer-presentation

BBC Ideas (2019). How to write a perfect speech. BBS ideas. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oV1h7n0HcTE&feature=emb_logo Standard YouTube License.

Dicks, M. (2018). *Storyworthy: Engage, teach, persuade, and change your life through the power of storytelling.* New World.

Dunn, C. (2012). Mindmapping explained and demonstrated in five minutes. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAovxXGBxR8&feature=emb_logo Standard Youtube License.

Handley, A. (2015). *Everybody writes Your go-to guide to creating ridiculously good content*. John Wiley and Sons.

Lamont, A. (1994). *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life.* Pantheon Nooks.

Lidsky, I. (2016). What reality are you creating for yourself? [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/isaac_lidsky_what_reality_are_you_creating_for_yourself Standard YouTube License.

More Resources

There are many ways to brainstorm, if you are still stuck and looking for an idea, try this website: https://business.tutsplus.com/articles/top-brainstorming-techniques–cms-27181

Media Attributions

- Messy refrigerator is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Computer and notebook © Andrew Neel is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- photo-1502126324834-38f8e02d7160 © Brad Barmore is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.3: Brainstorming- Moving the Cheese Out of the Way So You Can Find Your Best Ideas is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.4: Opening a Speech- Get Their Attention from the Start!



Get the audience's attention, or the rest of your speech is a waste. I mean it! Most people spend the majority of their speech preparation time working on the body of their speech and then they tack on an opening and a closing last minute.

The opening and closing deserve the most attention. Why? If you don't get the audience's attention and get them to pay attention to you instead of… the thoughts in their heads, their grocery lists, their neighbors, their social media…then all the rest of your brilliant content is wasted because they will never hear it. Lisa Marshall of Toastmasters International stresses the opening words are so important that "I spend 10 times more time developing and practicing the opener than any other part of the speech."

Look at the description of Person A and Person B and tell me which person you like more.

Person A
envious, stubborn, critical, impulsive, industrious, and intelligent

Person B
intelligent, industrious, impulsive, critical, stubborn, and envious

If you are like most people, you have a preference for Person B. This illustrates a study by Solomon Ashe. He had subjects rate these two people using a string of descriptive words. Now look back at the descriptions. Look closely and you will notice they are the same words in a different order. Most people put the most emphasis on the first three words in determining how they will create the person. Like Asche's subjects, your audience will be evaluating those first three words. Let's bring it back around to speechmaking. The first sentence out of your mouth is crucial and the first three words are especially important.

I am sure you are not surprised to know that people form opinions quickly. To prove this, researchers showed subjects either a 20-minute clip of a job applicant or a 20-30 second clip of a job applicant. They were asked to rate the person on likeability and self-assurance. People were able to form an opinion in under thirty seconds. Not only that but they were able to form the same opinions from a 30-second clip as a 20-minute exposure.

The Battle for Attention

> *Remember that every piece of content in our modern era is part of an attention war. It's fighting against thousands of other claims on people's time and energy. This is true even when you're standing on a stage in front of a seated audience. They have deadly distracters in their pockets called smartphones, which they can use to summon to their eyes a thousand outside alternatives. Once emails and texts make their claim, your talk may be doomed. And then there's that lurking demon of modern life, fatigue. All these are lethal enemies. You never want to provide someone with an excuse to zone out. You have to be a savvy general directing this war's outcome. Starting strong is one of your most important weapons.*
> *Chris Anderson, TED Talks, The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking.*

"People don't pay attention to boring things," according to John Medina, author of Brain Rules, "You've got 30 seconds before they start asking the question, 'Am I going to pay attention to you or not?'"It is important to get your audience's attention right

away. In this chapter, I will share with you several ways to win the war for attention and to start your speech right. I will show you the basic opening and closing structure of speeches and give you many examples of what that looks like. A speech, like an airplane, needs a good take-off and a good landing. Now it's time to prepare to have a strong take-off and learn everything that goes into a speech introduction. This chapter is full of examples from a variety of talks. I included quotes from those introductions, but I also included links to each of those talks hoping you will be interested enough to want to listen.

Ways to Start a Speech

Chris Anderson likens this to battle. "First there is the 10-second war: can you do something in your first moments on stage to ensure people's eager attention while you set up your talk topic? Second is the 1-minute war: can you then use that first minute to ensure that they're committed to coming on the full talk journey with you?"

When thinking about your speech, spend a lot of time thinking about how to win the battle for their attention. Your introduction should make your audience want to put down their phones and listen. Your introduction should be so compelling they stop their wandering minds and turn their thoughts to you and you alone. Your introduction should start with three strong words where they form a strong opinion of you and your speech. Let me share how to accomplish this.

Story

Capturing the audience through the story is one of the most powerful ways to start a speech. A story engages the brain in powerful ways and causes the audience's brains to sync with the speakers. A well-told story will allow the audience to "see" things in their mind's eye and to join the speaker's emotions.

Watch this clip by Ric Elias for how he begins his speech with a powerful story. Particularly notice his first four words, "Imagine a big explosion."



Imagine a big explosion as you climb through 3,000 ft. Imagine a plane full of smoke. Imagine an engine going clack, clack, clack. It sounds scary. Well, I had a unique seat that day. I was sitting in 1D. I was the only one who could talk to the flight attendants. So I looked at them right away, and they said, "No problem. We probably hit some birds." The pilot had already turned the plane around, and we weren't that far. You could see Manhattan. Two minutes later, three things happened at the same time.

The pilot lines up the plane with the Hudson River. That's usually not the route. He turns off the engines. Now, imagine being in a plane with no sound. And then he says three words. The most unemotional three words I've ever heard. He says, "Brace for impact."

Ric Elias, Three Things I Learned While My Plane Crashed.

Consider these other examples and notice how the speaker uses a story.

More powerful introductions using story:

> ***I love you,*** *I believe in you and it's going to be OK. The three things that I needed to hear three years ago when I felt more abandoned than ever. I remember that day as if it happen this morning. It was Sunday and I had just woken up early at a brisk 12:30 in the afternoon.*
> *Ryan Brooks, Honesty, courage, and the importance of brushing your teeth.*
>
> ***When I was nine years old*** *I went off to summer camp for the first time. And my mother packed me a suitcase full of books, which to me seemed like a perfectly natural thing to do. Because in my family, reading was the primary group activity. And this might sound antisocial to you, but for us, it was really just a different way of being social. You have the animal warmth of your family sitting right next to you, but you are also free to go roaming around the adventureland inside your own mind. And I had this idea that camp was going to be just like this, but better.*
> *Susan Cain. The Power of Introverts.*
>
> ***I grew up to study the brain*** *because I have a brother who has been diagnosed with a brain disorder: schizophrenia.*
> *Jill Bolte Taylor, My Stroke of Insight.*
>
> ***A few years ago,*** *I got one of those spam emails. I'm not quite sure how, but it turned up in my inbox, and it was from a guy called Solomon Odonkoh.*
> *James Veitch This is What Happens When You Reply to Spam Email.*
>
> ***Eleven years ago,*** *while giving birth to my first child, I hemorrhaged and was transfused with seven pints of blood. Four years later, I found out that I had been infected with the AIDS virus and had unknowingly passed it to my daughter, Ariel, through my breast milk, and my son, Jake, in utero.*
> *Elizabeth Glaser, Address to the 1992 Democratic National Convention.*

Good stories immediately set the stage and introduce you to the place and to the people. Doing this helps your brain can form a structure where the story takes place. It helps you see the story unfold in your mind. If you need help starting a story, Vanessa Van Edwards suggests these prompts:

- Once upon a time.
- I'm here for a reason, and it's an interesting story.
- The best thing that ever happened to me was.

There is an entire chapter on the Power of Story that can be found here.

Humor is a rubber sword –
it allows you to make a point without drawing blood.
– Mary Hirsch

Humor

When Family Guy's Seth MacFarlane spoke at Harvard Commencement in the rain, he started with "There's nowhere I would rather be on a day like this than around all this electoral equipment." People laughed, people smiled, and the speech was off to a strong start. Humor works because it gives the audience a hit of the feel-good hormone dopamine. That is … if you are funny. If you decide to use humor, make sure you are funny. Test your humor on honest friends. In addition, the humor you use should fit your personality and your audience. Be warned, some groups would find humor inappropriate, do your research.

Watch this clip for how Tshering Tobgay begins his speech with humor.



In case you are wondering, no, I'm not wearing a dress, and no, I'm not saying what I'm wearing underneath. (Laughter) This is a go. This is my national dress. This is how all men dress in Bhutan. That is how our women dress. Like our women, we men get to wear pretty bright colors, but unlike our women, we get to show off our legs. Our national dress is unique, but this is not the only thing that's unique about my country. Our promise to remain carbon neutral is also unique, and this is what I'd like to speak about today, our promise to remain carbon neutral.

Tshering Tobgay, This Country Isn't Just Carbon Neutral–Its Carbon Negative.

More powerful introductions using humor

> ***I didn't rebel as a teenager.*** *I started late and was still going at it the summer I turned thirty. I just became an American citizen, I divorced my husband, I got a big tattoo of a bat on my arm, and I joined a New York City punk band.*
> *Danusia Trevino, Guilty*
>
> ***I need to make a confession*** *at the outset here. A little over 20 years ago, I did something that I regret, something that I'm not particularly proud of. Something that, in many ways, I wish no one would ever know, but that here I feel kind of obliged to reveal. In the late 1980s, in a moment of youthful indiscretion, I went to law school. Dan Pink, The Puzzle of Motivation.*
>
> ***It is really interesting*** *to be a woman and to get to 45 and to not be married yet and to not have kids, especially when you have pushed out your fifth kid on television.*
> *Tracee Ellis Ross, 2017 Glamour Woman of the Year.*
>
> ***I am not drunk****…but the doctor who delivered me was." (reference the shake she has due to a botched medical procedure at birth causing her cerebral palsey).*
> *Maysoon Zayid, I've Got 99 Prolbems and Cerebral Palsey is Not One of Them.*

Salutation followed by humor

> *Oh boy, thank you so much, thank you so much. Thank you, President Cowan, Mrs. President Cowen; distinguished guests, undistinguished guests, you know who you are, honored faculty and creepy Spanish teacher. And thank you to all the graduating Class of 2009, I realize most of you are hungover and have splitting headaches and haven't slept since Fat Tuesday, but you can't graduate 'til I finish, so listen up. When I was asked to*

> *make the commencement speech, I immediately said yes. Then I went to look up what commencement meant which would have been easy if I had a dictionary, but most of the books in our house are Portia's, and they're all written in Australian. So I had to break the word down myself, to find out the meaning. Commencement: common, and cement, common cement. You commonly see cement on sidewalks. Sidewalks have cracks, and if you step on a crack, you break your mother's back. So there's that. But I'm honored that you've asked me here to speak at your common cement*
> *Ellen DeGenres, Commencement Speech at Tulane.*
>
> *Well, thank you. Thank you Mr. President, First Lady, King Abdullah of Jordan, Norm, distinguished guests. Please join me in praying that I don't say something we'll all regret. That was for the FCC. If you're wondering what I'm doing here, at a prayer breakfast, well so am I. I'm certainly not here as a man of the cloth, unless that cloth is — is leather.*
> *Bono at the 54th annual National Prayer Breakfast.*

Interesting or Startling Fact

Starting your speech by sharing a little-known fact, can be powerful. For this to fully work, you need to have the audience's attention from the very first word. Read on for how these speakers started strong.

Powerful introductions using facts

> *Sadly, in the next 18 minutes when I do our chat, four Americans that are alive will be dead from the food that they eat.*
> *Jamie Oliver, Teach Every Child About Food.*
>
> *So I want to start by offering you a free, no-tech life hack, and all it requires of you is this: that you change your posture for two minutes.*
> *Amy Cuddy, Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are.*
>
> *Okay, now I don't want to alarm anybody in this room, but it's just come to my attention that the person to your right is a liar. (Laughter) Also, the person to your left is a liar. Also the person sitting in your very seats is a liar. We're all liars. What I'm going to do today is I'm going to show you what the research says about why we're all liars, how you can become a lie spotter and why you might want to go the extra mile and go from lie spotting to truth seeking, and ultimately to trust building.*
> *Pamela Meyer, How to Spot a Liar.*
>
> *You will live 7.5 minutes longer than you would have otherwise, just because you watched this talk.*
> *Jane McGonigal. The Game That Can Give You Ten Extra Years of Life.*
>
> *There are 900,000 divorces in the United States of America every year. Fewer than 10% of them ever talked to anybody about their relationship. So why would you need a science? Well, we need a science to develop effective treatment and understanding of how to make love work. Why? Why should we care about having great relationships? Well, it turns out that in the past 50 years, a field called social epidemiology has emerged, and it shows that great friendships, great love relationships between lovers and parents and children lead to greater health – mental health as well as physical health – greater*

> *wealth, greater resilience, faster recovery from illness, greater longevity – if you want to live 10 to 15 years longer, work on your relationships, not just your exercise – and more successful children as well.* John Gottman. The Science of Love.
>
> *This room may appear to be holding 600 people but there is actually so many more because within each of us there is a multiple of personalities.*
> *Elizabeth Lesser, Take the Other to Lunch.*

Use a Prop

Using a physical object can draw the audience's attention. Make sure you plan the timing of the prop, and you practice with it. It is important that it is large enough for the audience to see and they can see it well enough that they are not frustrated. Depending on your speech, it may be appropriate to put it away, so it is not distracting.

Powerful introductions using props

> *Darren Tay walks onto the stage and stares at the audience. He pulls a pair of underwear out of his pocket and puts them on over his suit. "Hey loser how do you like your new school uniform. I think it looks great on you. Those were the words of my high school bully Greg Upperfield. Now if you are all wondering if the underwear that Greg used was clean, I had the same questions.*
> *Darren Tay, Outsmart, Outlast. Toastmasters 2016 World Champion of Public Speaking*.

> *Mohammed Qahtani walks onstage, puts a cigarette in his mouth … then looks up as if noticing the audience and says, "What?" As the audience laughs, he continues. "Oh, you all think smoking kills? Ha-ha, let me tell you something. Do you know that the amount of people dying from diabetes are three times as many [as the] people dying from smoking? Yet if I pulled out a Snickers bar, nobody would say anything." He goes on to say, his facts are made up and his real topic is about how words have power.* Mohammed Qahtani, Toastmasters 2015 World Champion of Public Speaking
>
> *JA Gamach blows a train whistle and then starts his speech as if he were a conductor, "All aboard! It's a bright sunny day and you are taking a train. You are wearing a pair of sandals you proudly made yourself. As you board the train one of your sandals slips off and falls beside the track. (J.A. loses one sandal that falls down the platform.) You try to retrieve it. Too late. The train starts to pull away. What would you have done? I would have cursed my bad luck, mad at losing a sandal.*
> *JA Gamache, Toastmasters 2007 World Championship.*

Use a Quotation

Powerful introductions using quotes

Rules for using quotes

- Be sure to use the quote purposefully and not just as placeholders.
- Quotes can just take up valuable space where you could put content unless they are not properly used.

- Let the quote be more important than the author. When using a quote at the opening, say the quote first and then the author. When using a quote at the end of a speech, say the author first and then the quote.
- Keep it short and sweet. Use a quote that gets to the point quickly.
- If you must use long quotes–put them on your slide.
- If you project a quote, read it to the audience. Never expect them to read it while you talk about something else. Never say stupid things like, "You can read, I'll let you read this for yourselves" or "Your adults, I'll let you process this."
- Check the authorship and authenticity of the quote. There are so many quotes on the internet that are misattributed and misquoted. For example, who wrote the quote: "They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel"?
- Do not go for the overused quote or your audience is prone to dismiss it. Instead of quoting an overused "I have a dream quote" do as Jim Key, the 2003 Toastmasters International World Championship of Public Speaking did and pick an equally great but lesser-used Martin Luther King Quote: "The time is always right to do what is right!"

Watch Nate Stauffer at a Moth Grand Slam as he uses poetry to start and carry his story.

Watch this clip for how Andrew Solomon opens with a quote to make us think about depression.



Andrew Solomon, Depression, The Secret We Share.

Reference the Occasion

> *Ceremonial speeches often call for acknowledgment of those in attendance or a mention of the occasion. Here is how Martin Luther King Junior set up his famous speech.*
>
> > *I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation. Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation.*
> > *Martin Luther King Junior, I Have a Dream.*

Get the Audience Involved

Having the audience stand, raise their hand, or even nod in encouragement can cause them to focus on your message. This can be particularly helpful if the audience has been sitting for a while. Let me show you a few examples of how that works.

Ask a Question

You can involve the audience from the start by asking them a question.

Watch the first few minutes of Amy Purdy's speech and how she starts with a question, "If your life were a book and you were the author, how would you want your story to go?"

More powerful introductions using a question

> *I'm here today to talk about a disturbing question, which has an equally disturbing answer. My topic is the secret of domestic violence and the question I'm going to tackle is the one everyone always asks. Why would she stay? Why would anyone stay with a man who beats her?*
> *Why Domestic Violence Victims Don't Leave- Leslie Morgan Steiner*
>
> *Here's a question we need to rethink together: What should be the role of money and markets in our societies? Today, there are very few things that money can't buy. If you're sentenced to a jail term in Santa Barbara, California, you should know that if you don't like the standard accommodations, you can buy a prison cell upgrade. It's true. For how much, do you think? What would you guess? Five hundred dollars? It's not the Ritz-Carlton. It's a jail! Eighty-two dollars a night. Eighty-two dollars a night.*
> *Michael Sandel, Why We Shouldn't Trust Markets with Our Civic Life.*

> *How do you explain when things don't go as we assume? Or better, how do you explain when others are able to achieve things that seem to defy all of the assumptions? For example: Why is Apple so innovative? Year after year, after year, after year, they're more innovative than all their competition.*
> *Simon Sinek, How Great Leaders Inspire Action.*
>
> *Can you remember a moment when a brilliant idea flashed into your head?*
> *Darren LaCroix, Ouch! World Champion of Public Speaking.*

Have the Audience Participate

If you ask a question you want the audience to answer, be sure to give them time to respond. If they raise their hands, be sure to acknowledge their response. You might have the answer by standing, by raising their hands, by speaking to their neighbor. You might call on one member of the audience to answer for the group.

If you ask a question you want the audience to answer, don't let your presentation slide give away the answer. For example, one speaker had a slide behind him that said, "Lesson 1: Don't Worry About IQ." He has the audience raise their hand if they want to improve their grades then he asks, "So can I get a show of hands, how many would say IQ is going to be the most important to get those marks to go up?" Very few people responded because the answer was "written on the wall" literally.

Watch this clip as Allan Pease engages the audience.



Everybody hold your right hand in front like this in a handshaking position. Uncross your legs. Relaxed position. Right hand in front. When I say the word, “Now” here’s what we’re going to do. I am going to ask you to turn to someone besides you, shake hands as if you’re meeting for the first time, and keep pumping till I ask you to stop. Then you’ll stop and freeze it and we’re going to analyze what’s happening. You got that? You don’t have time to think about this. Do it now. Pick anybody and pump. Pump, everybody. Freeze it. Hold it. Stop. Hold it. Freeze it. Keep your hands locked. Keep them locked. The person whose hand is most on top is saying “I’ll be the boss for the rest of the day.”
Allan Pease, Body Language, the Power is in the Palm of Your Hands.

More powerful introductions using audience participation

> *I have a confession to make. But first, I want you to make a little confession to me. In the past year, I want you to just raise your hand if you’ve experienced relatively little stress?*
> *Kelly McGonigal, How to Make Stress Your Friend.*
>
> *So I’d like to start, if I may, by asking you some questions.*
>
> *If you’ve ever lost someone you truly loved, ever had your heartbroken, ever struggled through an acrimonious divorce, or being the victim of infidelity, please stand up.*
>
> *If standing up isn’t accessible to you, you can put your hand up. Please stay standing and keep your hand up there.*
>
> *If you’ve ever lived through a natural disaster, being bullied or made redundant, stand on up. If you’ve ever had a miscarriage, if you’ve ever had an abortion or struggled through infertility, please stand up. Finally, if you or anyone you love has had to cope with mental illness, dementia, some form of physical impairment or cope with suicide, please stand up.*
>
> *Look around you. Adversity doesn’t discriminate. If you are alive, you are going to have to, or you’ve already had to, deal with some tough times Thank you, everyone. Take a seat.*
> *Lucy Hone: The Three Secrets of Resilient People.*
>
> *Advice from Moth Storytelling Club*
>
> ***Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs attention***

> *No: "So I was thinking about climbing this mountain. But then I watched a little TV and made a snack and took a nap and my mom called and vented about her psoriasis then I did a little laundry (a whites load) (I lost another sock, darn it!) and then I thought about it again and decided I'd climb the mountain the next morning."*
>
> *Yes: "The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure."*

Arouse Suspense or Curiosity

Watch this clip for how Kathryn Schulz creates curiosity by showing us Johnny Depp's tattoo and then talks about her tattoo of regret. We hang on to her every word wondering, "Where is all this going and how bad can her tattoo really be?"



So that's Johnny Depp, of course. And that's Johnny Depp's shoulder. And that's Johnny Depp's famous shoulder tattoo. Some of you might know that, in 1990, Depp got engaged to Winona Ryder, and he had tattooed on his right shoulder "Winona forever." And then three years later — which in fairness, kind of is forever by Hollywood standards — they broke up, and Johnny went and got a little bit of repair work done. And now his shoulder says, "Wino forever."

So like Johnny Depp, and like 25 percent of Americans between the ages of 16 and 50, I have a tattoo. I first started thinking about getting it in my mid-20s, but I deliberately waited a really long time. Because we all know people who have gotten tattoos when they were 17 or 19 or 23 and regretted it by the time they were 30. That didn't happen to me. I got my tattoo when I was 29, and I regretted it instantly. And by "regretted it," I mean that I stepped outside of the tattoo place — this is just a couple miles from here down on the Lower East Side — and I had a massive emotional meltdown in broad daylight on the corner of East Broadway and Canal Street. (Laughter) Which is a great place to do it because nobody cares. (Laughter) And then I went home that night, and I had an even larger emotional meltdown, which I'll say more about in a minute.

Kathryn Schulz, Don't Regret, Regret.

> *Saying unexpected things or challenging assumptions can get a speech started off right.*
>
> > ***A herd of wildebeests,** a shoal of fish, a flock of birds. Many animals gather in large groups that are among the most wonderful spectacles in the natural world. But why do these groups form? The common answers include things like seeking safety in numbers or hunting in packs or gathering to mate or breed, and all of these explanations, while often true, make a huge assumption*

> *about animal behavior, that the animals are in control of their own actions, that they are in charge of their bodies. And that is often not the case.*
> *Ed Yong. Zombie Roaches and Other Parasite Tales. TED Talk*

✔ Keys to Success

Memorize your first sentence so you can deliver it with impact.
Memorize your whole speech opening if possible.
Make sure your first three words have an impact.

? Typical Patterns for Speech Openings

- Get the audience's attention–called a hook or a grabber.
- Establish rapport and tell the audience why you care about the topic of why you are credible to speak on the topic.
- Introduce the speech thesis/preview/good idea.
- Tell the audience why they should care about this topic.
- Give a transition statement to the body of the speech.

Step Two: Credibility

First, you hook the audience with your powerful grabber, then you tell them why you are credible to speak on the topic and why the topic is important. If they know your credentials, you would not need to tell them your credibility but you may still want to tell them why you are interested in the topic. Here are a few examples of how some speakers included credibility.

Tell Why You Are Credible

> *I'm a doctor, but I kind of slipped sideways into research, and now I'm an epidemiologist.*
> *Ben Goldacre, Battling Bad Science.*
>
> *I started studying resilience research a decade ago at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. It was an amazing time to be there because the professors who trained me had just picked up the contract to train all 1.1 million American soldiers to be as mentally fit as they always have been physically fit. Lucy Hone: The Three Secrets of Resilient People.*
>
> *What I'm going to do is to just give a few notes, and this is from a book I'm preparing called "Letters to a Young Scientist." I'd thought it'd be appropriate to present it, on the basis that I have had extensive experience in teaching, counseling scientists across a broad array of fields. And you might like to hear some of the principles that I've developed in doing that teaching and counseling.*
> *EO Wilson: Advice to a Young Scientist.*

Step Three: Tell Why it is Important

Early on in your speech, you should tell the audience why they should care. You should connect the speech to things they care about. This is where you answer, so what, who cares?

> *You know, I didn't set out to be a parenting expert. In fact, I'm not very interested in parenting, per se. It's just that there's a certain style of parenting these days that is kind of*

> *messing up kids, impeding their chances to develop.*
> *Julie Lythcott-Haims, How to Raise Successful Kids – Without Over-Parenting*

Step Four: Tell the Purpose of the Talk (aka Preview/ Thesis)

> *"If you don't know what you want to achieve in your presentation your audience never will." – Harvey Diamond, author*

Tell the audience your purpose, clearly give them an overview of the main points. MIT professor, Patrick Winston says one of the best things to add to your speech is an empowerment promise. You want to tell people what they will know at the end of your speech that they didn't know at the beginning. It's their reason for being here. His empowerment promise was, "Today you will see some examples of what you can put in your armory of speaking techniques and it will be the case that one of those examples–some heuristic, some technique, maybe only one will be the one that will get you the job. By the end of the next 60 minutes, you will have been exposed to a lot of ideas, some of which you will incorporate into your own repertoire, and they will ensure that you get the maximum opportunity to have your ideas valued and accepted by the people you speak with." Notice that this statement told you what to expect and why it mattered.

Here are examples of how various speakers accomplished this.

> *For years, I've been telling people, stress makes you sick. It increases the risk of everything from the common cold to cardiovascular disease. Basically, I've turned stress into the enemy. But I have changed my mind about stress, and today, I want to change yours.*
> *Kelly McGonigal, How to Make Stress Your Friend.*
>
> *We've been sold the lie that disability is a Bad Thing, capital B, capital T. It's a bad thing, and to live with a disability makes you exceptional. It's not a bad thing, and it doesn't make you exceptional.*
> *Stella Young, I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much*

> *What I'm going to show you is all of the main things, all of the main features of my discipline, evidence-based medicine. And I will talk you through all of these and demonstrate how they work, exclusively using examples of people getting stuff wrong.*
> *Ben Goldacre, Battling Bad Science.*
>
> *I would like to think that we (Arab women) poor, oppressed women actually have some useful, certainly hard-earned lessons to share, lessons that might turn out useful for anyone wishing to thrive in the modern world. Here are three of mine.*
> *Leila Hoteit, Three Lessons on Success from an Arab businesswoman*
>
> *We are often terrified and fascinated by the power hackers now have. They scare us. But the choices they make have dramatic outcomes that influence us all. So I am here today because I think we need hackers, and in fact, they just might be the immune system for the information age. Sometimes they make us sick, but they also find those hidden threats in our world, and they make us fix it.*
> *Keren Elazari. Hackers: The Internet's Immune System*
>
> ***Try This — Inspired by TED Master Class***
> *After you write your thesis, send it to three people with the question,*
> *"Based on what you read here, what do you think my speech will be about?"*

Putting It All Together

At this point, you know you need to have a grabber, a preview, a credibility statement, and a so-what-who-cares statement. Let's take a look at one of the top TED talks of all time by Jamie Oliver. This speech is a good illustration of everything we've been talking about so far and how all this works together.



Teach Every Child About Food by Jamie Oliver Analyzed

Get the audience's attention– called a hook or a grabber.	Sadly, in the next 18 minutes when I do our chat, four Americans that are alive will be dead through the food that they eat.
Establish rapport and tell the audience why you care about the topic or why you are credible to speak on the topic.	My name's Jamie Oliver. I'm 34 years old. I'm from Essex in England and for the last seven years, I've worked fairly tirelessly to save lives in my own way. I'm not a doctor; I'm a chef, I don't have expensive equipment or medicine. I use information, education.
Tell the audience why they should care about this topic.	I profoundly believe that the power of food has a primal place in our homes that binds us to the best bits of life. We have an awful, awful reality right now. America, you're at the top of your game. This is one of the most unhealthy countries in the world.
Introduce the speech thesis/preview/good idea.	I came here to start a food revolution that I so profoundly believe in. We need it. The time is now. We're in a tipping-point moment.

Give a transition statement to the body of the speech.	I've been doing this for seven years. I've been trying in America for seven years. Now is the time when it's ripe — ripe for the picking. I went to the eye of the storm. I went to West Virginia, the most unhealthy state in America. Or it was last year. We've got a new one this year, but we'll work on that next season.



Never Start a Speech This Way

So we've talked about hooking the audience, telling why you are credible, telling them why they should care, and giving them a preview of your talk, now let's talk about what *not* to say or do. There are some things that speakers say to hurt their credibility and diminish the chances the audience will listen, be sure to avoid these.

"Everybody close your eyes."

> *I don't want to close my eyes; it makes me feel awkward and exposed to be in a group of people with my eyes closed. Because of that, I keep my eyes open. The problem is when I keep my eyes open, I feel like some sort of horrible nonconformist rebel. I feel awkward with my eyes closed and I feel guilty if they are open. Either way, I just feel bad. Besides, half of the time when speakers tell audience members to close their eyes, they forget to tell us when we can open them. If you are wanting me to imagine a story, just tell me to imagine it, don't make me close my eyes (rant over).*

"Can everybody hear me?"

> *You should plan your opening to be intentional and with power. "Can everybody hear me" is a weak and uncertain statement and this is not the first impression you want to leave. Do a microphone check before the audience members arrive and have someone stand in different corners of the room to make sure you can be heard. Don't waste your valuable speech time with questions that you should already know the answer to.*

"How long do I have to speak?"

> *You should know that before you begin. Even if the presentations for the day are running over and you are the last speaker, you should ask the MC before you begin. Always plan your first words with power.*

"Can you read this?"

> *You should make your slides big, really big. Test out your slides in advance of your speech, walk all around the room and make sure you can read them. Have a friend check*

> *them out as well. You should know they are big enough because you planned for it and tested it.*

"Turn off your cell phones and laptops."

> *People really hate having things taken away, not to mention that your audience may want to take notes on their devices. Chances are you are speaking to adults, let them determine if it is appropriate to have out their technology.*

"I'm sorry, I'm losing my voice."
"I'm stopped up."
"I'm under the weather."

> *Stop apologizing! Stop making excuses! While these lines may be true, they just come of as excuses and can make the audience either feel like you don't want to be there, or they just feel sorry for you.*

"I'm so nervous right now."

Talking about your nervousness will make you more nervous and will make them look for signs of your nervousness. Just start your speech.

"So, Um, Ok."

Do not start with hesitation. Plan the first words, memorize the first words, practice the first words. Do not start with "Ok, so um, now I'd like…" Plan strong and start strong.

> ***Do Not Discuss Your Business with People Watching…Really! I Mean It!***
>
> *Many of us are giving and listening to presentations in an online format. I have attended numerous presentations this year through Zoom where I have to sit and watch while the organizers engage in personal small talk or deal with the details of the presentation.*
> *This is how the speech I recently attended began."Donna, you are going to share your screen, right?"*
> *"Yes. I have my PowerPoint ready to go. Will you push "record" when I give the signal?"*
> *"Sure. Where did you say that button is again? Do you think we should wait five more minutes, I think we had more who were coming? Dave, what was the total we were expecting?"*
> *"Yeah, we had 116 sign up, but the reminders went out late so this may be all we have. We can give them a few more minutes to log on."*
> *"Donna, How is your dog? Is she still struggling with her cone since her spay surgery? My dog never would wear the cone –she tore her stitches out and broke her wound open. It was terrible. Well, it looks like it is about time to begin, thank you everyone for coming."*
> *If you are organizing an event online, hosting a speech online, giving a*

> *presentation online–please keep it professional. Most platforms will allow you to keep the audience in a waiting room until it is time to start. If you have a business to deal with, keep the audience out until you have everything ready to go. Once the audience is in the meeting, you should engage the audience in group-type small talk or you should just start the presentation. In professional settings, you should start the meeting on time. Why punish those who showed up on time to wait for those who aren't there yet?*

? A Conversation Over Coffee with Bill Rogers

I asked my long-time friend, Bill Rogers, to write an excerpt to add to the book. I met Bill when he was the Chief Development Officer for a hospital in Northwest Arkansas and I met him again when he was reinventing himself as a college student getting a Master's Degree in the theater. He would love to share a symbolic cup of coffee with you and give you advice about public speaking.

Perfect morning for a walk, isn't it? Join me for a cup of coffee? Wonderful. Find us a table and I'll get our coffee.

There you go; just like you like it. There's nothing like a great cup of coffee on the patio of your neighborhood coffee shop, is there?

Now that you're settled in your favorite chair, take a sip, and let that glorious caffeine kick in and do its stuff. Okay, let's talk.

So, you were asking me about public speaking.

Well, let's see. Where do we begin?

One of the first pieces of advice I ever received was to imagine that every member of your audience is sitting there in their underwear! Yeah, right. That never worked for me. I tried it once with a local civic group of community leaders both male and female. If the intent of that tidbit is to make you relax, it certainly didn't work for me. It just made me more self-conscious… and more nervous. I not only got distracted, but I also lost my train of thought, I started sweating, and, of course, imagined myself standing there without clothes. Needless to say, that speech was a disaster and I've never used it again. I suggest you don't either.

In the early days, I also relied very heavily on my typed-up speech. Now, there's nothing wrong with that unless you find yourself reading it word for word as I did. Nothing is more boring nor puts an audience to sleep quicker than a speaker with their nose down reading a speech. There's no connection and connection with your audience is key.

As you know, I love theatre and I've done a bit of acting over the years. Early on, I learned that the quicker I learned my lines, the more I could play, experiment, and shape my character. It relaxed me and gave me enormous freedom. It led me to find a mantra for myself: "With discipline comes freedom." This freedom will allow you to improvise as your audience or situation dictates while still conveying the core message of your presentation. That discipline and its resulting freedom apply to public speaking of any kind and, I think, will serve you well.

Another old adage we've all heard is Aristotle's advice. You know the one. No? Well, roughly, it's to tell your audience what you're going to say, say it, and then tell them what you just said. That's the basic formula for public speaking. And it works as a good place to start.

However, effective speaking is much more and, to me, it starts with a story or even a simple sentence.

You know the feeling you get when you read the first sentence of a good book and it just reaches out and grabs you? That should be your goal with every presentation. One sentence to capture your audience's attention. Something that causes them to lean forward. Something that sparks their imagination.

It doesn't have to be all that profound either. It can be something very simple. A personal story that relates to your topic. A relevant fact or statistic that defines or illustrates the issue or subject matter at hand.

A couple of classics come to mind. The first is Alice Walker's, "The Color of Purple."

> *"You better not tell nobody but God."*

And the second one is from my favorite novel, “To Kill A Mockingbird,” by Harper Lee.

> *“When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm broken at the elbow.”*

Both sentences hook you immediately. A few simple words speak volumes. After reading or hearing those words, you naturally lean in. You want to learn more. You want to find out what happens next. Every effective speech or presentation does the same thing.

Of course, make sure that the first and last thing you say to your audience is both relevant and appropriate. I share this out of an abundance of caution. I once worked for an internationally recognized and well-respected children’s research hospital and I was given the privilege to speak at a national educational convention. The room was filled wall to wall with teachers. I thought I’d be cute and add a little levity. I opened my presentation with this line, “You know, I’ve had nightmares like this…” Instead of the roars of laughter, I was expecting, a wave of silence ensued. Not only was the line not funny, but it was also wholly inappropriate and I immediately lost my audience. Not my best day. Learn from my mistakes.

Finally, let’s touch on the importance of approaching a speech as a conversation. You and I are sitting here enjoying our coffee and having a friendly, relaxed conversation. Strive for that every chance you get. You may not always have that luxury. Some speeches and presentations simply demand formality. But even in those cases, you can usually make it somewhat conversational. I always try to write my speeches in a conversational style. Like I’m talking to a friend…or trying to make a new one.

So, to recap: tell a story, learn your lines, hook your audience with a simple sentence, close with a question or call to action, use repetition, keep it conversational, treat your audience as a friend, and give yourself permission to relax.

Above all, be yourself. Allow yourself to be as relaxed as you are with those closest to you. If you’re relaxed, if you try to think of your audience as a friend, then, in most cases, they too will relax and they will root for you. Even if they disagree with what you are telling them, they will respect you and they will listen.

How about another cup?

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- The most important part of your speech is the introduction because if you don’t get their attention, they are not listening to the rest of what you have to say.
- To get attention, tell a story, use humor, share a quote, tell a startling fact, show a prop, ask a question, reference the occasion.
- In addition to the grabber, a good introduction should establish rapport and tell the audience why you are credible.
- An introduction often includes a “so what who cares statement” to tell the audience why this should matter to them.
- The thesis/preview should be clear enough that someone could read just that sentence or couple of sentences and know what the speech is about.

Please share your feedback, suggestsoin, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Asch, S. E. (1946). Forming impressions of personality. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 41*, 258-290. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0055756

Anderson, C. (2016). *TED talks: The official TED guide to public speaking*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Barton, D. (2015). What do top students do differently? TED Talk.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Na8m4GPqA30 Standard YouTube License.

Brooks, R. (2020). SAM Talk: Honesty, courage, and the importance of brushing your teeth. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/SskgA2hHgFI Standard YouTube License.

Castel, A.D. (2008). Metacognition and learning about primacy and recency effects in free recall: The utilization of intrinsic and extrinsic cues when making judgments of learning. *Memory & Cognition*, *36*,429–43. https://doi.org/10.3758/MC.36.2.429

Davis, A. (2016). 19 quotes that will inspire you to create an amazing presentation. Inc. https://www.inc.com/alison-davis/19-quotes-that-will-inspire-you-to-create-an-amazing-presentation.html

DeGeneres, E. (2009). Ellen at Tulane Commencement. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0e8ToRVOtRo Standard YouTube License.

Duarte, N. (n.d.). *Be a S.T.A.R. presenter.* https://www.duarte.com/be-a-star-presenter/

Duarte, N. (n.d.). Illuminate: Ignite Change Through Speeches, Stories, Ceremonies, and Symbols

Elazari, K. (2014). Hackers: The internet's immune system. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/keren_elazari_hackers_the_internet_s_immune_system?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Elias, R. (2011). Three things I learned while my plane crashed. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/ric_elias_3_things_i_learned_while_my_plane_crashed?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Fisher, W.R. (2009). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monograph*s, 51 (1). 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758409390180

Gamache, J.A. (2007). Being Mr. G. Toastmasters World Championship. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoW-T2_6OJo Standard YouTube License.

Goffman, A. (2015). How we are priming some kids for college and others for prison. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/alice_goffman_how_we_re_priming_some_kids_for_college_and_others_for_prison/transcript?language=en#t-183504 Standard YouTube License.

Gottman, J. (2018). The science of love.[Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/-uazFBCDvVw Standard YouTube License.

Goldacre, B. (2011). Battling bad science. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/ben_goldacre_battling_bad_science?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Glaser, E. (1992). Aids address to the 1992 Democratic National Convention.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7z0lbUJWjf4 Standard YouTube License.

Hone, L. (2019). The three secrets of resilient people. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/NWH8N-BvhAw Standard YouTube License.

Hoteit, L. (2016). Three lessons on success from an Arab businesswoman. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/leila_hoteit_3_lessons_on_success_from_an_arab_businesswoman/transcript?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Karia, A. (2013). How to open and close a TED Talk (or any other speech or presentation). [Video] YouTube. https://akashkaria.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/HowtoOpenandCloseaTEDTalk.pdf Standard YouTube License.

Key, J. (2016). 2003 World Champion: 'Never Too Late' Jim Key, Toastmasters International. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54Ck5V495dA Standard YouTube License.

King, M.L. (1963). I have a dream. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/I47Y6VHc3Ms Standard YouTube License.

LaCroix, D. (2001). World champion of public speaking. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUDCzbmLV-0 Standard YouTube License.

Lieber, D. (2013). The power of storytelling to change the world. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Bo3dpVb5jw Standard YouTube License.

Lythcott-Haims, J. (2015). How to raise successful kids without overparenting. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/julie_lythcott_haims_how_to_raise_successful_kids_without_over_parenting?language=en Standard

YouTube License.

Marshall, L. B. (20170. How to hook your audience in 30 seconds: Learn to create catchy speech openings from top contest winners. https://www.toastmasters.org/magazine/magazine-issues/2017/june2017/hook

Masters, K. (2014). Nipping an education myth in the bud: Poh's brain activity during lectures. *Medical Teacher,* 1-4 DOI: 10.3109/0142159X.2014.916785

McGonigal, K, (2013). How to make stress your friend. Tedtalk. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend Standard YouTube License.

McViker, D. (2015). *Ten phrases that savvy speakers never say. http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/10-toxic-speech-phrases/*

Meade, A. (2013). Your body is my canvas. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/alexa_meade_your_body_is_my_canvas?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Medina, J. (2014). Brain rules: 12 principles for surviving and thriving at work, home, and school. Pear Press.

Miller, N. & Campbell, D. T. (1959) Recency and primacy in persuasion as a function of the timing of speeches and measurements. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 59,* 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0049330

Morgan-Steiner. (2012). Why domestic victims don't leave. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/leslie_morgan_steiner_why_domestic_violence_victims_don_t_leave?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Moth. Storytelling tips and tricks: How to tell a successful story. https://themoth.org/share-your-story/storytelling-tips-tricks

Murdock, B.B., Jr. (1962). The serial position effect of free recall. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 64*(5), 482–488. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045106Neuroskeptic. (2014). *Another education neuromyth debunked*. June 29, 2014. https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/another-education-neuromyth-debunked

Oliver, J. (2010). Teach every child about food. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie_oliver_teach_every_child_about_food?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Pease, A. (2013). Body language, the power is in the palm of your hands. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/ZZZ7k8cMA-4 Standard YouTube License.

Pink, D. (2009). The puzzle of motivation.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrkrvAUbU9Y&vl=fa Standard YouTube License.

Purdy, A. (2011). Living beyond limits. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_purdy_living_beyond_limits?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Qahtani, M. (2015). The power of words. 2015 World Champion, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iqq1roF4C8s&t=138s Standard YouTube License.

Ratanakul, S. (2017). A study of problem-solution discourse: Examining TED Talks through the lens of move analysis. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network Journal, 10*(2). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1229624.pdf

Riegel, D. G. (2019). Stop beginning your speeches with good morning and thank you and start with this instead. Talk Support. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbq4_Swj0Gg Standard YouTube License.

Rogers, B. (2020). *A conversation over coffee.* A personal essay was written for this chapter.

Rosling, H. (2014). Don't panic–the truth about population.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FACK2knC08E Standard YouTube License.

Ross, T. E. (2019). *Tracee Ellis Ros is living for herself.* [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=neU_sum9824. Standard YouTube License.

Sandel, M. (2013). Why we shouldn't trust markets with our civic life. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_why_we_shouldn_t_trust_markets_with_our_civic_life?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Schulz, K. (2011). Don't regret, regret. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_don_t_regret_regret/details Standard YouTube License.

Siddons, S. (2008). *Chapter 05. how people remember, what they forget*. London: Kogan Page Ltd. https://search.proquest.com/books/chapter-05-how-people-remember-what-they-forget/docview/276318853/se-2?accountid=8361

Sinek, S. (2009). How great leaders inspire action. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Solomon, A. (2013). Depression: The secret we share. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_solomon_depression_the_secret_we_share/up-next?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Stauffer, N. (2019). Moth Grand Slam Story. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzHZAsyki78 Standard YouTube License.

Toastmasters. (2017). Beginning your speech. The Better Speaker Series. Toastmasters International -The Better Speaker Series Set

Toastmasters. (2017). Concluding your speech. The Better Speaker Series. Toastmasters International -The Better Speaker Series Set

Toastmasters. (2017). *Creating an introduction.* The Better Speaker Series. https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/creating-an-introduction.

Tobay, T. (2016). This country isn't just carbon neutral –it's carbon negative. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering_tobgay_this_country_isn_t_just_carbon_neutral_it_s_carbon_negative/transcript?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Trevino, D. (2020). Guilty. Moth Mainstage. https://youtu.be/OcHLBkLVoNw

VanEdwards, V. (2020). *How to start a speech: The Best (and worst) speech openers. [Video] YouTube.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tzentBmmUc. Standard YouTube License.

Veitch, J. (2015). This is what happens when you reply to spam email. Ted Talk. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/james_veitch_this_is_what_happens_when_you_reply_to_spam_email?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Wilson, E.O. (2012). Advice to a young scientist. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/e_o_wilson_advice_to_a_young_scientist?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare Standard YouTube License.

Winston, P. (2019). How to speak by Patrick Winston.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Unzc731iCUY Standard YouTube License.

Yong, E. (2014). Zombie roaches and other parasite tales. TED Talk [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/ed_yong_zombie_roaches_and_other_parasite_tales?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Young, S. (2014). I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- austin-distel-rxpThOwuVgE-unsplash (1) © Austin Distel is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- jose-aragones-81QkOoPGahY-unsplash © Jose Aragones is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.4: Opening a Speech- Get Their Attention from the Start! is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.5: Closing a Speech- End with Power and Let Them Know It is Time to Clap



Open Your Speech With a Bang
Close It With a Slam-Dunk
Westside Toastmasters

"Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending," according to poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The first few words of your speech make the audience want to listen and the last few sentences help them decide what they feel about you and your topic. In this chapter, I will explain the function of a conclusion, the format of a conclusion, and I will give you numerous examples of ways to end your speech. Most of this chapter is dedicated to showing you good examples of different types of speech closings. Let's get started by talking about the purpose of the closing.

A Strong Closing Does Many Things

1. **Summarizes the points.** By restating your points your audience is more likely to remember them.
2. **Tells the audience when to clap.** Let's face it, it is so awkward when you are done with your speech, and no one claps. Being clear the end is near, relieves the audience of the pressure of wondering if they are clapping at the right time.
3. **Provides resolution.** Your speech should give the audience a sense of resolve or a sense of being challenged.

The Formula for Closing Most Speeches

- Transition statement to ending.
- Review the main points–repeat the thesis.
- If it is a persuasive speech, tell the audience what you want them to do or think.
- Provide a closing statement.

Restate the Thesis

Tell them what you are going to say, say it, tell them what you have said. This speech pattern is useful in most types of speeches because it helps the speaker to remember your key points. As you build your closing, make sure you restate the thesis. A good rule of thumb is to write it in such a way that if the audience were asked to restate the main points, their answer would match closely with your thesis.

EXAMPLE
Watch as Stella Young gives her thesis and then restates her thesis at the end of the speech as she wraps up.
The thesis of the talk in the introduction:
We've been sold the lie that disability is a Bad Thing, capital B, capital T. It's a bad thing, and to live with a disability makes you

exceptional. It's not a bad thing, and it doesn't make you exceptional.

Restates the thesis of the talk at the closing:

Disability doesn't make you exceptional but questioning what you think you know about it does.



This next example is from a student's speech. It is easy to pull out one sentence that clearly summarizes the main points of her speech. Following her summary, she winds the speech down into a thoughtful conclusion and ends with three powerful words.

> *Now is the time to separate the war on drugs from the war on addiction. Today you've heard the problems, impacts, and solutions of criminalizing addictions. Bruce Callis is 50 years old now. And he is still struggling with his addiction. while you all are sitting out there listening to this, I'm living with it. Bruce Callis is my father and for my entire life, I have watched our misguided system destroy him. The irony here is that we live in a society where we are told to recycle. We recycle paper, aluminum, and electronics. But why don't we ever consider recycling them most precision think on Earth–**the human life.***
> *Student Tunnette Powell, Winner of the 2012 Interstate Oratorical Association Contest.*

Closing Phrases

After you restate your thesis, you should carefully deliver your closing phrases. Your closing should provide a resolution to your speech and/or it should challenge the audience. *Frantically Speaking* writer Hrideep Barot suggests "a conclusion is like tying a bow or ribbon to a box of your key ideas that your audience will be taking along with them."

A speech closing is not just about the words you say, but it is also the way you say it. Change the pace near the end of your speech. Let your tone alone should signal the end is near. It is about deliberate voice control, don't let your voice weakly away.

In the next section, I will cover these ways to end your speech:

> *End with powerful words*
> *End with a quote*
> *End with a graphic*
> *End with parallel construction*
> *End on a positive note*
> *End with a challenge*
> *End with a question*
> *End with inspiration*
> *End with well-wishing*
> *End with humor*
> *End with a call to action*

End with a feeling of resolve
End with a prop

The best way to teach you about advanced closings is to show not tell. For this section, I will briefly explain each type of closing and then provide a video. Each video is queued so you can play the video and watch the closing statement. I included a transcript under each video if you want to follow along. It will be most beneficial for you to watch the clip and not just read the text. By watching, you will have a chance to hear the subtle changes in the speaker's voice as they deliver their closing statements.

End with Powerful Words

As you design your closing, look at the last three to five words and examine them to see if they are strong words. Oftentimes, you can rearrange a sentence to end with a powerful word. (I have the video cued to play just the closing)

Watch this clip for how BJ Miller ends with a powerful thought and a powerful word.



Parts of me died early on, and that's something we can all say one way or another. I got to redesign my life around this fact, and I tell you it has been a liberation to realize you can always find a shock of beauty or meaning in what life you have left, like that snowball lasting for a perfect moment, all the while melting away. If we love such moments ferociously, then maybe we can learn to live well — not in spite of death, but because of it. **Let death be what takes us, not lack of imagination.**

BJ Miller, What Really Matters at the End of Life

End by Circling Back to the Opening

Another type of ending is to circle back to what you said in the beginning. You can revisit a quote, share the end to an illustration that was begun in the beginning, or you can put away a prop you got out in the beginning.

Watch this clip for how Zubing Zhang
begins and ends with the same quote to circle back around to the main idea.



She starts by telling a story of bungee jumping off the world's highest platform and how she saw a sign with a quote that says, "Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone." After telling her own story about pushing her emotional limits, she circles back around at the end by saying, "As the words said high on the bungee platform, "Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone."

Yubing Zhang, Life Begins at the End of Your Comfort Zone.

End With Quote

If you end your speech with a quote, attend to the following.

1. Always say the author of the quote before the quote for example, "I want to leave you with a leadership quote 'What you do has far greater impact than what you say,' Steven Covey." The problem with this ending is that "Stephen Covey" are the last two words of the speech and that is boring. Consider instead this ending. "I think Robin Sharma said it best 'Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence, and inspiration.'" In this arrangement, the last three words are powerful–influence and inspiration.
2. Provided context for the quote before or after. Make sure the quote is meaningful and not just an easy way to end.

Watch this clip for how Sir Ken Robinson ends with a quote. Notice how he says the author and then the quote.

Also, notice how he then ties his speech to the quote with a final few sentences and ends with the powerful word–"revolution" and how he uses a strong vocal emphasis as he says his last word. (I have the video cued to play just the closing)



There's a wonderful quote from Benjamin Franklin. "There are three sorts of people in the world: Those who are immovable, people who don't get it, or don't want to do anything about it; there are people who are movable, people who see the need for change and are prepared to listen to it; and there are people who move, people who make things happen." And if we can encourage more people, that will be a movement. And if the movement is strong enough, that's, in the best sense of the word, a revolution. **And that's what we need.**

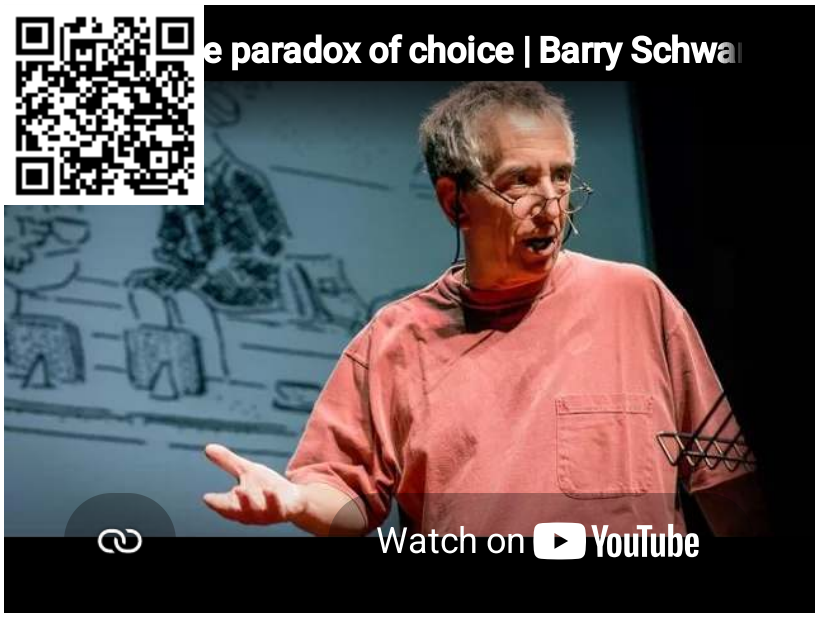
Sir Ken Robinson, How to Escape Education's Death Valley.

End with a Graphic

You might want to use a visual to make your final point. Bringing in a picture, graphic, or object, reengages the audience to pay attention to your final ideas.

Watch this clip for how Barry Schartz uses the magic words "so to conclude" and then he creatively uses a picture of a fishbowl to narrow in on his point.

Notice how his final word is spoken with urgency as he says "disaster." (I have the video cued to play just the closing)



> *So, to conclude. (He shows a picture of fish in a fishbowl) He says, "You can be anything you want to be — no limits." You're supposed to read this cartoon and, being a sophisticated person, say, "Ah! What does this fish know? Nothing is possible in this fishbowl." Impoverished imagination, a myopic view of the world –that's the way I read it at first. The more I thought about it, however, the more I came to the view that this fish knows something. Because the truth of the matter is, if you shatter the fishbowl so that everything is possible, you don't have freedom. You have paralysis. If you shatter this fishbowl so that everything is possible, you decrease satisfaction. You increase paralysis, and you decrease satisfaction. Everybody needs a fishbowl. This one is almost certainly too limited –perhaps even for the fish, certainly for us. But the absence of some metaphorical fishbowl is a recipe for misery and, I suspect, disaster.*
>
> *Barry Schwartz, The Paradox of Choice*

End with Parallel Construction

Parallel construction is a series of repeated phrases. It can be a powerful tool to use in a persuasive speech as it creates a feeling of importance.

Watch this clip for how Malala Yousafzai ends with a series of parallel statements to build momentum.
Notice how her pace perfectly matches her words and you feel her strength when she ends with "education first." (I have the video cued to play just the closing)



Dear brothers and sisters, we must not forget that millions of people are suffering from poverty, injustice, and ignorance. We must not forget that millions of children are out of schools. We must not forget that our sisters and brothers are waiting for a bright peaceful future. So let us wage a global struggle against illiteracy, poverty, and terrorism, and let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one pen, and one book can change the world.
Education is the only solution. Education First.

Malala Yousafzai, United Nations Youth Assembly

End on a Positive Note

Audiences are constantly evaluating a speaker to determine their attitude and motivation. As you consider your speech closing, ask yourself what type of impression do you want to leave? Do you want to leave them with depression or hope? Sadness or promise? Most of the time, audiences will receive messages that end positively better than speeches that end negatively.

In this speech sample, Hans Rosling showed the audience some hard statistics and he even pointed fingers at the audience as part of the problem. To help them hear his main point, he wisely ends on a positive note.

Watch this clip for how Hans Rosling
ends this thought-provoking talk on a positive note.
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



Now, when thinking about where all this leaves us, I have just one little humble advice for you, besides everything else, look at the data. Look at the facts about the world and you will see where we are today and how we can move forwards with all these billions on our wonderful planet. The challenge of extreme poverty has been greatly reduced and it's for the first time in history within our power to end it for good. The challenge of population growth is, in fact, already being solved, the number of children has stopped growing. And for the challenge for climate change, we can still avoid the worst, but that requires the richest, as soon as possible, find a way to use their set their use of resources and energy at a level that, step by step, can be shared by 10 billion or 11 billion by

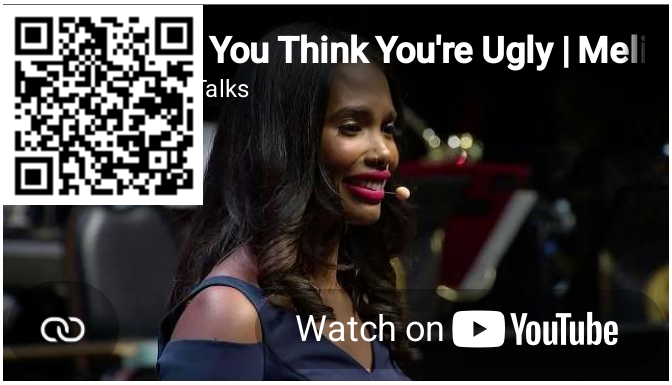
the end of this century. I've never called myself an optimist, but I do say I'm a possibilist and I also say the **world is much better than many of you think.**

Hans Rosling, Facts about the Population.

End with a Challenge

Leave the audience with a doable personal challenge. Help them mentally make sense of all the information that you shared by helping them know how to file it away and how to use it.

Watch this clip for how Melissa Butler
ends with a challenge.
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://uark.pressbooks.pub/speaking/?p=1935

So, I challenge each of you, when you go home today, look at yourself in the mirror, see all of you, look at all of your greatness that you embody, accept it, and love it. And finally, when you leave the house tomorrow, try to ***extend that same love and acceptance to someone who doesn't look like you****.*

Melissa Butler, Why You Think You're Ugly.

Watch this clip as
Darren LaCroix literally falls face down
to anchor the point that when we fall, we "fall forward."
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



Darren LaCroix talks about taking risks and falling down and getting back up, he literally and purposefully falls down during his speech and ends this way:

> *What's your next step… take it. I didn't want to look back at my life and say you know I never did try that comedy thing, but I died debt-free. All of us are headed toward that goal we are going to teach a point where we get stuck and our feet are like in cement and we can't move but we're so afraid of that ouch but we forget that if we lean forward and take a risk–(He falls face down) and we fall on our face. When we get up, notice, you still made progress. So please, with me, go ahead and fall.* ***But fall forward.***
>
> *Darren LaCroiz, Winning Speech delivered at National Speech Association*

End with a Question

Asking a question at the end is one way to reengage the audience. It helps them think about what your topic might mean for them.

Watch this clip for how David Eagleman
reminds us about why his topic is important
and then ends with a question.
Notice how he pauses before his final question and
how he changes the pace of his speech for the final sentence.
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



So I think there's really no end to the possibilities on the horizon for human expansion. Just imagine an astronaut being able to feel the overall health of the International Space Station, or, for that matter, having you feel the invisible states of your own health, like your blood sugar and the state of your microbiome, or having 360-degree vision or seeing in infrared or ultraviolet. So the key is this: As we move into the future, we're going to increasingly be able to choose our own peripheral devices. We no longer have to wait for Mother Nature's sensory gifts on her timescales, but instead, like any good parent, she's given us the tools that we need to go out and define our own trajectory. **So the question now is, how do you want to go out and experience your universe?**

David Eagleman, Can We Create New Senses for Humans?

Watch this clip for how Lera Boroditsky ends with a personal note and a powerful final question.
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



I want to leave you with this final thought. I've told you about how speakers of different languages think differently, but of course, that's not about how people elsewhere think. It's about how you think. It's how the language that you speak shapes the way that you think. And that gives you the opportunity to ask, "Why do I think the way that I do?" "How could I think differently?" And also, **"What thoughts do I wish to create?"**

Lera Boroditsky, How Language Shapes the Way We Think

End with Inspiration

"Inspiring your audience
is all about helping them
see their own vision, not yours."

Anonymous

You may want to end your speech with inspiring and encouraging words. Pick words that resonate with most of your audience and deliver them in such a way that your audience feels your lift in emotion.

Watch this clip for how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ends with an inspiring final note and a powerful last few words "regain a kind of paradise"
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her Southern relatives who had moved to the North. She introduced them to a book about the Southern life that they had left behind. “They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained.”

I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single-story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, **we regain a kind of paradise.**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, The Danger of a Single Story

> ***Watch this clip for how Dan Pink ends with an inspiring final note.***
> *(I have the video cued to play just the closing)*
>
> 
>
>
> *Let me wrap up. There is a mismatch between what science knows and what business does. Here is what science knows. One: Those 20th century rewards, those motivators we think are a natural part of business, do work, but only in a surprisingly narrow band of circumstances. Two: Those if-then rewards often destroy creativity. Three: The secret to high performance isn’t rewards and punishments, but that unseen intrinsic drive– the drive to do things for their own sake. The drive to do things cause they matter.*

> *And here’s the best part. We already know this. The science confirms what we know in our hearts. So, if we repair this mismatch between what science knows and what business does, if we bring our motivation, notions of motivation into the 21st century, if we get past this lazy, dangerous, ideology of carrots and sticks, we can strengthen our businesses, we can solve a lot of those candle problems, and maybe, maybe —**we can change the world.I rest my case.***
>
> *Dan Pink, The Puzzle of Motivation*

End with Well Wishing

There are several types of closings where the speaker wished the audience well.

The Benediction Close: May God bless and keep you….
The Presidential Close: God bless you and may God bless the USA
The Congratulatory Close: I congratulate you on your accomplishment and wish you continued success.

End with Humor

You can end on a fun lighthearted note. It is important to always run your humor by a variety of people to make sure you are funny, and your humor is appropriate.

Watch this clip for how Andrew Dunham uses humor throughout his speech and ends with a funny one-liner.
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



I wish you all the best as we begin this journey on our paths and I sincerely hope and pray that your time and success have proven to be as memorable and spiritually rewarding as mine. If not, there's always summer school.

Andrew Dunham, Valedictorian Comes Out As Autistic During Speech

End with a Call to Action

If you are delivering a persuasive speech, let the audience know exactly what you want them to do.

End with a Feeling of Resolve

Paul Harvey made famous the line "And now you know…the rest of the story." Your closing should allow us to know the rest of the story or to know how a situation was resolved.

Watch this clip for how Lucy Hone
ends this tough but inspiring talk with a feeling of resolve
(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



> *If you ever find yourself in a situation where you think there's no way I'm coming back from this, I urge you to lean into these strategies and think again. I won't pretend that thinking this way is easy and it doesn't remove all the pain. But if I've learned anything over the last five years, it is that thinking this way really does help. More than anything it has shown me that it is possible to live and grieve at the same time.* ***And for that I will be***

> ***always grateful.***
>
> *Lucy Hone, The Three Secrets of Resilient People*

End with a Prop

Nancy Duarte says you should give your audience, SOMETHING THEY will ALWAYS REMEMBER–S.T.A.R. One way to do that is with an action or statement that will have the audience talking about it for a long time. President Obama did it with a mic drop.



Memorize Your Conclusion

Know your ending so well you can say it without looking at your notes. The audience is deciding what they think about you and your topic so end strong by having a plan, sticking with your plan, using strong eye contact, and a clear strong voice.

End on Time

Audiences stop listening when the time is up. If you go over, they will start checking their watches, looking at the door, or just mentally check out.

Do not diminish the effect of a great speech
with a bloated,
aimless conclusion.
Dan Rothwell.



Never End a Speech This Way

So, we've talked about ending with power, now let's talk about ways not to end your talk– be sure to avoid these.

“Times about up.”

Don’t end with any references to time. It is like a giant stop sign saying, “stop listening.” Don’t highlight that you ran over time or that it is almost time for lunch. You want them to think about your speech, not the clock.

“Any Questions?”

You want them to feel a sense of closure for your speech. End with something powerful and let them applaud. After the applause, you can offer to answer questions. Similarly, projecting your last slide with the words, “Any Questions” is a weak ending.

“Let Me Add This Point I Missed”

If you forget something in the body of your speech, it is usually best to leave it out. Most of the time you are the only one who will miss it.

“Thank You to the Team”

There is a time to thank the organizers and those who helped you but it is not at the end of your speech. Your focus should be on your audience and what they need and what they need to hear is your idea. Send a thank you letter to the team if you want them to feel your appreciation.

“I’m Sorry”

“Sorry again for the technology issue,” “I apologize for going over time, ” “I regret I have no answer to this.” These are all negative phrases. Keep to your topic that is what they need to hear and stay focused.

“I’ll Close with this Video”

No, you should close with talking about the big idea.

Rambling

> *If you don’t have a plan at the end, you will ramble. “Steer clear of meandering endings they kill a story,” according to the Moth Storytelling website. “Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!”*

To Thank or Not to Thank, That is the Question

There is a debate amongst speech professionals, speech teachers, and speech coaches about whether or not you should thank the audience. Here are their main arguments.

Why You Should <u>Not</u> Say Thank You

1. You want to end with powerful words. “Thank you” are not strong words.
2. The recency effect suggests they will remember the last words you spoke. You want them to remember more than just “thank you.”
3. It is not a very creative way to end.
4. It can be a sign of a lazy speaker, “I have no idea how to end this, I’ve run out of good things to say so I’ll say ‘Thank you’ so you will clap now.”

Why You Should Say Thank You

1. It has come to be the expected ending in many settings. Violating their expectations can cause them to have a negative reaction.
2. It clearly signals you are finished so the audience knows when to clap. The relieves the pressure from both you and the audience.
3. It expresses gratitude.

I will leave it up to you to decide what works for you. As for me, I plan on trying to find more creative ways to end other than just saying “thank you.”

✔ Maximizing the Primacy Recency Effect

If I were to read you a list of thirty things on my grocery list and then asked you to list all that you can remember, chances are you would remember the first times on the list and the last items on the list (and any ones you found interesting from the middle). When people engage in listening, they tend to remember the first and last things they hear, it is called the primacy-recency effect. This is just one more reason that your introduction and conclusion should be so well planned out. It is those first words and last words that the audience is going to remember.

The primacy recency effect influences, not only what people pay attention to in a speech, but also which speech we pay the most attention to in a series of speeches. For example, if there is a lineup of six speakers, the first and last speakers tend to get the most attention.

As a speaker, you can use this information to your advantage by volunteering to go first or last. If you are giving a long presentation, you can break it up by allowing the audience to move around or talk to a neighbor. When you come back from break, you have re-engaged that primacy effect and moved them back to a high state of attention.

Do You Have Everything You Need for a Strong Closing?

- Have I signaled my speech is coming to an end with my words or my voice?
- Have I restated my main points?
- If I am persuading my audience, do they know what I want them to do or think?
- Have I written the last three to five words in such a way that I end with powerful words?
- Have I memorized my closing?

Getting Off the Platform is Part of Your Closing

Plan on making a strong exit. Whether you are stepping off a stage or simply going to your seat, you should consider that the audience is watching you.

I have had students who finished their speech and then walked over to the trashcan and in a large, exaggerated movement, they threw their notecards in the trash. In our minds, we threw their message away with those cards. I’ve seen speakers, sit in their chairs and then announce, “I can’t believe my hands were shaking so much.” I’ve sat there and thought, “I didn’t notice.” I then realized that the comments they made influenced my perception of them and my perception of their topic.

You said your last word and the audience is applauding, now what? Look at your audience and smile and nod in appreciation before walking off the stage. If you will be answering questions, wait until after the applause stops to begin your question and answering period.

When practicing your speech, it is a good idea to start from your chair, walk up to a spot and then give your speech, and then walk back to your chair and sit down. Your “speech” impression begins and ends from your chair.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- A speech closing should include a review of the main points and a purposeful closing sentence.
- Persuasive speech endings should tell the audience specifically what they should do or think about.
- The recency effect suggests that people remember the most recent things they have heard which is one reason the closing is so important.
- Chance the pace of your speech and the tone of your voice to signal the end of the speech.

Please share your feedback, suggetions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?

Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Adichie, C.N. (2009). The danger of a single story. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg Standard YouTube License.

Anderson, C. (2016). *TED talks: The official TED guide to public speaking*. Mariner Books.

Barot, H. Fifteen powerful speech ending lines (and tips to create your own). Frantically Speaking. https://franticallyspeaking.com/15-powerful-speech-ending-lines-and-tips-to-create-your-own/

Boroditsky, L. (2017). How language shapes the way we think. https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think Standard Youtube License.

Butler, M. (2018). Why you think you're ugly. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imCBztvKgus Standard YouTube License.

Dunham. A. (2019). Valedictorian comes out as autistic during speech. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtPGrLoU5Uk Standard Youtube License.

Eagleman, D. (2015). Can we create new senses for humans?[Video]. YouTube https://youtu.be/4c1lqFXHvqI Standard YouTube License.

Hone, L. (2019). The three secrets of resilient people. [Video]. YouTube https://youtu.be/NWH8N-BvhAw Standard YouTube License.

Jeff, P. (2009). Ten ways to end your speech with a bang. http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/10-ways-to-end-your-speech

Jobs, S. (2005). You've got to find what you love. https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/

Khanna, P. (2016). Let the head of TED show you how to end your speech with power. https://www.fastcompany.com/3059459/let-the-head-of-ted-show-you-how-to-end-your-speech-with-p

Karia, A. (2013). How to open and close a TED talk (or any other speech or presentation). https://akashkaria.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/HowtoOpenandCloseaTEDTalk.pdf

LaCroix, D. (2001). World champion of public speaking. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUDCzbmLV-0 Standard YouTube License.

Mandela, N. (2011). Speech from the dock in the Rivonia trial.[Video]. YouTube https://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/i-am-prepared-to-die Standard YouTube License.

Mandela, N. (1994). Presidential Inaugural Speech. [Video]. YouTube https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/nelsonmandelainauguralspeech.htm Standard YouTube License.

Miller, B.J. (2015). What really matters at the end of life. [Video]. YouTube https://www.ted.com/talks/bj_miller_what_really_matters_at_the_end_of_life?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Moth. (2021). Storytelling tips and tricks: How to tell a successful story. https://themoth.org/share-your-story/storytelling-tips-tricks

Obama, B. (2016). White House correspondents dinner. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxFkEj7KPC0 Standard YouTube License.

Pink, D. (2009). The puzzle of motivation. [Video]. YouTube https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_the_puzzle_of_motivation Standard YouTube License.

Rothwell, D. (2014). *Practically Speaking.* Oxford University Press.Robinson, K. (2013). How to escape education's death valley. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wX78iKhInsc Standard YouTube License.

Rosling, H. (2014). Don’t Panic-Hans Rosling showing the facts about population.[Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FACK2knC08E Standard YouTube License.

Schwartz, B. (2005). The paradox of choice. [Video]. YouTube https://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_the_paradox_of_choice Standard YouTube License.

Toastmasters International. (2016). Concluding your Speech. https://www.toastmasters.org/Resources/Concluding-Your-Speech

Young, S. (2014). I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtPGrLoU5Uk Standard YouTube License.

Yousafzai, M. (2013). Malala Yousafzai addresses United Nations Youth Assembly. [Video]. YouTube https://youtu.be/3rNhZu3ttIU Standard YouTube License.

Zhang, Y. (2015). Life begins at the end of your comfort zone. [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmN4xOGkxGo Standard YouTube License.



President Obama ended his speech with two words-Obama Out and then did a mic drop at the White House Correspondents Dinner. Image from giphy.com

Media Attributions

- Audience clapping © Alex Motoc is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- jose-aragones-81QkOoPGahY-unsplash © Jose Aragones is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.5: Closing a Speech- End with Power and Let Them Know It is Time to Clap is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.6: The Power of Story- The Secret Ingredient to Making Any Speech Memorable



Ideas are not really alive
if they are confined to one person's mind.

Nancy Duarte, Speech coach and author

We love stories because they are engaging, they ignite the imagination, and they have the potential to teach us something. You have likely sat around a campfire or the dinner table telling stories? That is because stories are the primary way we understand the world causing communication scholar Rhetorical scholar Walter Fisher to call us *homo narrans–storytelling humans.* Not only is storytelling important in conversation, but it is also important to speechmaking. It is no surprise then, that when researchers looked at 500 TED Talks, they found of the TED talks that go viral, 65% included personal stories.

Professional speakers, college students, politicians, business leaders, and teachers are all beginning to understand the benefits of telling stories in speeches. Increasingly, business leaders are encouraged to move away from the old model of sharing the vision and the mission to a new model of telling the story of the business. Academic literature points out that teachers who use stories can help students understand and recall information. For years, politicians have been coached to include a story in their speeches. They do it because it works, and it is bound in science.

In short, people don't pay attention to boring things. The story is one way to engage and help ideas come alive. Cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham says, "The human mind seems exquisitely tuned to understand and remember stories—so much that psychologists sometimes refer to stories as 'psychologically privileged,' meaning that they are treated differently in memory than other types of material."

The goal of public speaking is to plant an idea into the minds of your listeners and the most effective way to accomplish that is through a story. I want to share with you three major principles about storytelling and give you concrete ways to incorporate them into your own storytelling.

1. Stories, when told properly, will ignite both the reason center and the emotion center of your audience's brains making them not only more effective in the moment but also more memorable in long run.
2. Stories activate the little voices in the audience's heads and help them think creatively about problems. This activation encourages audiences to act on the idea as opposed to just being passive listeners.
3. The best way to tell a story is to connect it to a message, offer concrete details, and follow a predetermined plotline.

(Editorial note: One of the advantages of digital textbooks is I can add videos. In my opinion, the best way to learn about how to write a good story is to see numerous examples of good stories in action. I have provided you with numerous videos illustrating how the story is used in business, used in law, used in entertainment, and used in education so that you can see the many applications. This chapter is different from standard textbooks on the subject because it includes more examples than text. You will only get deep learning if you take the time to watch the video clips.)

Tell me the fact and I'll learn.
Tell me the truth and I'll believe.
But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.

–Ancient proverb

Stories Engage the Audience and Make a Point

In under four minutes, Mark Bezos, tells a memorable story. He makes us laugh, allows us to see the situation, and then uses all the emotion and visualization he has created to make a powerful point. A good story draws us in and helps us connect with the person and their idea.



The brain doesn't pay attention to boring things.

– John Medina, author of Brain Rules

Stories Help Ideas Stick

Stories are sticky. A well-told story "sticks" to our brains and attaches to our emotions. A speaker can tell a story in such a way that the audience "sees" the story in their mind's eye and "feels" the emotions of the story. In some situations, an audience may become so involved in the story they "react" by making facial expressions or gasping in surprise. By "seeing the story" and physically reacting to the story, the audience is moved from a passive listener to an active participant.

Think about college teachers you have had who told stories as part of their lectures. Did it help you to listen? Did it help you to learn? Chances are it did. Researchers Kromka and Goodby put it to the test on one hundred ninety-four undergraduate students. One group listened to a lecture that included a lesson with a story, while others just heard the lesson's key points. Students that heard the narrative had more sustained attention to the lecture and they did better on a test of short-term recall. The stories helped them remember the material, but there was an added benefit. The students who heard the narrative liked the teacher more and were more likely to take another course from the instructor in the future.

One of the top TED Talks of all time is *My Stroke of Insigh*t by Jill Bolte Taylor. In this talk, she weaves a story so engaging that the audience is afraid to blink because they might miss what happens next. Watch as she tells you about the "morning of the stroke."



> *On the morning of the stroke, I woke up to a pounding pain behind my left eye. And it was the kind of caustic pain that you get when you bite into ice cream. And it just gripped me — and then it released me. And then it just gripped me — and then it released me. And it was very unusual for me to ever experience any kind of pain, so I thought, "OK, I'll just start my normal routine."*
>
> *So I got up and I jumped onto my cardio glider, which is a full-body, full-exercise machine. And I'm jamming away on this thing, and I'm realizing that my hands look like primitive claws grasping onto the bar. And I thought, "That's very peculiar." And I looked down at my body and I thought, "Whoa, I'm a weird-looking thing." And it was as though my consciousness had shifted away from my normal perception of reality, where I'm the person on the machine having the experience, to some esoteric space where I'm witnessing myself having this experience.*
> *Jill Bolte Taylor*

? Try This

I'd like to illustrate to you the connection between thinking and doing.

- Imagine you are looking at the Eiffel tower.
- Think of two words that start with "b."
- Think of two words that start with "p."
- Imagine that I am cutting a lemon in half and then squeezing the juice in a glass.
- Imagine fingernails running down a chalkboard.

When imagining the Eiffel tower, most people's eyes scan up.

When thinking of the words that begin with "b" and "p", most people will mouth the words.

When imagining the lemon, many people will salivate.

When imagining fingernails on a chalkboard, many people will tighten their facial muscles.

We respond physically because a connection exists between our imagination and our physical response. When we say things in our speech that cause a physical response, the audience becomes actively engaged with our talk.

Stories Help the Audience Become Emotionally Engaged

"Emotions are the condiments of speech," according to speech coach Nancy Duarte. They add spice and flavor to your talk. Emotions such as passion, vulnerability, excitement, and fear are particularly powerful. Researchers at Ohio State have a word for that sense of being carried away into the world of a story. They call it *transportation.* Their research demonstrated that people can get so immersed in a story they hardly notice the world around them. Audiences can be transported by stories as facts and stories as fiction. Narrative transportation theory proposes that when people lose themselves their intentions and attitudes may change to align with the characters in the story. As speakers, our goal should be to help our audience get lost in the story. Sometimes that means telling our own stories, sometimes it means telling the stories of others, and other times telling a hypothetical story.

You've probably heard of an fMRI. It's the machine that measures blood flow to the brain. Scientists used fMRI machines to measure what happened when someone is telling a story and when someone is listening to that story. What they found is exciting. When they compared the speaker's brain to the listener's brains, they noticed the brains were lighting up in the same places. When the speaker described something emotional, the audience was feeling the emotion and the emotional centers of their brains were lighting up. Princeton researcher, Uri Hanson calls this brain synching, "neural coupling."

Consider a study at Emory University that noticed differences in how brains respond to texture words, "she had a rough day" versus non-texture words "she had a bad day." The texture words activated sensory parts of the brain. When telling a story, find creative and tactile descriptions to engage your audience.

Texture Words	Nontexture words
He is a smooth talker	*He is persuasive*
The logic was fuzzy	*The logic was vague*
She is sharp-witted	*She is quick-witted*
She gave a slick performance	*She gave a stellar performance*
She is soft-hearted	*She is kind-hearted*

Imagine you pull up to a flashing red stoplight at an intersection. Seeing it in your mind activates the visual part of your brain. Now, imagine a loved one giving you a pat on the back. Once you imagine it, your tactile center will light up. This is quite powerful when you think about it. When you hear a story, you don't just hear it, but you *feel it*, *visualize* it, and *simulate* it.

Dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins are what David Philips calls the "angel's cocktail." He suggests speakers should intentionally create stories to activate each of these hormones. By telling a story in which you build suspense, you increase dopamine which increases focus, memory, and motivation. Telling a story in which the audience can empathize with a character increases oxytocin, the bonding hormone which is known to increase generosity and trust. Finally, making people laugh can activate feel-good endorphins which help people feel more relaxed, more creative, and more focused.

Because of neural coupling (our brain waves synching) and transportation (getting lost in a story), the audience members begin to see the world of the person in the story. Because of hormonal changes, they feel their situation and can empathize. A thoughtfully crafted story has the power to help the audience believe in a cause and care about the outcome.



Time and time,
when faced with the task of persuading a group of managers

to get enthusiastic about a major change,
storytelling was the only thing that worked.
Steve Denning, the Leaders Guide to Storytelling

Stories Inspire Action

The conventional view has always been when you speak, you try to get the listeners to pay attention to you. The way you get them to pay attention is to keep the little voice inside their heads quiet. If it stays quiet, then your message will get through. Stephen Denning in *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling* suggests an alternative view. He challenges speakers to tell stories to work in harmony with the voices in people's heads. He says that you don't want your audience to ignore their voice; you want to tell a story in a way that awakens their little voice to tell its own story. You awaken their voice and then you give it something to do. He advocates using stories as springboards to help the audience think about situations so they can begin to mentally solve problems. In this way, you are not speaking to an audience but rather you are inviting the audience to participate with you.

Consider this story told by Jim Ferrell about the local garbage man and how it engages you and creates both mental images and new ideas.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://uark.pressbooks.pub/speaking/?p=29

Stories Help the Ideas Stick in a Way that the Audience Remembers and Understands

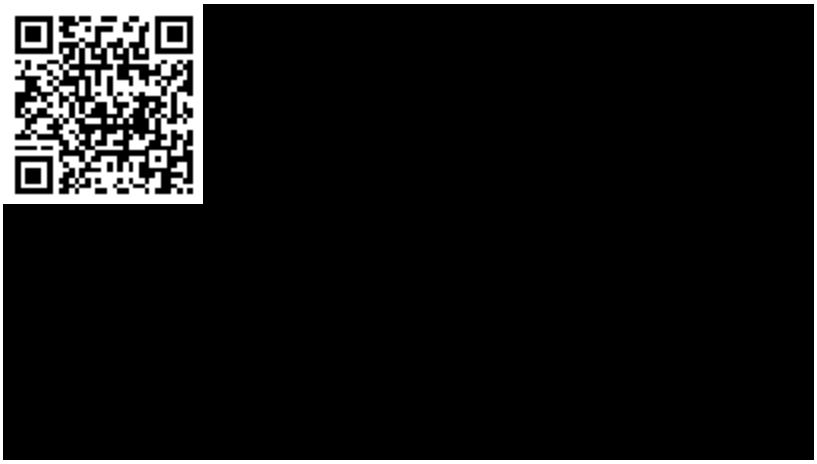
Steven Covey, considered one of the twenty-five most influential people by Time Magazine, teaches on business, leadership, and family. In his books and seminars, he uses stories to help the audience remember his lessons. In this video, *Green and Clean*, he uses a story to help the audience understand servant leadership. As you watch, ask yourself if you will remember this story and the lesson that it offers?



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://uark.pressbooks.pub/speaking/?p=29

Stories Help Win Law Cases–Example of a Story Analogy

Gerry Spence is considered one of the winningest lawyers and he credits his ability to tell stories to his success. In this video clip, you can see him in action as he tells this jury the story of the old man and the bird. Imagine yourself as a member of the jury, how might this affect you?



> *"Here's the story of the bird that some of you wanted to hear again. This is one I've used many, many times. It's a nice method by which you can transfer responsibility for your client to the jury. Ladies and gentlemen, I am about to leave you, but before I leave you I'd like to tell you a story about a wise old man and a smart-alec boy. The smart-alec boy had a plan, he wanted to show up the wise old man, to make a fool of him. The smart-alec boy had caught a bird in the forest. He had him in his hands. The little bird's tail was sticking out. The bird is alive in his hands. The plan was this: He would go up to the old man and he would say, "Old man, what do I have in my hands?" The old man would say, "You have a bird, my son." Then the boy would say, "Oldman, is the bird alive or is it dead?" If the old man said that the bird was dead, he would open up his hands and the bird would fly off free, off into the trees, alive, happy. But if the old man said the bird was alive, he would crush it and crush it in his hands and say, "See, old man, the bird is dead." So, he walked up to the old man and said, "Old man, what do I have in my hands?" The old man said, "You have a bird, my son." He said, "Old man, is the bird alive or is it dead?" And the old man said, "The bird is in your hands, my son." Ladies and gentlemen of the jury my client is in yours." Gerry Spence*

Stories Help People Engage With Topics

Alan Alda founded the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science because he wanted to help scientists learn how to best communicate what they know to a lay audience. In this video clip, he shares his lesson on using stories to draw in an audience.



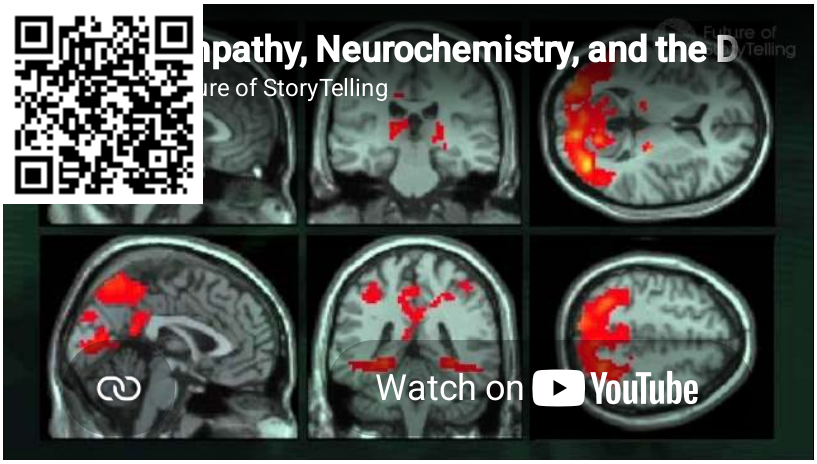
Example from a Corporate Trainer

The Leader Who Withheld Their Story
by Robert “Bob” Kienzle

Our communication training firm was hired to conduct a storytelling workshop for a major client. I quickly realized a major problem: the leader refused to tell a story in the storytelling workshop. We brought the water to the horse and the horse wouldn’t drink. Read the full story of Bob explaining how he taught one of his corporate clients to use storytelling.

Story Changes the Brain Chemistry in Listeners

Paul Zak told audience members a story and then measured the chemicals their bodies released during this story. His conclusion is that story changes brain chemistry and makes individuals more empathetic. In this case, they were more likely to donate money to charity. Watch this video as Zak talks about a universal story structure that includes exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.



Stories Can Have Drawbacks

While storytelling can be used positively, it can have drawbacks. A story can be more memorable than the point. If the audience remembers your story without the purpose of the story, you missed it. In the teacher’s study mentioned before, students had better short-term recall when the teacher told a narrative. The study also reported that listening to stories increased student cognitive load and some students basically used up their “brainpower” to remembering extraneous information instead of the lesson. The lesson here is to make sure the story reinforces a point and to make sure that the point is clear.

Because stories draw people in emotionally, there can be ethical challenges. Is it ethical to tug at an audience’s heartstrings to get them to donate money? How about giving you money? Speakers need to consider the ethical obligation to consider the impact of the story. Stories tap into emotions and create lasting memories. Stories told with the wrong motives can be manipulative.



The Formula for a Good Story

Tension-Release

So now you see the clear advantage in telling a story, let's talk about the formula for a good story. A good story should help the audience see the events in their mind's eye. Your story should play out like a movie in their head. This movie happens because you help them see the setting, characters, and details. To be fully engaged, the audience must *feel* some sort of tension.

The formula is tension and release.

The best stories create tension or conflict and then in some way resolve conflict. In persuasion, a story can create tension that can be released only by acting on the persuasion. Haven defines a story as "A character-based narration of a character's struggles to overcome obstacles and reach an important goal." Notice the focus on struggle and overcoming the struggle. Once you decide on the story that you want to tell, work on helping the audience feel the tension and release.

> *If the point of life is the same as the point of a story, the point of life is character transformation. If I got any comfort as I set out on my first story, it was that in nearly every story, the protagonist is transformed. He's a jerk at the beginning and nice at the end, or a coward at the beginning and brave at the end. If the character doesn't change, the story hasn't happened yet. And if story is derived from real life, if story is just condensed version of life then life itself may be designed to change us so that we evolve from one kind of person to another.*
> *Donald Miller, A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: What I Learned While Editing My Life.*

Dale Carnegie's formula for storytelling includes three parts: Incident, action, and benefit. In the incident phase, the storyteller shares a vivid personal experience relevant to the point. Next, they give the action phrase, and they share the specific action that was taken. Finally, the speaker tells the benefit of taking the action. It still fits the tension-release formula, it just expands it to make sure that the speaker clearly lets the audience know what conclusion they are supposed to draw.

Dave Lieber illustrates this tension and release in his opening story and explains how it works. (You have to watch only the first five minutes to get the point, but I warn you it is hard to stop listening once he has you hooked) According to Dave Lieber, the formula is to meet the character; there is a low part in the story; the hero pushes up against the villain and overcomes.



Good stories represent a change

One part of the tension-release model is how the character changes. Matthew Dick Moth storytelling champion suggests that stories, where no change took place in the storyteller, are just anecdotes, romps, drinking stories, or vacation stories, but they leave no real lasting impression.

> *The story of how you're an amazing person who did an amazing thing and ended up in an amazing place is not a story, it is a recipe for a douchebag. The story of how you are a pathetic person who did a pathetic thing and remained pathetic, is also not a story, it is a recipe for a sadsack. You should represent a change in behavior, a change in heart, a change in attitude. It can be a small change or a very large change. A story cannot simply be a series of remarkable events. You must start out as one version of yourself and end as something new. The change can be infinitesimal. It need not reflect an improvement in yourself or your character, but change must happen.*
> *Matthew Dick.*
>
> *I once was this, but now I am this*
>
> *I once thought this, but now I think this*
>
> *I once felt this, but now I feel this.*
>
> *I once was hopeful, but now I am not*
>
> *I once was lost, but now I am found*
>
> *I once was happy, but now I am sad*
>
> *I once was sad, but now I am happy*
>
> *I once was uncertain, but now I know*
>
> *I once was angry, but now I am grateful*
>
> *I once was afraid, but now I am fearless*
>
> *I once doubted, but now I believe*

Stories Often Follow Common Plots

According to Heath and Heath of *Made to Stick*, there are common story plots. Each of these can be used in most speech types and can be adapted to the tension-release model.

Challenge Plot

- Underdog story
- Rags-to-riches story
- Willpower over adversity

they inspire us to act.

- To take on challenges
- To work harder

Connection Plot

- Focusing on relationships
- Making and developing friendships
- Discovering and growing in love

they inspire us in social ways.

- To love others
- To help others
- To be more tolerant of others

Creativity Plot

- Making a mental breakthrough
- Solving a longstanding puzzle
- Attacking a problem in an innovative way

they inspire us to do something differently.

- To be creative
- To experiment
- To try something new

Elements to a Good Story

For the audience to experience the tension and release, they must be invested in the story. Good stories help the audience see the setting, know the characters, and feel the action.

1. Setting

Think of the setting as a basket to hold your story. If you start with the basket, the audience has a place to hold all the other details you give them. For this reason, many storytellers begin by describing the setting.

2. Characters

When you describe how the characters look or how they felt, we can see them as if we are watching them in a movie. The trick is to tell enough details we can create a mental picture of the character without giving so much information that we get bogged down.

3. Action

When you describe the action that is taking place, the audience begins to *feel* the action. If you describe something sad that happened, the audience will feel the sadness. If you describe something exciting that happened to you or a character, the audience will feel that excitement.

Watch the first two minutes of this video and notice how Matthew starts with the setting and the characters and you can see the events unfold. You can see the action take place in your mind's eye and you become invested in his story.



It's December 23, 1988, I'm 17 years old. I'm coming out of the record store and I have a shopping bag in my hand. I see my friend Pat, he's coming towards me. He sees the bag and he asks me what's in it. I tell him it's a concert t-shirt. It's a Christmas present. It's a surprise Christmas present for our friend Benji, my best friend. Pat looks at me a little funny–and Pat's only 15–but he's already cooler than I will ever be in my entire life. So when he looks at me like this, I've learned to pay attention. Pat tells me that guys don't buy Christmas presents for other guys. He tells me they especially don't buy surprise Christmas presents for other guys. He tells me that he has dated girls for six months and never bought them a single thing so for me to buy Benji a surprise Christmas present is really strange. I'm suddenly feeling very self-conscious about the betta fish in the back seat of my car, the one I bought for Pat like an hour ago at the pet store and the comic books I bought for Coug and the sweatshirt I bought for Tim. I have filled my car with Christmas presents for my friends and I know that Pat is right. It is strange to buy surprise Christmas presents for your friends, but it's been a long time since I've had a good Christmas and I want this year to be different. Through a combination of failing marriage and persistent poverty and a terrible stepfather, the last Christmases have just been a disaster. Matthew Dicks

Flavor Crystals–The Little Extras

As a child, I used to love breath mints that would have blue flecks in them. They were called flavor crystals and they were there as little taste surprises that would enhance the flavor. You can enhance your story with little flavor crystals–little details that make it more interesting. Flavor crystals are those extra details that will impact your audience.

Ruben Gonzalez and Olympic Champion luger is a motivational speaker. As you watch this video clip, notice how he incorporates details in his story so we can see what's happening.



Make Sure Your Story is Relatable

When you pick your story, make sure that you pick themes others can relate to in some way. Watch World Champion Presiyan Vasilev and notice how he uses little examples that everyone can relate to, like how you always get a flat tire when you are dressed up.



Why do flat tires always happen when you're dressed up? Is there something collapsed in your life? Your knowledge may be limited. Your skills may be rusty. But no doubt, you will be changed when you reach out.

? Do This: Keep a Story Log



Notetaking Challenge

Matthew Dicks suggests sitting down every day and asking yourself, "What happened today that is storyworthy?" Keep a notebook and write down a few ideas every day.

The Magical Science of Storytelling TED Speaker David Philips has a similar suggestion. He encourages people to not only write down your stories but you index them based on the emotional reaction you wanting to get.

✔ Theory Application

Literary theorist Kenneth Burke asks us to think of life as a drama where people are actors on a stage. What is their motivation for what they do and what they say? He offered five strategies for viewing life that he called *dramatistic pentad.*

1. **Act:** What happened? What is the action? What is going on? What action; what thoughts?
2. **Scene:** Where is the action happening? What is the background situation?
3. **Agent:** Who is involved in the action? What are their roles?
4. **Agency:** How do the agents act? By what means do they act?
5. **Purpose:** Why do the agents act? What do they want?

How does all this relate to telling a story in a speech? The first thing you can do is to use this list when brainstorming how to fully develop your story. You can also use it as a way to evaluate the completeness of your story. The third way to use it is as a tool to evaluate your audience and how they view life. Why do they do what they do and what do they need to hear in order to be inspired, motivated, or persuaded?

In this TED Talk, *My Invention that Made Peace with Lions*, Richard Turere makes the audience wonder how a problem like lions killing livestock can possibly be solved. Richard draws us into his story and makes us want to know how a young boy could solve such a large problem. Watch this video and see if you can apply each of Burke's Five Items.



? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- A story is a powerful tool because it engages the audience on not just a logical but also an emotional level.
- Good stories offer a setting, a description of the characters, and add enough detail for the audience to see the story take place in their mind's eye. The action of a story should be told in a way that the audience can see the events unfold in their mind's eye.
- Good stories have tension and release.
- Good stories have characters and situations that demonstrate a change.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

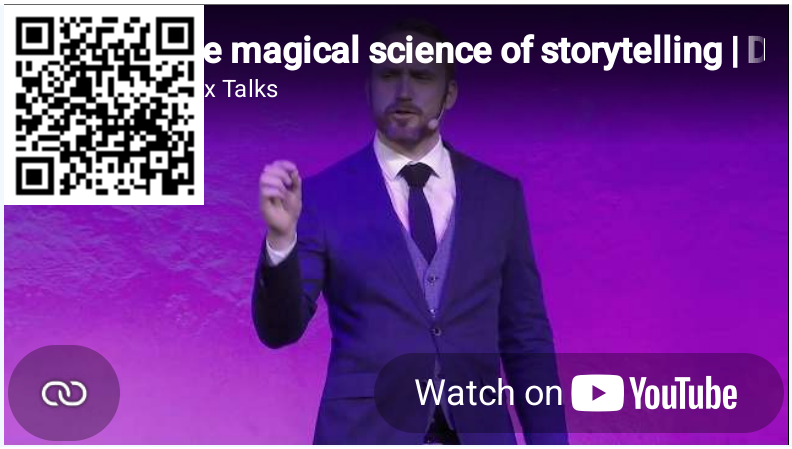
Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

Bonus Features

There is so much information on this topic, that I struggled with what to include and what to leave out or put as optional. Here are a few videos that I like to think of as the BONUS FEATURES. In addition, there is a supplemental chapter on story that includes more videos and activities.

✔ The Magical Science of Storytelling



David Philips uses stories to illustrate how storytelling can activate what he calls the angel's cocktail: dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins.

Angel's Cocktail

- **Dopamine**
  - What it does: Increases focus, motivation, memory.
  - How to do it: Build suspense, launch a cliffhanger, create a cycle of waiting and expecting.
- **Oxytocin**
  - What it does: Increases generosity, trust, bonding.
  - How to do it: Create empathy for whatever character you build.
- **Endorphin**
  - What it does: Increases creativity and focus and people become more relaxed.
  - How to do it: Make people laugh.

? The Structure of Story

Nancy Duarte studied hundreds of speeches and found the same storytelling technique. In her TED talk, she provides this chart. It is a story that is easy to digest, remember and retell.

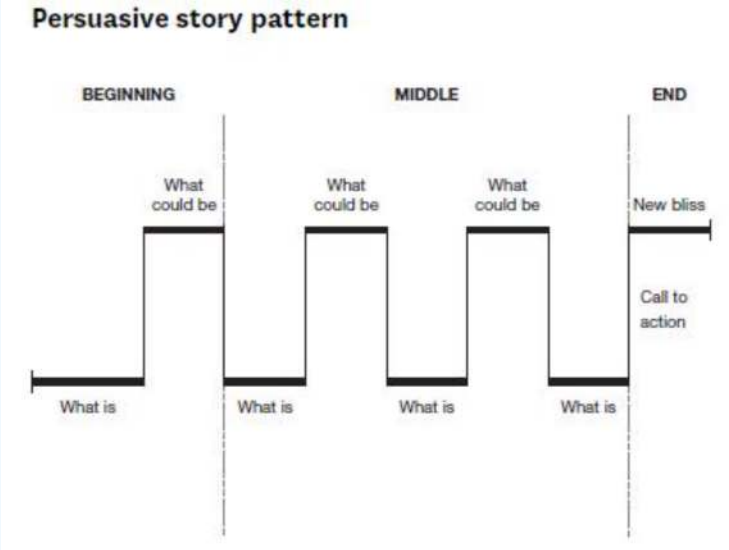


Figure 1: Nancy Duarte-Persuasive Story Pattern



✔ Examples of Storytelling

- Storytelling in a Eulogy: Brook Shield's Eulogy to Michael Jackson:



- Storytelling in Business: Steve Denning Discovered the Power of Leadership:



- Storytelling and Education: Speak Less, Expect More. Matthew Dicks:



REFERENCES

Alda, A. (2017). *If I understood you, would I have this look on my face?* Random House.

Alda, A. (2017). Knowing how to tell a good story is like having mind control. Big Think. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4k6Gm4tlXw Standard YouTube License.

Bezos, M. (2011). A life lesson from a volunteer firefighter. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/mark_bezos_a_life_lesson_from_a_volunteer_firefighter?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare Standard YouTube License.

Bolte-Taylor, J.92008). My Stroke of Insight. Ted Talk. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_my_stroke_of_insight?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Braddock, K., Dillard, J. P. (25 February 2016). Meta-analytic evidence for the persuasive effect of narratives on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. *Communication Monographs*, *83* (4), 446–467. doi:10.1080/03637751.2015.1128555. S2CID 146978687.

Brooks, D. (2019). The lies our culture tells us about what matters–and a better way to live. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/david_brooks_the_lies_our_culture_tells_us_about_what_matters_and_a_better_way_to_live?language=en Standard Youtube License.

Burke, K. (1945). *A grammar of motive*s. Berkeley: U of California Press.

Carnegie, D. (2017). *The art of storytelling.* Dale Carnegie & Associates ebook.

Covey, S. (2017). Green and Clean. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8MylQ_VPUI Standard YouTube License.

Dahlstrom, M,F. (2014). Using narratives and storytelling to communicate science with nonexpert audiences. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 111(4), 13614–13620. DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1320645111

Denning, S. (2005). *The leader's guide to storytelling: Mastering the art and discipline of business narrative.* John Wiley and Son.

Denning, S. (2001). *The springboard: How storytelling ignites action in knowledge-era organizations.* Taylor & Francis.

Dicks, M. (2018). *Storyworthy: Engage, teach, persuade, and change your life through the power of storytelling.* New World.

Dicks, M. (2016). This is Gonna Suck. Moth Mainstage. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3J4Q5c1C1w Standard YouTube License.

Duarte, N. (n.d.) Fifteen Science-Based Public Speaking Tips to be a Master Speaker, The Science of People. https://www.scienceofpeople.com/public-speaking-tips/.

Ferrell, J. (2017). An outward mindset for an inward world. Jim Ferrell Keynote. The Arbinger Institute. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_phMQY_3S8 Standard YouTube License.

Fisher, W.R. (2009). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monograph*s, 51 (1), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758409390180

Fisher, W.R. (1985). The Narrative Paradigm: In the Beginning, *Journal of Communication*, 35(4), 74-89. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1985.tb02974.x

Gallo, C. (2016). I've analyzed 500 TED Talks, and this is the one rule you should follow when you give a presentation. *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/ted-talk-rules-for-presentations-2016-3

Gershon, N, & Page, W. (2001). What storytelling can do for information visualization. *Communication of the ACM*, 44, 31–37.https://doi.org/10.1145/381641.381653

Gonzales, R. (2011). Three-time Olympian, peak performance expert. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqMOrjsRUT4. Standard YouTube License.

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *79*(5), 701–721. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.79.5.701

Green, S. J., Grorud-Colvert, K. & Mannix, H. (2018). Uniting science and stories: Perspectives on the value of storytelling for communicating science. *Facets*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2016-0079

Hasson, U., Ghazanfar, A.A., Galantucci, B., Garrod S, & Keysers C. (2012). Brain-to-brain coupling: a mechanism for creating and sharing a social world. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *16*(2), 114–121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2011.12.007

Haven, K. (2007). *Story proof: The science behind the startling power of story.* Kendall Haven.

Heath, C & Heath, D. (2008). *Made to Stick.* Random House.

Homo Narrans: Story-Telling in Mass Culture and Everyday Life. (1985). *Journal of Communication*, 35 (3) https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1985.tb02973.x

Kromka, S. M. & Goodboy, A. K. (2019) Classroom storytelling: Using instructor narratives to increase student recall, affect, and attention, *Communication Education*, 68:1, 20-43. DOI: 10.1080/03634523.2018.1529330

Lacey, S., Stilla, R., & Sathian, K. (2012). Metaphorically feeling: comprehending textural metaphors activates somatosensory cortex. *Brain and language*, *120*(3), 416–421. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2011.12.016

Lieber, D. (2013). The power of storytelling to change the world. TEDtalk. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Bo3dpVb5jw Standard YouTube License.

Miller, D. (1994). A million miles in a thousand years: How I learned to live a better story. Thomas Nelson.

Philips, D. (2017). The magical science of storytelling. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj-hdQMa3uA Standard YouTube License.

Reynolds, G. (2014). Why storytelling matters TED. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbV3b-l1sZs Standard YouTube License.

Simmons, A. (2001). The story factor: Inspiration, influence, and persuasion through the art of storytelling. Basic Books.

Spencer, G. (1995). *How to argue and win every time*. St. Martin.

Spence, G. (2018). Persuasive storytelling for lawyers by Alan Howard. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzdoR2PJqYg Standard YouTube License

Turere, T. (2013). My invention that made peace with lions. TED. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAoo–SeUIk Standard YouTube License.

Willingham, D. T. (2009). *Why Don't Students Like School?: A cognitive scientist answers questions about how the mind works and what it means for the classroom*. Jossey-Bass.

Zac, P.J. (2014). Why your brain loves good storytelling. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2014/10/why-your-brain-loves-good-storytelling

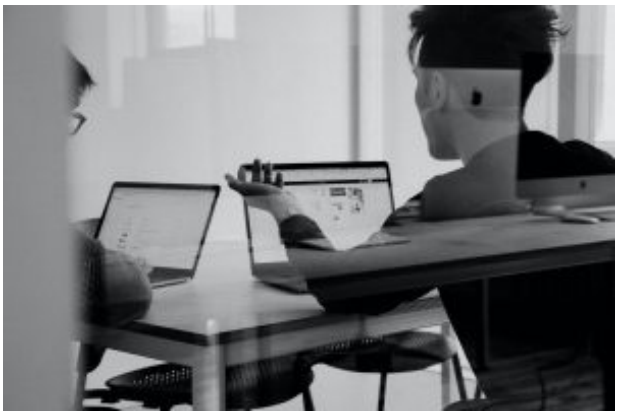
Zac, P.J. (2012). Empathy, neurochemistry, and the dramatic arc: Paul Zac and the future of storytelling. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1a7tiA1Qzo Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Sitting around a campfire © Ball Park Brand is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Voices in your head is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Formula for a story © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Take Notes
- Persuasive Story Pattern

This page titled 1.6: The Power of Story- The Secret Ingredient to Making Any Speech Memorable is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.7: Giving and Receiving Feedback- It is Harder Than You Think



- Your colleague asks you to listen to them practice their speech practice and give them feedback.
- Your teacher asks you to give feedback to another classmate about their speech.
- Your boss asks, “What did you think about my speech?”

In each case, the person is looking to you to provide feedback. In this chapter, I will talk about how to assess the feedback situation, how to offer constructive criticism, and how to graciously receive criticism. Let’s start with how to ask for feedback and listen graciously.

Beta Testing with Friends

One useful way to test out your speech is with friends or trusted colleagues. In the world of fan fiction, writers send out a manuscript for beta testing. The idea is that a group of people with eyes on a text can provide helpful suggestions. Seek out those individuals in your life who will be beta testers for you. It is especially important for you to identify the purpose of your speech and what potential problems to look for. For example, are you wanting someone to proof your outline for formatting mistakes or are you wanting someone to tell you if your speech will work for the audience you have? You should seek out friends who will build you up, but you should also seek out those who will give you honest feedback.



Think of feedback as a gift.

Receiving Feedback

When you ask for feedback from others, receive their feedback as a gift. Someone is taking their time and giving it to you; someone is putting themselves out there and saying things that might cause discomfort, but they are doing it for you. Individuals vary on how they receive feedback and how comfortable they are with being evaluated. It can be hard, I know. Growth can be hard.

When receiving feedback, try doing the following:

1. Sit in a non-defensive posture. It is tempting to cross your arms and to tense up all your muscles when receiving oral feedback. Keep your body open and loose. Staying open helps them to feel like you really want their suggestions and

closed arms can equal a closed mind — keep an open body.
2. Do not take feedback as a personal insult.
3. If the feedback is verbal, write down the suggestions (even if you disagree with the suggestions). Respect the other person's opinions by writing them down. It makes them feel like they have been heard and you appreciate the feedback they are giving. (Writing the feedback down also helps you to not cross your arms defensively–see suggestion one– and it helps you remember the suggestions.
4. Do not take it as a personal insult. (I mean it).
5. Avoid the temptation to defend yourself. "I did it this way because…" or, "I thought it would be best to…" You already know why you did things the way you did. Interrupting them to tell them the reasons you did what you did comes off as defensive and reduces the likelihood they will give you all the feedback they have to offer. You already know what you were thinking and by telling them you haven't advanced your situation. Use this time to learn what they are thinking.
6. Do not take it as a personal insult. (Really, this is so important).
7. Breathe. Most people feel stress when someone is giving them constructive criticism, breathe and relax so you can really listen.
8. Do not take it personally. Do not take it personally. Do not take it personally. I said it three times so it will stick. Since it is about your performance or your speech writing, it is hard not to feel criticism of your speech as a criticism of your person. Try to take criticism instead as someone caring enough about you to push you to grow.

Don't be a Lynn. Yeah, that's me, I'm the Lynn that you are *not* supposed to be. I remember being in high school debate my sophomore year and getting a grade from my teacher on my speech performance. She wrote, "slow down." I can remember being so mad because this was proof that the "evil witch" hated me. It didn't matter that I earned an A on that speech and that there were many positive things mentioned. It didn't matter that she picked me to go to the best competitions. No, I was convinced that those two words meant she hated me. Now, I know to take advice as proof that someone cares and not as a criticism. It took me only twenty-plus years to get there. Don't be a Lynn.

? After Every Speech, Do a Self-Evaluation

Allison Shapira of Global Speaking suggests you do a self-evaluation after each speech:

1. What did I do well?
2. What didn't I do so well?
3. What am I going to do differently next time?

Write these down and keep this on file for the next time you give a speech.

(As a teacher, I do this every time I get student evaluations. I have a file of helpful suggestions from students. Yes, I even keep the critiques. I review the file every semester before I reteach the class. I think it makes me a better teacher.)

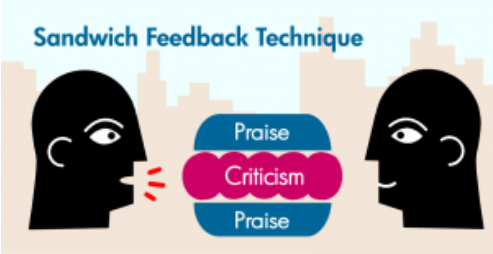
Constructive Criticism

There will be times when others look to you to read over their speech or listen to them practice and then give them constructive criticism. Constructive criticism is made up of two words: constructive–the building of something, and criticism–the giving of a critique. So constructive criticism is critiquing with the intention of building something. When we give others constructive criticism, our goal should be to help build them to be better speakers.

Give Them Help

> *Reagel and Reagle came up with a creative way to remember the goal of feedback, it should **HELP**:*
>
> ***Help** the speaker improve*
> ***Encourage** another speech*
> ***Lift** self-esteem*
> ***Provide** useful recommendations*

Give Them a Sandwich



One way to give constructive criticism is to use the sandwich method. Say something positive, give feedback about something they can work on to improve, and then say something positive. This way, the first and last words out of your mouth are positive.



Ask Questions

Ask honest questions that can help lead them to solutions or ask questions to soften the sound of negative feedback:
“What did you mean by…”
“Have you considered? ”
“Have you thought about…?”
“When you said… did you really mean?”

For example:
“Have you considered the impact of showing such a gruesome photo on your slide?”
“Have you considered starting with a quote? ”
“Have you thought about whether the people in the back will be able to see your poster?”
“Have you thought about using a microphone so everyone can hear you?”

Different People, Different Types of Feedback

It is no surprise that people give and receive feedback differently. One person might take a feedback statement and be grateful for the corrections while the next person might take it as a complete insult. People are unique and I want to talk about a few of the most common differences. My goal here is not to put people in boxes or types, but rather to help you be more empathetic as a giver and receiver of feedback.

High and Low Self Monitors

Psychology researcher Mark Snyder identified people as being either high self-monitors or low self-monitors. High self-monitors typically try to fit in and play the role according to the context. They are about image, and they are motivated to fit in with their peers. They like to know what is expected, so they can adapt to the situation. Giving them useful feedback may mean pointing out how they can make changes in their message to meet the audience’s expectations. When giving feedback to high self-monitors, focus the feedback on how they can elevate their credibility in the eyes of the audience.

On the other hand, low self-monitors tend to be motivated to act based on their inner beliefs and values. They are motivated to be true to their sense of self and to above all– be genuine. When giving low self-monitors feedback, encourage them to be the best speaker they can be while being true to themselves. Focus on giving them feedback in a way that encourages them to harness their unique talents.

While you may not know exactly whether they are high or low self-monitor, I bet you have some idea of what motivates them. The more you can tailor your feedback to them, the more likely it is they will hear what you are saying. If you are curious about your type, you can take the quiz. You can have the person giving you feedback take the quiz as well. This can be a helpful exercise to think about how you give and receive feedback.

Take the high and low self-monitor quiz to find out your type

Cultural Differences



When you know your sickness
You're halfway cured.
French saying

In the book, *The Culture Map*, a Dutch businessman is quoted as saying. "It is all a lot of hogwash. All that positive feedback just strikes us in the face and not in the least bit motivating." People from different cultural groups have different feedback norms. As our society grows increasingly diverse, it is important to learn not just how to give good feedback, but to give feedback that demonstrates an awareness of how different cultures give and receive feedback.

Erin Meyer does international training to help business professionals understand differences and similarities and how to bridge the gap:

> *Managers in different parts of the world are conditioned to give feedback in drastically different ways. The Chinese manager learns never to criticize a colleague openly or in front of others, while the Dutch managers learns always to be honest and to give the message straight. Americans are trained to wrap positive messages around negative ones, while the French are trained to criticize passionately and provide positive feedback sparingly. Having a clear understanding of these differences and strategies for navigating them is crucial for leaders of cross-cultural teams.*
> *Erin Meyer, The Culture Map*

Upgraders and Downgraders

Meyers identifies cultures as *Upgraders* and *Downgraders*. Upgraders use words or phrases to make negative feedback feel stronger. An upgrader might say, "this is *absolutely* inappropriate." As you read this, see if you identify more as an upgrader or downgrader.

Upgraders say:

- Absolutely–"That was absolutely shameless."
- Totally–"You totally missed the point."

- Strongly–” I strongly suggest that you…”

By contrast, downgraders use words to soften the criticism. A downgrader might say, “We are not quite there yet” or “This is just my opinion, but…”

Downgraders say:

- “Kind of”
- “Sort of”
- “A little”
- “Maybe”
- “Slightly”
- “This is just my opinion.”

When giving and receiving feedback across cultures, it is helpful to be aware of these differences so you can “hear” what they are really saying. Take for example this statement as a Dutch person complains about how Americans give feedback.

> *The problem is that we cant’ tell when the feedback is supposed to register to us as excellent, ok, or really poor. For a Dutchman, the word “excellent” is saved for a rare occasion and “okay” is…well, neutral. But with the Americans, the grid is different. “Excellent” is used all the time, “Okay” seems to mean, “not okay.” “Good” is only a mild complement. And when the message was intended to be bad, you can pretty much assume that, if an American is speaking and the listner is Dutch, the real meaning of the message will be lost all together.*
> *Erin Meyer, The Culture Map.*

Nannette Ripmeester, Director of Expertise in Labour Mobility, illustrates these differences to her clients with a chart. This chart shows the differences between what the British say, what they mean, and what the Dutch understand. (This is a condensed version of her list.)

What the British Say	What the British Mean	What the Dutch Understand
Very interesting	I don’t like it	They are impressed.
Perhaps you would think about… I would suggest…	This is an order. Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	Think about this idea and do it if you like it.
Please think about that some more	It’s a bad idea. Don’t do it.	It’s a good idea, keep developing it.
I would suggest	Do it as I want you to	An open suggestion
An issue that worries me slightly	A great worry	A minor issue
A few issues that need to be addressed	A whole lot needs to be changed	2-3 issues need rewriting

Chances are as you read this list, you identified yourself in some of the statements and identified someone you know who is in the other list. Hopefully, this made you think about how personal style can be as different as cultural style. The big idea here is when you are giving and receiving feedback, it can be helpful to try to identify their communication style and adjust accordingly.

Politeness Strategies

As you already know, whenever you critique someone’s work, there is a potential to hurt their feelings. There are many factors that influence whether the feedback is helpful or hurtful. In communication, we use the term “face” to mean the sense of self a person projects. People can “take face” by creating a situation where someone looks bad to others or people can “lose face” by doing something that diminishes them in the eyes of others. Optimally, we want people to feel like they “gain-face” and feel encouraged. The way that you give feedback as well as the person’s natural tendencies will influence how “face” is affected.

When giving feedback, you should think about how your feedback takes or gives face. You also need to consider what is at stake for the other person. Is this a small speech assignment or is it a career-defining presentation? In addition, critiquing someone privately vs critiquing someone in front of their boss will have different "face" outcomes.

How much you are willing to "take face" from someone may depend on the importance of the feedback. You will likely want to provide more suggestions for someone who is doing a career speech to get their dream job vs that same person doing a college speech worth minimal points. You will likely be more invested in helping a friend polish a speech to make it just right as opposed to someone you barely know.

Finally, the other thing influencing feedback is the power difference between people. You will likely give feedback differently to your little sister than you would to your boss. The status of the individuals and how important power is to them will impact how "face" is taken and given. For example, a high-power country like China would consider an open critique of a teacher, boss, or elder a huge insult, whereas someone from a low-power country, would be less offended. In any situation, you will be negotiating power, context, and the need to save face.

Taking all these factors into account, Brown and Levinson created Politeness Theory as a way to explain the different ways we give feedback to save face.

Bald on Record: This type of feedback is very direct without concern for the person's esteem face. This type of feedback is usually given if there is a small fix the speaker would feel strongly about.

> ***Examples of bald on record feedback:***

- "Be sure you bold the headings."
- "Alphabetize the references."

Positive Politeness: In this type of feedback, you would build up the face or esteem of the other person. You would make them feel good before you make any suggestions. (It looks a lot like the sandwich method, hunh?)

> ***Examples of positive politeness feedback:***

- "You are so organized; this one little fix and it will be perfect."
- "I love the story you told, a few more details would really help me see the character."

Negative Politeness: The name of this type of feedback is a little misleading. It doesn't mean you are negative. It means you acknowledge that getting feedback may make them feel negative. You would say things that acknowledge their discomfort. You might minimize the criticism so it doesn't make them feel bad or find other ways to soften the blow of criticism.

> ***Examples of negative politeness feedback:***

- "I know this critique might sound rough and I hope it helps, but I think you really need to work on the middle section."
- "This is just me making suggestions, but I would be able to understand more if your slide has a heading."
- I'm not an expert on this, but I think you might need to have a stronger thesis."
- "I see what you are trying to do here, but I think some of your audience members might not get it."

Off Record: When you give feedback that is off the record, you are hinting vaguely that they should make a change.

> ***Examples of off the record feedback.***

- "How many sources are we supposed to have?" (Instead of saying, "You need to have more research")
- "I thought we were supposed to have slides with our speech, maybe I heard that wrong."
- "Are other people in the class dressing up?"

Avoidance: Some people are afraid of giving feedback so they will avoid the situation altogether.

? Try This

Avoid the three C's

- Criticize
- Complain
- Condemn

Perform the three R's

- Review
- Reward
- Recommend

From Westside Toastmasters



Giving Feedback During a Speech

When you are listening to someone speak, you are giving constant nonverbal feedback. Are you leaning forward listening intently or are you leaned back picking at your fingernails? The way you listen lets the speaker know that you value them and what they are saying. It can be reassuring to the speaker to have people who are in the audience smiling and nodding.

Try this little experiment: If you have a speaker who is average or boring, lean in and listen intently. Don't be insincere and cheesy, but rather try to be an earnest listener. You will find that when the speaker notices you paying attention, they will usually become less monotone and more engaging. The speaker affects the audience, and the audience affects the speaker.

Asking for Feedback During Your Speech

"It is not OK to say OK at the end of every sentence!" That is what my friend told me after one of my speeches. I wasn't even aware I was saying "OK." I asked my friend to raise a finger every time I said, "OK" in my speech. At first, it was distracting because he kept raising his fingers, but eventually, I figured out the way to get him to stop was to stop saying "OK." Sometimes, it helps to get feedback after a speech, and sometimes it helps to get it during the speech. Having a friend put their hand to their ear to tell you to speak up can be really helpful. I once stood at the back of the room and tried to signal to my husband as he was speaking with the fly of his pants unzipped. I kept making the zipper gesture. He saw me gesturing and he could tell I wanted something, but he couldn't understand what. He finally stopped lecturing and said, "Lynn, what do you want?" What was I to do? What would you do? I said, "Zip your pants." Friends don't let friends give an entire speech with their pants unzipped.

Do yourself a favor and appoint someone to be your speech buddy. Someone who will tell you if your pants are unzipped (preferably before you start) and will give you the signal to speak louder or to check your microphone. If you know that you tend to pace, lean on the podium, or say um's, have them give you the signal.

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak.
Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.
Winston Churchill
Former Prime Ministre of the United Kingdom

Assess the Situation

"How do I look?" I asked my husband before we go out on a date. "What do you think of my new dress?" Many of you know that this question can be a trap. Am I really wanting his opinion or am I wanting him to compliment me? A savvy partner will assess the situation and answer accordingly. The thought process might go, *"She already bought the dress, she is excited about trying out a new restaurant and has been talking about it all week. She has been getting ready for a long time– the right answer is clearly one that makes her feel good. She is not really wanting my advice, she is fishing for a compliment."*

Take this story to heart when thinking about giving speech feedback. Your boss spent three weeks preparing for this big speech with the clients. He told you he has not slept in two days because he wanted everything to be perfect. After the presentation, he asks you, "What did you think?" A savvy co-worker will read the situation and pick out the positive parts. There may be constructive criticism that needs to happen, but when the boss is in the moment of high adrenaline after laying it all on the line, you should read the situation and hold any negative feedback for another time.

"My honesty is not a gift that everyone wants," this phrase was from one of my students who was writing a reflective essay about navigating being honest and being appropriate. Be savvy and read the situation to know when to give feedback and when to be quiet. You should also read the person. The more you adjust your feedback to the person's personal style and to the situation, the more likely they are to use that feedback to improve.

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Be open to the feedback of others, it can help you improve as a speaker.
- When giving feedback to others consider the context, their needs, the impact on their esteem, and their culture.
- Use the feedback sandwich as a model for giving constructive criticism.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

Bonus Features

Advice to Teachers (and Leaders)

Research suggests the following regarding giving students feedback on their speeches:

- Discuss the purpose of feedback.
- Discuss ways to view criticism.
- Give smaller, low-stakes opportunities to receive speech feedback.
- Give negative feedback privately.
- Allow feedback to come from multiple sources: In a speech class, have other students offer speech feedback.
- Phrase it as skill-building rather than deficiency. Instead of "poor eye contact" say "increasing eye contact will build a connection with your audience."
- Give as many positive comments as possible.
- Develop a warm, positive relationship with your students so they sense goodwill when they receive feedback from you.

King, P. E., & Young, M. J. (2002). An information processing perspective on the efficacy of instructional feedback. *American Communication Journal, 5* *http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol5/iss2/articles/feedback.htm*

Identify the Politeness Strategy

I asked numerous professionals to Beta Test (review) this book. The feedback I received had great examples of the politeness strategies mentioned in this chapter. For me, the review process was the living version of this chapter. I felt exposed and vulnerable (and still feel exposed letting you see these comments). Because I was open to criticism, I was able to correct my mistakes, become a better writer, and give you a book that represented the profession and not just my opinions.

Read these and see if you can figure out which politeness strategy is at work.

As a speaker, it will not be easy to be open to criticism, but doing so will allow you to grow. As an act of reflection, ask yourself, which feedback below would be the most palatable to you–the direct, the apologetic, the explanatory.

- After posting five sentences of praise, this reviewer wrote: “The only things I would look at are the critical comments I am making below. I hope you don’t mind. I’m a teacher. 😊
- Is there an extra space in that highlighted area?
- This sentence reads funny to me. Seems like you are taking away from your powerful point if you end with the phrase “a little.” Sorry, just saying.
- I am an over-user of the word “that”. If you can eliminate it and the sentence still makes sense, I would go ahead and cut it.
- I was curious about your choice to provide transcripts for some videos but not for others.
- I realize you are totally confident with saying NEVER. I say NEVER and ALWAYS in class, but I am not sure I should. Maybe “Instead of” can sub for NEVER.
- Review bulleted lists for punctuation consistency: Some lines have periods in the end; some don’t.
- “It is no surprise then, that when researchers looked at 500 Ted talks.” I suggest the style “TED Talks,” as that’s how the TED org itself expresses its name, and TED was originally an acronym for Technology, Entertainment, and Design.
- The content was spot on and have no critical-minded commentary. My comments and sharings would be just on formatting. Because I’m a Monica… (maybe you’re a Friends gal, too?)
- There is a noticeable lack of diversity in the speakers featured. Almost all the examples are of speakers who are white and most of those are men. This is a big problem. It makes white, male, English-first speakers the norm rather than an example of many. This would make me wary of using this text in my classes because typically this demographic of white, male, English-first speakers only represents a bare plurality of my students.

References

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena. In E. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* (pp. 56-310). Cambridge University Press.

Churchhill Central: Life and words of Sir Winston Churchill. https://www.churchillcentral.com/

Gonzales, M. (2017). How to get feedback on speeches. Global Public Speaking. https://www.globalpublicspeaking.com/get-feedback-speeches/

King, P. E., & Young, M. J. (2002). An information processing perspective on the efficacy of instructional feedback. *American Communication Journal, 5* *http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol5/iss2/articles/feedback.htm*

King, P. E., Young, M. J., & Behnke, R. R. (2000). Public speaking performance improvement as a function of information processing in immediate and delayed feedback interventions. *Communication Education, 49,* 365–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520009379224

Mehra, A., Kilduff, M. & Brass, D.J. (2001). The social networks of high and low self-monitors Implications for workplace performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 46* (1), 121-146. https://doi.org/10.2307/2667127

Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business.* Public Affairs. https://erinmeyer.com/books/the-culture-map/

Meyer, E. (2014). How to say “This is Crap” in different cultures. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2014/02/how-to-say-this-is-crap-in-different-cultures

Reagle, J.M. & Reagle, J.M. (2015). *Reading the comments: Likers, haters, and manipulators at the bottom of the web*. MIT Press. https://readingthecomments.mitpress.mit.edu/

Ripmeester, N. Rottier, B., & Bush, A. (2010). Separated by a common translation? How the Brits and the Dutch communicate. *Pediatric Pulmonology. 46(*4). 409-411. https://doi.org/10.1002/ppul.21380

Ripmeester, N. (2015). We all speak English, don’t we? https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/we-all-speak-english-dont-nannette-ripmeester/

Smith, C.D. & King, P.E. (2007). Student feedback sensitivity and the efficacy of feedback interventions in public speaking performance improvement. *Communication Education 53*(3). https://doi.org/10.1080/0363452042000265152

Snyder, M. (1974). Self-monitoring of expressive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 30* (4), 526-537. http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/self-monitoring_of_expressive_behavior.pdf

Toastmasters International. (2017). Giving effective feedback. https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/giving-effective-feedback

Media Attributions

- charles-deluvio-Lks7vei-eAg-unsplash © Charles Deluvio is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- kira-auf-der-heide-8mj-o2H5PKE-unsplash © Kira auf der Heide is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Diagram of the Sandwich Feeedback Technique is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- jon-tyson-RUsczRV6ifY-unsplash © Jon Tyson is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- clay-banks-LjqARJaJotc-unsplash © Clay Banks is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- eric-mok-D2CUJOl2EOA-unsplash © Erik Mok is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.7: Giving and Receiving Feedback- It is Harder Than You Think is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.8: Organizing a Speech and Harnessing the Power of Three



A designer knows he or she has achieved perfection,
not when there is nothing left to add,
but when there is nothing left to take away.
– Nolan Haims, Presentation Coach

also attributed to Antoine de Saint-Exupery

When it comes to speeches there are many formulas for how to present. Once you pick your topic, it is helpful to decide which formula works for you and use it from the start. Sure, you could wing it, but when you run into trouble, you will most likely find yourself seeking out a formula, so it just makes sense to start with an organization plan. Since this is an advanced class, I will review the basics and then talk about ways to take your speech organization to the next level by harnessing the power of three.

Staples of Most Speeches

Every math class I have ever taken starts off with reviewing the basics. Once we review the basics (fractions and decimals) and everyone has a strong foundation, then the class can work on the advanced items. I want to start off by reviewing the basics before we move on to the advanced.

Dale Carnegie wrote, “Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them.” By this, he didn’t mean being senselessly repetitive, but rather he wanted speakers to set up the framework for their speech, tell the audience the main points, and then recap the points.

The basic formula for most speeches follows this pattern:

> ***Grabber/Hook:*** *A statement to get the audience’s attention.*
>
> ***Preview/Big Idea/Thesis statement.*** *This statement is an overview of what the speech is about.*
>
> ***Credibility Statement:*** *Why should the audience listen to you talk about this? Why are you credible on this topic?*
> *Many, but not all speeches, need this.*
>
> ***So-What-Who-Cares Statement****: A statement telling your audience why this topic suits this audience and this occasion.*
> *This can be achieved as a statement, or it can be sprinkled throughout.*
>
> ***Transitions / Signposts****: Statements that move the audience from one idea to the next.*
>
> ***Body of Speech:*** *Main points of your speech with transitions between main ideas.*
>
> ***Review:*** *Summary of the speech.*

> ***Closure/Cincher**: A series of statements that provide closure.*



An audience will listen as much as they think you are credible.

Audiences Will Listen According to Their Understanding of Your Credibility

One important thing to think about when building your speech is how you will build your credibility with the audience. If an audience doesn't think you are credible, they will listen with suspicion, or they won't listen at all. In speechmaking, there are three types of credibility–initial, derived, and terminal. Initial credibility is the credibility you have before you start to speak. It comes from any preexisting knowledge they have about you as a speaker, it comes from the way you are introduced, and it comes from the way your presentation was advertised. Next, there is derived credibility–credibility stemming from what you say during your speech, how you present yourself during the speech, and how you manage visuals during the speech. Finally, there is terminal credibility– credibility that you have at the end of the speech. Terminal credibility stems from what they think of how you managed yourself and your topic.

We live in a world where many speakers are "googled", and their credibility is examined before they ever come in contact with their audience. When I train new teachers, I always have them google their names and see what comes up. To make a strong point, I have them open up their social media with someone else in the room. Once they have their profile pulled up, I ask them to hand their phone to the person next to them. I ask, "If a student looks at your public profiles and your social media, what will they think of you as a teacher?" New teachers are often shocked to think of students looking them up but that is the reality. Whether you are a student, a teacher, or a business professional, you need to be aware that people are looking online and using what they find there to determine your initial credibility.

(Now is a good time to pause and "google" your name and look into your social media to think about your credibility).

So, what makes up your credibility? According to communication researchers McCroskey and Teven, credibility is one part competence, one part trustworthiness, and one part goodwill. Competence is how much an audience member perceives you to be knowledgeable and an expert on the topic. You can boost your competence by using research, by having clear, organized ideas, and by clearly, articulating your ideas. Audiences are quick to form opinions and they are constantly evaluating your honesty and trustworthiness. If an audience deems you untrustworthy, every word out of your mouth will be seen as suspect. Finally, the audience evaluates your caring and goodwill. An audience wants to feel like you have their best intentions in mind. Audiences place a high priority on goodwill.

There are several ways to build your credibility with the audience. You can have someone introduce you who tells the audience why you are speaking on the subject. You can find ways to connect with the audience, so they trust you. The more a speaker shows that they understand and recognize the audience's feelings, the closer the audience will feel towards the speaker. Demonstrating enthusiasm and passion, managing content respectfully, and showing an awareness of situational factors all can enhance credibility.

Mind the Gap

When mapping out your speech, you should always mind the GAP–goal, audience, and parameters. Always remember what the goal of the speech is, who the audience will be, and what parameters are set by the location, the time limit, and the setting.

Minding the Gap is covered in detail in the chapter on the audience.



Rules for Effective Communication

Frank Lunz, political advisor, and author of *Words that Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear,* advises politicians of these key components to be an effective communicator.

1. **Simplicity:** Keep the language appropriate for the audience. It is usually better to assume they do not know and explain all terms than it is to leave them with words they don't understand.
2. **Brevity:** People have limited attention spans so be aware of the speech time. It is better to have fewer points than to have too many points.
3. **Credibility:** People will listen to you to the degree of trust that they have in you.
4. **Consistency**: Make sure what you say agrees with other things you have said. In other words, people look to the context of your life and other messages to interpret what you are saying. It is not uncommon for audience members to "google" a speaker before, during, and after a speech to see if they are trustworthy and consistent with what they say in their speech and in other places.
5. **Novelty:** Find ways to grab attention and stand out.
6. **Sound and texture:** Creative use of words will help attract and hold the audience's attention.
7. **Aspiration:** Help the audience reflect on how your message taps into them and their goals and dreams. Help them to see more and be more.
8. **Visualization:** Paint vivid pictures with your words to help the audience visualize the story or the outcome.
9. **Questioning:** Turn some statements into questions to engage the audience.
10. **Context and Relevance:** Tell the audience why your speech should matter to them.

Organizing Your Ideas

Nancy Duarte, speech coach was asked, "What's the best way to start creating a presentation?" Her reply was as follows:

> *My best advice is to not start in PowerPoint. Presentation tools force you to think through information linearly, and you really need to start by thinking of the whole instead of the individual lines. I encourage people to use 3×5 note cards or sticky notes — write one idea per note. I tape mine up on the wall and then study them. Then I arrange them and rearrange them — just work and work until the structure feels sound.*

That is Right for You

> *To help your travelers understand*
> *what is needed to achieve your vision,*
> *articulate where you need them*
> *to move from and where you need them to move to.*

> *Then make everything in your speech support that transformation.*
> *— Nancy Duarte,*
> *Illuminate: Ignite Change Through Speeches,*
> *Stories, Ceremonies, and Symbols*

In a study published in *Speech Monographs*, researchers found that audiences who listened to an unorganized speech were more likely to lose interest. It makes sense that if the speaker is jumping around that we quit trying to follow the message. It also makes sense that their study found that it was harder for audiences to recall the speech information from a disorganized speech. Finally, it is no surprise that disorganized speakers were judged less persuasive and less credible. To maximize the effectiveness of your speech, to make your speech more memorable, and to be seen as more credible, you should use an organized speech pattern.

There are many different formulas for how to organize your speech and I am including a list of the most common structures for you to consider. As a useful activity, you might want to go down the list and figure out how your speech could fit into each of the patterns before you settle on the one that works for you.



> *When I think about compelling presentations, I think about taking an audience on a journey. A successful talk is a little miracle—people see the world differently afterward.*
>
> *If you frame the talk as a journey, the biggest decisions are figuring out where to start and where to end. To find the right place to start, consider what people in the audience already know about your subject—and how much they care about it. If you assume they have more knowledge or interest than they do, or if you start using jargon or get too technical, you'll lose them. The most engaging speakers do a superb job of very quickly introducing the topic, explaining why they care so deeply about it, and convincing the audience members that they should, too.*
>
> *The biggest problem I see in first drafts of presentations is that they try to cover too much ground. You can't summarize an entire career in a single talk. If you try to cram in everything you know, you won't have time to include key details, and your talk will disappear into abstract language that may make sense if your listeners are familiar with the subject matter but will be completely opaque if they're new to it. You need specific examples to flesh out your ideas. So limit the scope of your talk to that which can be explained, and brought to life with examples, in the available time.*

> *A successful talk is a little miracle—people see the world differently afterward.*
>
> *Chris Anderson, TED Talk Curator*

Informative Speech Patterns

Chronological:

You would format your speech in the order things occurred. First this, then that.

In this talk, America Ferrera describes her step-by-step process of trying to get a role as a Latina in the United States. She takes us on a chronological journey as she wrestles with identity.



As you watch this speech notice how she opens with a story of her as a little girl dancing in the den singing and dreaming. At the end of her speech, she loops back to the nine-year-old girl and ends with power as she expertly points to the audience to bring them in as she delivers a well-thought-out last line:

> *If I could go back and say anything to that nine-year-old, dancing in the den, dreaming her dreams, I would say, my identity is not my obstacle. My identity is my superpower. Because the truth is, I am what the world looks like. You are what the world looks like. Collectively, we are what the world actually looks like. And in order for our systems to reflect that, they don't have to create a new reality. They just have to stop resisting the one we already live in.*

Compare and Contrast:

You would compare things and point out how they are similar and how they are different.

In this talk, Julie Hogan informs the audience about the concept of cultural humility by comparing and contrasting a Muslim burka and academic regalia.



Cause and Effect:

You would discuss what caused something and what was the overall effect.

In this talk, Caleb Stewart informs his audience of the benefits of reading. He tells all the effects that reading has had on his life.

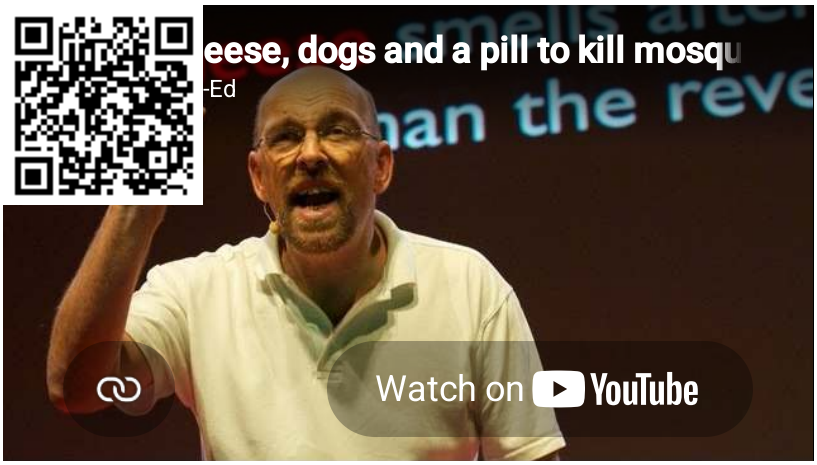


Problem Solution:

State the problem, tell us why it is a problem, offer us a solution to the problem.

> *Many of the best talks have a narrative structure that loosely follows a detective story. The speaker starts out by presenting a problem and then describes the search for a solution. There's an "aha" moment, and the audience's perspective shifts in a meaningful way.*
>
> *If a talk fails, it's almost always because the speaker didn't frame it correctly, misjudged the audience's level of interest, or neglected to tell a story. Even if the topic is important, random pontification without narrative is always deeply unsatisfying. There's no progression, and you don't feel that you're learning.*
> *Chris Anderson, TED Talk Curator*

In this speech, Bart Knols tells us about the problem with mosquitoes (spoiler alert, it is malaria) and then he informs us of three innovative ways to kill mosquitoes. As you watch, notice how he uses a variety of props–a bed, a box of mosquitos, the slideshow, his boxer shorts to keep his audience engaged. His points are so clear that when his talk is over, you could remember the three main solutions and repeat them to a friend.



Spatial Organization:

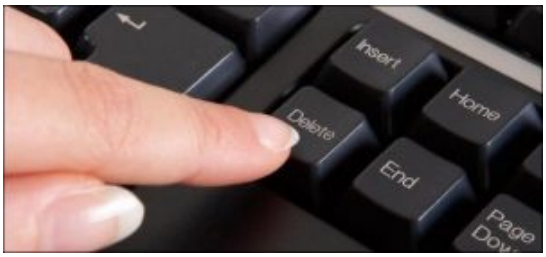
Show us a map and move across the map and show us where things are located. This works for more than a map, it could be a blueprint, a piece of art, an object.

Topical Organization:

You would inform us of a topic and how this topic is broken down into subtopics.

Tucker and LeHew in, *Exploring Public Speaking*, offer this activity and insight:

> *One of the authors frequently does the following exercise in class. She has all the students take some object from their pocket, purse, or backpack and place it on a table at the front of the room. (It's interesting what gets put on the table!). Then she has the students gather around and look at the items and "group them"–put them into categories, with each group having at least two items and all items being put in some group. Afterward, she gets the different grouping schema and discusses them. Of course, most of the groups are "correct," even if just based on color. However, she then asks, "If you had to communicate to a classmate who is absent what is on the table, which schema or grouping pattern would you use?" The point is that grouping can be done on the basis of many characteristics or patterns, but some are clearer and better for communicating.*



Less is More

Writer Richard Bach says, "Great writing is all about the power of the deleted word." Many speakers try to do too much in a speech. They have so much information that they either speak too quickly or explain too briefly. It is better to have fewer points than you can illustrate in numerous ways. After you write your speech, go back, and try to condense. Try to find ways to be more specific and clearer.

It's a simple equation. Overstuffed equals under-explained.
The wrong way to condense your talk
is to include all the things that you think you need to say,
and simply cut them all back to make them a lot shorter.

There's a drastic consequence
when you rush through multiple topics in summary form.
Chris Anderson, TED Talk Curator

To make sure the audience gets your point. Tell them what you are going to say, say it, tell them what you've said. When you make a point, say the point, illustrate the point with a fact or story, and then tell them how the point applies.

Getting Advanced: The Rule of Three



If you have an important point to make,
don't try to be subtle or clever.
Use a pile driver.
Hit the point once.
Then come back and hit it again.
Then hit it a third time-a a tremendous whack.
-Winston S. Churchill

Omne Trium Perfectum means everything that comes in threes is perfect. Humans love threes. In our culture, three provides a sense of the whole–it feels complete. The rule of threes suggests ideas presented in threes are easier to remember, more interesting, and more enjoyable. The three could mean have three main points, or the three could mean you have three items to a sentence. It could also mean explaining something in three different ways.

Hendiatris: Three successive words used to express one idea

> *Friends, Romans, countrymen. William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*
> *Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. US Declaration of Independence.*

Tricolon: Three parallel words or phrases

> *Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation – not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy.*
> *Barack Obama, Keynote speech to Democratic National Convention*
>
> *Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered.*
> *Barack Obama, Inaugural Address*
>
> *You learn that duty, honor, and country are not simply words, but guideposts. They dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be.*
> *Michelle Obama, West Point Banquet*

Parallel construction: Repeated phrases

Anaphora: The repeat of exact words at the beginning

> ***A sandal of** hope when you reach out.*
> ***A sandal of** joy when you listen to your heart.*
> ***A sandal of** courage when you dare to care.*
> *J.A. Gamache, Toastmasters*

> ***We can not** dedicate*
> ***We can not** consecrate*
> ***We can not** hallow — this ground*
> *Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address*

> ***It means to*** *try to tell your kids everything you thought you'd have the next 10 years to tell them in just a few months.*
> ***It means to*** *make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family.*
> ***It means to*** *say your goodbyes.*
> *Steve Jobs, Stanford Commencement Speech*
>
> ***These men*** *are our fathers, grandfathers and even great-grandfathers.*
> ***These men*** *have been and will be apart of our lives in ways that go far beyond the Tokyo Raid.*
> ***These men*** *are the crews that have made sure our families' lives were on the right path.*
> *Speech on the Doolittle reunion*
>
> ***This was the moment*** *when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal.*
> ***This was the moment*** *when we ended a war, and secured our nation, and restored our image as the last, best hope on Earth.*
> ***This was the moment****, this was the time when we came together to remake this great nation so that it may always reflect our very best selves and our highest ideals.*
> *Barack Obama Democratic Nomination Victory Speech – Change We Can Believe In*

Epiphora: Repeat the words at the end.

> ***There is*** *no Southern* ***problem****.*
> ***There is*** *no Northern* ***problem****.*
> ***There is*** *only an American* ***problem****.*
> *President Lydon B. Johnson*
>
> *This is not, however,* ***just America's fight****.*
> *And what is at stake is not just America's freedom.*
> *This is the world's* ***fight****.*
> *This is civilization's* ***fight****.*
> ***This is the fight*** *of all who believe in*
> *progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.*
> *President George Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks*

Have Three Points to Your Speech

Have three main parts to your speech and make sure they are clear.

> *Now I want to share with you* ***three things*** *I learned about myself that day. I learned that it all changes in an instant. We have this bucket list, we have these things we want to do in life, and I thought about all the people I wanted to reach out to that I didn't, all the fences I wanted to mend, all the experiences I wanted to have and I never did. As I thought about that later on, I came up with a saying, which is, "I collect bad wines." Because if the wine is ready and the person is there, I'm opening it. I no longer want to postpone anything in life. And that urgency, that purpose, has really changed my life.*

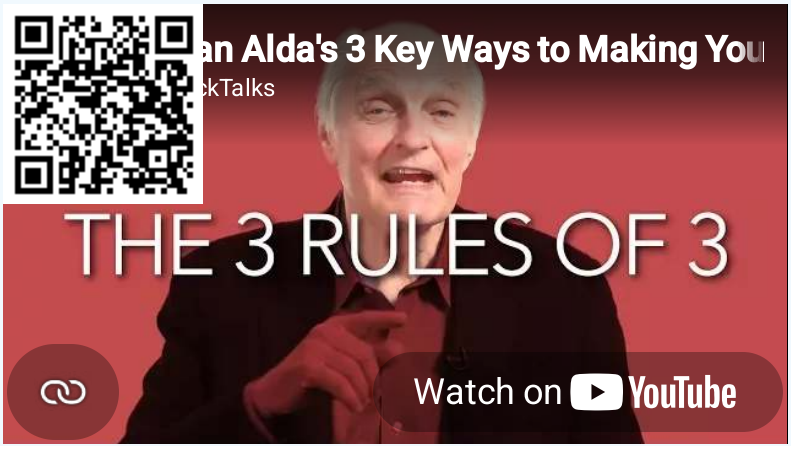
> *The **second thing** I learned that day — and this is as we clear the George Washington Bridge, which was by not a lot — I thought about, wow, I really feel one real regret. I've lived a good life. In my own humanity and mistakes, I've tried to get better at everything I tried. But in my humanity, I also allow my ego to get in. And I regretted the time I wasted on things that did not matter with people that matter. And I thought about my relationship with my wife, with my friends, with people. And after, as I reflected on that, I decided to eliminate negative energy from my life. It's not perfect, but it's a lot better. I've not had a fight with my wife in two years. It feels great. I no longer try to be right; I choose to be happy.*
> *The **third thing** I learned — and this is as your mental clock starts going, "15, 14, 13." You can see the water coming. I'm saying, "Please blow up." I don't want this thing to break in 20 pieces like you've seen in those documentaries. And as we're coming down, I had a sense of, wow, dying is not scary. It's almost like we've been preparing for it our whole lives. But it was very sad. I didn't want to go; I love my life. And that sadness really framed in one thought, which is, I only wish for one thing. I only wish I could see my kids grow up.*
> *Ric Elias, Three Things I Learned While My Plane Crashed.*

? Alan Alda's Three Ways to Make Yourself Understood

Some of you may know Alan Alda from the hugely popular show, Mash. Others of you may know him as the host of Scientific American Frontiers. What many people don't know was he was a visiting professor at Stony Brook University and the founder of the Universities' Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science. He created that center as a place to train scientists on how to clearly communicate with the public.

In this video, he explains the rule of threes.

- Make no more than three points.
- Explain difficult ideas in three different ways.
- Find a subtle way to make an important point three times.



? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- A speaker should pick a speech pattern that fits the goal, audience, and parameters of the speech
- Following a standard speech pattern helps the speaker be more organized

- Organized speakers are easier to listen to, are perceived as more credible.
- Using the rule of threes can make your speech easier to listen to and more memorable.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

REFERENCES

Anderson, C. (2016). *TED Talks: The official TED guide to public speaking*. Mariner.

Anderson, C. (2013). How to Give a killer presentation. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2013/06/how-to-give-a-killer-presentation

Ausubel, D. P. (1968). *Educational psychology*. Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Baker, E. E. (1965). The immediate effects of perceived speaker disorganization on speaker credibility and audience attitude change in persuasive speaking. *Western Speech, 29*, 148–161.

Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. *(2001). Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communications perspective.* McGraw-Hill.

Bush, G.W. (2015). President George W. Bush addresses a joint Congress about the War on Terror. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYnx-c8pF34 Standard YouTube License.

Bostrom, R. N., & Waldhart, E. S. (1988). Memory models and the measurement of listening. *Communication Education, 37*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528809378699

Carnegie, D. (1998). *How to win friends and influence people.* Pocket Books.

Churchhill Central: Life and words of Sir Winston Churchill. https://www.churchillcentral.com/

Dlugan, A. (2009). How to use the rule of three in your speeches. Six Minutes. How to Use the Rule of Three in Your Speeches (dlugan.com)

Duarte, N. & Sanchez, P. (2016). *Illuminate: Ignite change through speeches, stories, ceremonies, and symbols.* Portfolio and Penguin.

Ferrera, A. (2019). My identity is a superpower–not an obstacle. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/america_ferrera_my_identity_is_a_superpower_not_an_obstacle/transcript?language=en#t-191931 Standard YouTube License.

Gamache, J.A. (2007). Being Mr. G, JA Gamache, Toastmasters World Championships. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoW-T2_6OJo Standard YouTuve License

Hogan, J. (2018). The tale of two robes. Julie Hogan. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/w3Z3jdubP4Y Standard YouTube License.

Jobs, S. (2008). Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford commencement address. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hd_ptbiPoXM Standard YouTube License.

Kalb, I. (2013). Marketers must understand the power of three. *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/using-the-power-of-three-to-your-marketing-advantage-2013-5

Knols, B. (2012). Three new ways to kill mosquitos. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/bart_knols_3_new_ways_to_kill_mosquitoes?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare Standard YouTube License.

LeFrancois, G. R. (1999). *Psychology for teaching* (10th ed.) Wadsworth.

Lineham, D. R. (n.d). Rule of three in speechwriting. https://davelinehan.com/rule-of-three-speechwriting/

McCroskey, J.C. & Teven, J.J. (1999). Goodwill: A re-examination of the construct and its measurement. *Communication Monographs. 66*(1), 90-103. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759909376464

McCroskey, J.C. & Mehrley, R.S. (2009). The effects of disorganization and nonfluency on attitude change and source credibility. *Speech Monographs*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637756909375604

McCroskey, J.C. & Young, T. J. (1981). Ethos and credibility: The construct and its measurement after three decades. *Central States Speech Journal*, *32*, 24-34. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510978109368075

Obama, B. (2004). Keynote speech to Democratic National Convention. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/eWynt87PaJ0 Standard YouTube License.

Obama, B. (2008). Obama victory speech-Change we can believe in. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wJ-2Zu_Iic Standard YouTube License.

Obama, M. (2011). Address at West Point Graduation Banquet. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/hS01mK7xMDs Standard YouTube License.

Raa Rams. (2018). Raa 2018 Keynote Speaker. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6OchXV-Mo8 Standard YouTube License.

Smith, R. G. (1951). An experimental study of the effects of speech organization upon attitudes of college students. *Speech Monographs*, *18*, 292–301. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637755109375045

Shu, S. B. & Carlson, K.A. (2014). When three charms but four alarms: Identifying the optimal number of claims in persuasion settings. *Journal of Marketing*, *78(1). https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.11.0504*

Thompson, E. C. (1960). An experimental investigation of the relative effectiveness of organizational structure in oral communication. *Southern Speech Journal*, *26*, 59–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/10417946009371589

Torgovnick May, K. (2012). How to give more persuasive presentations: A Q & A with Nancy Duarte. TED Blog. https://blog.ted.com/how-to-give-more-persuasive-presentations-a-qa-with-nancy-duarte/

Tucker, B. & LeHew, M. (n.d) *Exploring public speaking* (4th edition). https://alg.manifoldapp.org/projects/exploring-public-speaking

Media Attributions

- Hiway © Karsten Winegeart is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- john-mark-smith-IS7WfX_f_ug-unsplash © John Mark Smith
- Keep_it_Simple_(3340381990) © Wiki Media: Jimee, Jackie, Tom & Asha is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license
- vlad-bagacian-d1eaoAabeXs-unsplash © Vlad Bagacian is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Finger-pressing-delete-button © Auaan is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license
- tony-hand-C9Ni6Gh_gWk-unsplash © Tony Hand is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.8: Organizing a Speech and Harnessing the Power of Three is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.9: Transitions- Bridging Ideas for a Seamless Presentation



Good transitions
can make a speech more important to the audience
because they feel they are being taken
to a positive conclusion
without having to travel a bumpy road.
– Joe Griffith

Transitions

The difference between a novice speaker and an advanced speaker is in how they bridge the gap between ideas. Learning to use transitions effectively will help take your speaking to the advanced level. Transitions can be one word, a phrase, or a full sentence.

> *The audience is dying to know the relationship between ideas. Their brains are hard-wired for that. It's more important when you are speaking than when you are writing because the listeners can't go back – they have to get it when it happens. If the brain is bored, or gets tired because it's overwhelmed, or gets confused – it can't stay in that place, so it daydreams, creating its own interest.*
> *Speech Coach Max Dixon, Westside Toastmasters.*

So, let's get started. I have included various transition types for you to consider. These do little good if you read them and do not use them. This list works best if you read it now and then revisit it every time you write a speech.

Beginning

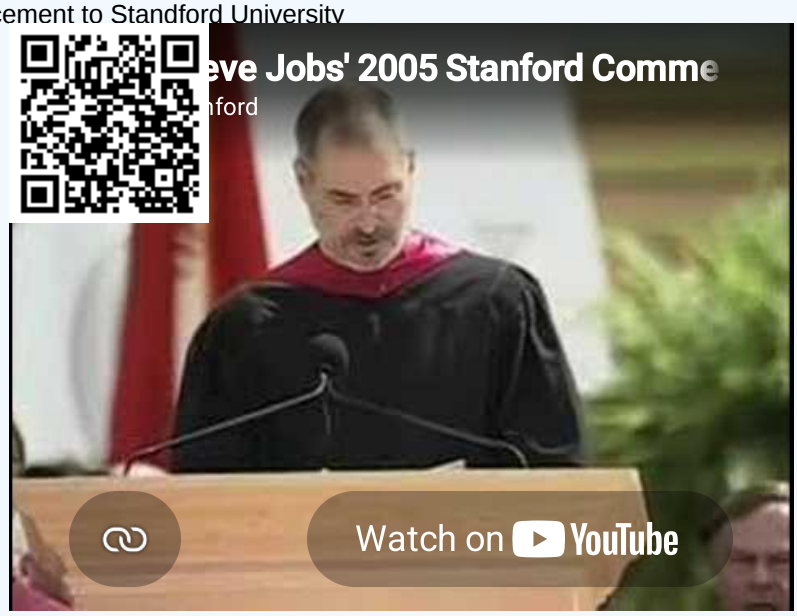
- Let's begin with…
- First, I'd like to share with you…
- Now that you're aware of the overview, let's begin with…
- Our first stop is…
- I will first cover…
- My first point covers…
- To get started, let's look at…

The Order of Things

- After that…
- Next…
- Second thing…

- Our next stop is…
- Let me tell you about your next step.

Steve Jobs Commencement to Standford University



Steve Jobs clearly previews his main points, “Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That’s it. No big deal. Just three stories.” He flows smoothly between points with clear transitions.

- “The first story is about connecting the dots.”
- “My second story is about love and loss.”
- “My third story is about death.”

Between Similar Points

- In the same way…
- In addition…
- Likewise…
- Similarly…

Between Disagreeing Points

- Conversely…
- Despite this…
- The flip side of the issue…
- However…
- On the contrary…
- On the other hand…
- However …
- On the other side …
- Yet, we cannot ignore …
- The opposing argument …
- If we examine the opposite side, we see …

Introduce an example

- This is best illustrated by an example…
- For instance…
- Take the case of…
- For example…
- To understand this…

- Let me illustrate this by…

Introduce Research

- To make the point…
- As illustrated by…
- For instance…
- Case in point…
- To solidify this point…
- As researched by…

Cause and effect

- Therefore…
- Thus…
- Consequently…
- As a result…
- This is significant because…
- Hence…
- Resulting in…
- For that reason …
- The effect is…

Elaboration

- Also…
- Besides…
- What's more…
- In addition/additionally…
- Moreover…
- Furthermore…

Transition to a Demonstration

- Let me show you how this works…
- Let me demonstrate this…
- Now that we've covered the theory, let's see it in action …
- Next, I'd like to let you see this for yourselves…

Introducing Your Visual

- As you can see from this chart…
- I'd like you to notice that…
- The table indicates…

Questions as Transitions

- Now that you know the problem, what do you think will solve it?
- What do you think will solve this crisis?

Vocabulary



Connective:
A word or phrase that connects the ideas of a speech and indicates the relationship between them.

Transitions:
A word or phrase that indicates when a speaker had finished one thought and it moving on to another.

Internal preview:
A statement in the body of the speech that tells the audience what the speaker is going to discuss next.

Internal summary:
A statement in the body of the speech that summarizes the speaker's preceding point or points.

Signpost:
A very brief statement that indicates where a speaker is in the speech or that focuses attention on key ideas.

From the *Art of Public Speaking* by Stephen Lucas

Thoughts from a Former Student

One thing I learned in class that made me a better speechwriter was to pay attention to the transitions. In our outlines, there was space for our main points, but also our transitions between them. At the beginning of the semester, I thought this was a waste of time planning out my transition for a speech and that I would just wing it the day of, but I soon realized how important they were. Transitions are like the finishing touches that make everything fall together in a speech.

You may have some interesting points or facts to give to your audience, but without transitions, you have nothing to connect your points and create a narrative. An audience is much more interested in a talk if there is a continuing idea or theme, and transitions help create this. I found this out by watching the other students in my class as they learned to use transitions as well. I loved the speeches that were clearly organized and had a common idea with transitions.

Zoe Lawless, Honors Public Speaking, University of Arkansas



Imagine the stage as a baseball diamond. Move to each base as you move between speech points. Begin and end at home plate.

Movement as Transition

Many people don't think about movement as a type of transition, but it can be a very powerful way to help your audience transition between ideas.

- Setting out a visual or putting it away signals a change in ideas.

- Some speakers will imagine a baseball diamond laid out on the floor and move to each base throughout the speech. Their opening comment is at home plate. Point one is delivered on first, point two on second, and point three on third. They stand back on their home plate to deliver the final closing statements.
- One speaker that I met said he always has a special place that is his big idea place. He may move around during his speech but when he wants the audience to know it is an important point, he stands in the big idea place.

Silence as a Transition

> *John Chappelear, speech consultant, suggests that the use of silence can be powerful. It is powerful, but it is not easy. Being able to stand silently in front of a large audience for 15-45 seconds requires practice. Sometimes you can use silence as a way to let the audience catch up and think deeply about what you just said.*

Transitioning Between Slides

- As the next slide shows…
- As you can see…
- Next, I will show you…

Transitioning to Visuals

- As you can see from this chart…
- I'd like to direct your attention to…
- This diagram compares…
- Now, I'd like to illustrate this with…

Signaling the End is Near

- In conclusion…
- To sum it up…
- Lastly…
- In a nutshell…
- To recap…
- I'd like to leave you with…
- Finally, I'd like to say…
- The takeaway from all of this is…
- In conclusion…
- To summarise…



Moving to the Next Speaker

- I told you about the most credible theories about climate change, now John will share with you some examples of what you can do.
- I'm going to turn it over to Malachi, who will take you through the next few points.
- Next, Angie will come up and talk about…
- To help us understand this topic better, we have Beatrice, who will talk us through…

- Look to the next speaker and motion towards them as they walk to the podium, Twila will tell you more…

Problems with Transitions

These are some of the most common problems with transitions:

- Not planning out transitions and just "winging it."
- Using fancy phrases inconsistent with the rest of the speech.
- Saying, "I have five points" and then having only four or miscounting the points.
- Overusing the same transitional phrase.
- Long pauses before transitions as the speaker tries to figure out what to say next.

Tricks on Smoothly Presenting Transitions

Now you have a list of ideas to use when you write your next speech, let's talk about how to use transitions effectively. Speakers typically struggle as they end one point and seek to move to the next idea. This usually happens because of poor planning, not enough practice, and poor note management. Let's talk about these one at a time. First, poor planning happens because a speaker does not put enough time and effort into writing the speech. Second, not enough practice happened because even when a speech is practiced, it is practiced with regards to getting through the main points and not about moving smoothly between points. Finally, poor note management. Let me give you some tricks.

- Make your notes large-larger than you think you need.
- Give ample space between main ideas so you can look down and see the gap and know another point is coming.
- On your notecards, make each main idea a different color.
- I usually have a "T" in a circle to remind me that this is a transition statement.
- Practice your speech twice by just reading the transition statements and the next sentence.
- The night before your speech, visualize how you will manage the transitions.

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Using transitions will help your speech flow smoothly.
- Practice using your transitions.
- Plan transitions for impact.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Allgood, E., & Ebersole, T. (Eds.). (2017). C*OMM 2100 public speaking: A workbook for student success*. Fountainhead Press.

Beqiri, G. (2018). Speech transitions: Words and phrases to connect your ideas. https://virtualspeech.com/blog/speech-transitions-words-phrases

Dugan, A. (2013, August 26). Speech transitions: Magical words and phrases. http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/speech-transitions/

Effective speech transitions, how to make your speech flow. https://franticallyspeaking.com/effective-speech-transitions-how-to-make-your-speech-flow/

Jobs, S. (2005). Steve Jobs commencement address to Stanford University. [Video]. YouTube. https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/ Standard YouTube License.

Lawless, Z. (2020). Honors Public Speaking, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Used with permission.

Lucas, S.E. (2009). *The art of public speaking.* McGraw Hill.

Pace, P. (n.d). Bridge the gap–Speech transitions. https://westsidetoastmasters.com/article_reference/bridge_the_gap-speech_transitions.html#:~:text=%22I%20think%20body%20movement%20is,carries%20the%20audience%20with%20him.

Media Attributions

- Sitting on bridge © Alex Azabache is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- karine-avetisyan-ipuiM-36tAg-unsplash © Karine Avetisyan is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- haniel-espinal-Oy9KX9NsDeU-unsplash © Haniel Espinal is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Panel_discussion_at_Wikipedia_Day_2019 © Eric Luth is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license

This page titled 1.9: Transitions- Bridging Ideas for a Seamless Presentation is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.10: Research- Finding and Citing Your Research



Supposing is good,
but finding out is better.
Mark Twain, writer

This chapter is about being strategic with how to find your research, how to evaluate the research you find, how to smoothly work information into your speech, and how to adapt your reference page to the presentation context. Since this is an advanced public speaking book, I am going to assume you already know the basics about how to access primary research sources. My goal is for you to take what you know about research and dig a little deeper. I also want you to think about how to use your research differently to adapt to the context.

Advanced Tips on Research

1. Brainstorm

You should thoroughly brainstorm your topic in writing before you ever begin researching. Make a list of possible words you would look up. Anytime you do this type of brainstorming, your goal should be to have at least 20 words. For example, if I wanted to give an informative speech on the impact of a teacher's body language on student learning, I might look up any of these words– notice the variety of angles as well as how I have listed several ways of saying the same thing.

1. body language
2. nonverbal
3. immediacy behaviors
4. gestures
5. eye contact
6. occulesics
7. personal space
8. dress
9. proxemics
10. education
11. educator
12. teaching
13. teacher
14. university
15. pedagogy
16. college
17. classroom
18. learning

19. student
20. evaluations

2. Research Your Topic Broadly

Vary your research by looking up different types of research from different types of sources. Don't just "google it." (Yes, I like to use internet search engines, but that should not be all you do.) Look up books on the topic, look up art on the topic, look up statistics on the topic, use a library periodical search engine on your topic. I am sure you have heard this before, but I am reminding you–mostly because I need to be reminded. Resist the temptation to do just one type of research.

You should also diversify your research. Look at the authors of your research, do they represent various genders, ethnicities, and political leanings? Try being intentional with varying your research. Seeking a variety of voices on your topic leads to some varied and interesting perspectives.

3. Interview Someone

One semester, I required all my students to do an interview for their speeches. At the end of the speech day, I asked them, What stood out about the speeches? What really helped you to be drawn in? One of the most frequent answers had to do with the interview. When possible, do an interview as part of your speech research.

One of the added bonuses of doing interviews is you can use it to make a new professional contact. Use your speech research to do networking, you might be surprised that you come out with a new contact or maybe a future job opportunity.

When you talk about the interview in your speech, be sure to tell the audience who you interviewed and the credentials of the person you interviewed. It is also helpful to include why you chose to interview that person. Take a picture of the person you interviewed or their office and if it seems right for your presentation, include the photo in your slides.

Brainstorm interview prospects

- Who can you interview on your topic?
- Who is a professional in the field?
- Who could you talk to who has a lived experience related to your topic?
- Who is a professional you have always wanted to talk to and needed a good excuse to get your foot in the door?

When conducting an interview always:

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Listen way more than you talk.
- Stay focused to the very end.
- Send a thank-you note.



Food For Thought

When researching for a ceremonial speech–eulogy, wedding toast, retirement speech, birthday speech–it is helpful to talk to other people who know the person you are celebrating. This type of research usually produces information you wouldn't have otherwise considered.

4. Look up Something Weird

Speaker, educator, and author John Spencer said, “Research shouldn’t feel like a chore. It should feel like geeking out.” Think of a weird way to look at your topic. Think of a subpart of your topic. Look up a fun fact related to your topic. Sometimes, this exercise becomes an interesting diversion, but other times, it is a gold mine of new ideas.



Using Your Research in a Speech

For the next section, I will tell you how to give an oral citation and how to write the reference (in APA) on your reference page.

Oral Citations: Using Your Research in a Speech

When mentioning your research in your speech, you should always give an oral citation. Depending on the type of speech and the type of audience, this would be done differently. Citations are about credibility–ethos. When you use high-quality sources, it instills trust in the minds of your audience. They trust the information that you are giving, and they trust you as a person.

When I was on the debate team, we had to say the entire citation…every single word of it….the author, date, article title, and the publication and issue number. For debaters talking to other debtors, this type of complete citation worked. Outside of that context, it is just too much information, and the audience gets bored. The trick is to find the balance that allows you to share key parts of your citation without losing the audience’s attention.

Instead of speaking every single part of the citation, find the part that is the most familiar to the audience (like a prominent name or publication) and speak the parts of the reference that enhances your credibility.

- If the information is from a known magazine or journal, you should mention that.
- If the article comes from a respected author that the audience knows, you should mention them.
- If the person you are citing has a title that is relevant, you should mention that.
- If the research is time-sensitive, you should mention the year of publication.

The key here is to be intentional about which part of the citation you speak. To further, illustrate this, I want to show you the difference between what you say in your speech, how you would write it on a full-sentence outline, and then how it would look on your reference page.

(These samples are in APA)

This is what you would say in your speech.

> According to an article on consumer perception of coffee published in *Nutrients Journal*, those who were surveyed said young males are more likely to be inclined to believe there are health benefits from drinking coffee. In a market where there is increased interest in healthy food, there is room to improve the perception of coffee and the scientifically-based health benefits.
>
> *(Nutrients Journal carries the credibility of a journal. Mentioning the authors would be optional. Since most people don’t know who they are, it doesn’t help with the credibility.)*

This is what it would look like on your outline.

> According to an article on consumer perception of coffee published in *Nutrients Journal* those who were surveyed said young males are more likely to be inclined to believe there are health benefits from drinking coffee (Samoggia & Riedel, 2019).

This is what you would put <u>on the reference page.</u>

Samoggia, A., & Riedel, B. (2019). Consumers' perceptions of coffee health benefits and motives for coffee consumption and purchasing. *Nutrients, 11*(3), 653. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/nu11030653

This is what you would say <u>in your speech.</u>

An article published in the *Nutrition and Food Science Journa*l titled, "To sip or not to sip: The potential risks and benefits of coffee drinking" coffee drinking can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease.

(The title of the article is interesting, and the mention of a Journal gives credibility. Once again, I wouldn't mention the authors since most people don't know them.)

This is what it would look like <u>on your outline.</u>

An article published in the *Nutrition and Food Science Journal* titled, "To sip or not to sip: The potential risks and benefits of coffee drinking" coffee drinking can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease. (Taylor & Demming-Adams, 2007).

This is what you would put <u>on the reference page.</u>

Taylor, S. R., & Demmig-Adams, B. (2007). To sip or not to sip: The potential health risks and benefits of coffee drinking. *Nutrition and Food Science, 37*(6), 406-418. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00346650710838063

This is what you would say <u>in your speech.</u>

As I was working on this eulogy for today, I talked to a couple of family members and asked them what they most remember about grandpa. Cousin Zena said she remembers him for always wearing bibbed overalls, an International Harvester hat, and for having shoes the size of cars. Most of all, she remembers his laugh.

(In this case, the audience only needs to know the names and relationships. No need for formal titles or last names if the people are familiar)

This is what it would look like <u>on your manuscript.</u>

As I was working on this eulogy for today, I talked to a couple of family members and asked them what they most remember about grandpa. Cousin Zena said she remembers him for always wearing bibbed overalls, an International Harvester hat, and for having shoes the size of cars. Most of all, she remembers his laugh.

This is what you would put <u>on the reference page.</u>

Meade, Z. (2021, May 8). Personal Interview.

Let's be honest, in a real eulogy, you would not turn in a reference page. If you are in a college class, it will be required of you to establish the practice of citing your sources.

This is what you would say <u>in your speech.</u>

According to the Hobby Lobby website, wheeled glass nippers will cost you $16. These will be essential for cutting glass for your mosaic.

This is what it would look like <u>on your outline.</u>

According to the Hobby Lobby website, wheeled glass nippers will cost you $16. These will be essential for cutting glass for your mosaic (2021).

This is what you would put <u>on the reference page.</u>

Hobbylobby.com (2021) Wheeled Glass Nippers.

This is what you would say <u>in your speech.</u>

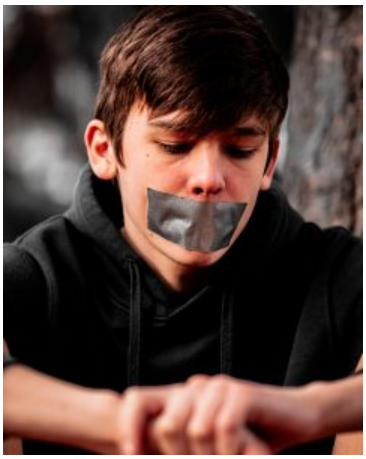
According to the article, How to Host Your Own Coffee Tasting on the Starbucks website, when formally coffee tasting, you should slurp your coffee to allow the coffee to spray across your tongue and palate.

This is what it would look like <u>on your outline.</u>

According to the article, How to Host Your Own Coffee Tasting on the Starbucks website, when formally coffee tasting, you should slurp your coffee to allow the coffee to spray across your tongue and palate (Starbucks, 2020).

This is what you would put <u>on the reference page.</u>

Starbucks. (n.d) Host your own coffee tasting. Retrieved May 8, 2020, https://athome.starbucks.com/host-your-own-coffee-tasting/



Do Not Say This

1. **"According to google."** Google is not a source; it is a search engine. The equivalent would be to say, according to the university library. The library is where you find the information, not the information itself.
2. **"According to homedepot.com."** You would never say, "According to 210 South Main Street, Fayetteville, Arkansas because that is an address. When you say ".com" you are citing an address. Don't site a person's address or a webpage's address as your source. You can say, "according to the home depot website."
3. **"And my source is…"** When saying your source, use the name of the specialist or the name of the article and journal. No need to tell us it is your source; we will figure that out.
4. **"Quote/Unquote**." Say the author and the quote, no need to say the word "quote."
5. **"Thank you and now here are my sources."** You do not need to show your audience your references on your slide show. To make sure your audience doesn't accidentally see your reference page, put two blank slides at the end of your presentation and then add your references. Putting them with your slides keeps them available for anyone who wants a copy of your slides.

Fake-istotle Quotes

While I was researching Aristotle, some amazing quotes came up as Aristotle quotes. The only problem is, he didn't say them. While I was hunting down the original author, I found a website called Fake-istotle Quotes.

Why is this relevant? It demonstrates one of the many challenges of internet research– typically one person puts it out there and then others copy it. You should be a sleuth and hunt down the originals and you should sniff out faulty research. Don't just copy the work of others, look for the original.

Good quotes, Aristotle just didn't say them.

- We are what we repeatedly do, excellence then is not an act but a habit. Will Durant
- Mark of an educated man is to entertain a thought without accepting it. Someone other than Aristotle

---

Does Your Research Pass the CRAAP Test?

Once you have found your research, you should test it to make sure it is credible. Check your research for currency, reliability, authority, accuracy, and purpose using the CRAPP test.

Currency

- When was it published?
- Has it been revised since then?
- Is it current enough for your topic?
- Is it a topic where the opinions about it change over time?

Reliability //Relevance

- Can you depend on the information and trust it to be accurate?
- Is the information biased?
- Is the information the appropriate complexity for the type of project I am working on?
- Does it provide reliable sources to back up claims?

Authority

- Can you trust the source where you found the information?
- Is the author an authority or do they cite subject authorities?
- Are they reputable?
- If the material is taken from other sources, do they credit/cite those sources?
- What does the URL end with? (.gov, .org, .edu, .com?) If not, how are you determining its reliability?

Accuracy

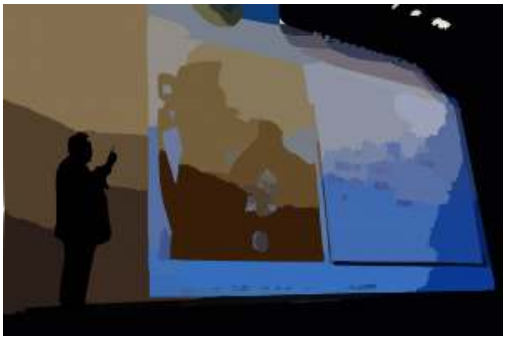
- Can you trust the reliability of the information?
- Is the information correct? How would you know?
- Can you verify any of the information from another source?
- Do the links lead to useful information corroborating the site's statements, or do they link to questionable information?

Purpose/Point of View

- What is the author's motivation for publishing the resource?
- Is the author trying to inform, persuade, or entertain you?
- Does the author appear to have an ax to grind or seem blindly committed to their cause?
- Are they using this information to make money off of users?
- Is there any conflict of interest?

This video gives a great analysis of a couple of sources using the CRAPP test.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhwB4zQD4XA&t=139s (<--- PRIVATE VIDEO)



Researching Images

Searching, finding, and using images is a type of research too. Just like text-based research, you should provide citations and give credit.

> Searching for Images

When searching for images to use, you should seek out images the have a creative commons copyright or are open for use. Here are a couple of my favorite sites.

Don't forget to reference your image on your reference page and on your slides.

- Creativecommons.org
  About: "CC Search is a tool that allows openly licensed and public domain works to be discovered and used by everyone. Creative Commons, the nonprofit behind CC Search, is the maker of the CC licenses, used over 1.4 billion times to help creators share knowledge and creativity online."
- About: All items on Unsplash can be used for free. You can use them for commercial and noncommercial purposes. You do not need to ask permission but giving credit to the photographer is appreciated.
- Eduimages
  About: A free library of photos celebrating students—and the educators who teach them—in seven schools across the United States.
- Gettyimages
  About: The Getty makes available without charge, all available digital images to which the Getty holds the rights or that are in the public domain to be sued for any purpose. No permission is required.
- Wikimedia Commons
  About: Wikimedia Commons is free. Everyone is allowed to copy, use and modify any file here freely as long as they follow the terms specified by the author. The conditions of each media file can be found on their description page.
- Pixabay
  About: All images and videos on Pixabay are released free of copyrights under Creative Commons CC0. You may download, modify, distribute, and use them royalty-free for anything you like, even in commercial applications. Attribution is not required.

Reference Page

The reference page is where you list all the sources that you used in your speech. This means the books, articles, and internet information that you use as well as any interviews, images, videos, and charts.

What Do You Do with Your Reference Page?

What you do with your reference page is going to be different based on context. Many of you are in a college speech class, which means that you will give your teacher a digital or physical copy of your reference page. I want you to be prepared for speeches outside the college classroom, so let's look at how to use a reference page in a variety of contexts.

College Presentation	If you are in a college class, your teacher will likely ask you to turn in a copy of your reference page. You should have it typed and it should include your name. Double-check which style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc) that your teacher wants you to use and follow precisely the rules of that style. For tips on using APA, go to OWL Purdue APA For tips on using MLA, go to OWL Purdue MLA

Academic Conference Paper Presentation	Academic talks often come from research papers. Typically, you will upload your paper and reference page into a database before the conference. Sometimes, they ask for your slides as well. If that is the case, you should include a final slide to your slideshow that includes your references. You would not actually show that slide during your presentation, but it is available for those who want to download your presentation slides. If you are giving a poster talk, you will want to have copies of your paper with references to hand out. Make a handout that is a photo of your poster on one side and key references and your name on another. Make sure your name is on it and think of it as a business card that people might keep to remember you and your research.
Academic Conference **Table talk** **Discussion group** **Non-paper presentation**	It is likely those in attendance will want a copy of your slides. You should anticipate this and have a reference page on your slides. You would not show your reference page during your talk, but it is there for those who want a copy of your slides. Handout. I prefer giving audiences a printed or digital handout instead of giving them my slides. I can customize a handout to give only the information that someone would want to look at after the talk. In that scenario, I only include the references that they would want to look up to gain more information.
Business Talk	Put your reference page on your presentation slides but don't show them during your presentation. If someone wants a copy of your slides, you have the references included. (Tip: At the end of the slideshow, add two blank slides before your reference page, that way you don't accidentally show them during your presentation)
Community Talk or Training	Pass out a handout that includes relevant references where they can look up more information or create an online resource where they can get the information.
Sales Talk	Most companies have a sales brochure that they give a customer. Ideally, they should include references or point to references on a website. You should be willing to give references if asked. It is a good idea to make a reference page when you prepare your sales presentation and have it in case you need it.

Reference Page

For reference, I have included a sample reference page in APA.

Reference Page Sample APA

- *"References" should be at the top.*
- *Alphabetize references.*
- *Use a hanging indent*

- *Every line is double-spaced. (This sample is not correct because of the way this program formats. Every line should be double space with no single-spaced items). For reference on this look at this sample student paper from OWL Purdue-the reference page in on page 17.*

References

Hobbylobby.com (2021) Wheeled Glass Nippers.

Meade, Z. (2021, May 8). Personal Interview.

Samoggia, A., & Riedel, B. (2019). Consumers' perceptions of coffee health benefits and motives for coffee consumption and purchasing. Nutrients, 11(3), 653. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/nu11030653

Starbucks. (n.d) Host your own coffee tasting. Retrieved May 8, 2020, https://athome.starbucks.com/host-yo...offee- \tasting/

Taylor, S. R., & Demmig-Adams, B. (2007). To sip or not to sip: The potential health risks and benefits of coffee drinking. Nutrition and Food Science, 37(6), 406-418. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00346650710838063

Understanding Peer Review and Scholarly Sources

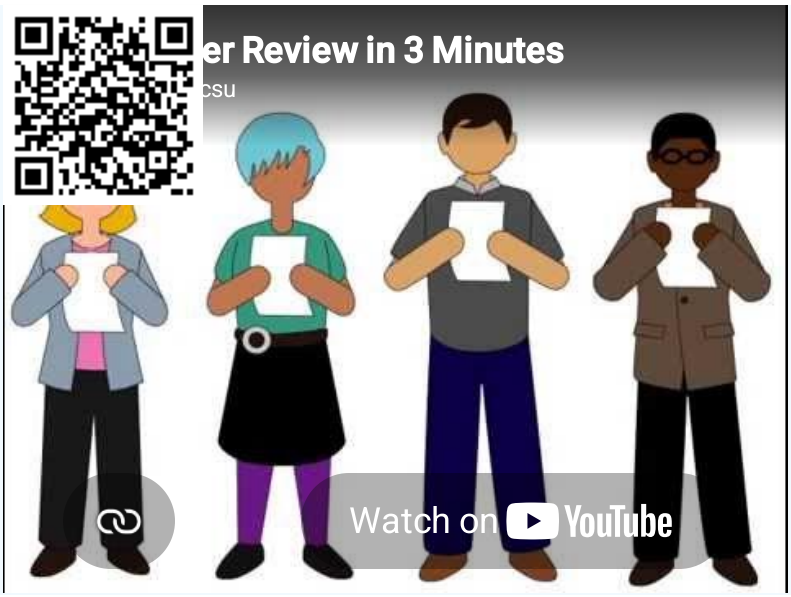
I want to make sure that you understand peer review and scholarly sources since it is an area that some struggle to grasp. When someone says they are wanting you to reference scholarly sources, typically they are talking about items that have been through the peer-review process. According to OWL Purdue, "One major character of scholarly sources is that they are peer-reviewed. Here's how a scholarly source typically goes through the process:

1. A scholar/author writes an article and submits it to the editor of a journal or book.
2. The editor sends it to other scholars who are at least the academic *peers* (equals) of the author in that field.
3. The reviewers review or *vet* (examine) it, then tell the editor whether they think it's good enough to be published in that journal or what should be changed."

Oftentimes your speech is required to have peer reviewers or scholarly articles, it is important that you are able to understand why peer review articles are different and how to access them. I included this video to help you understand.

What is Peer Review, Scholarly Article?

You may be asked to use peer-reviewed/scholarly/refereed articles for your research. It is important to understand the process in order to understand why this is a more advanced type of research.



Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

In summary, it is important to know how to research your speech properly and to reference those sources in a way that gives credibility to your topic.

References

AskUs NCSU Libraries. (2014). Peer Review in 3 Minutes. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOCQZ7QnoN0&t=9s Standard Youtube License.

Houston Community College Libraries. (2021). Evaluating sources: C.R.A.P. Test. https://library.hccs.edu/evaluatingsources/test

Huntress, C. (2017). My favorite quote of all time is a misattribution. https://medium.com/the-mission/my-favourite-quote-of-all-time-is-a-misattribution-66356f22843d

Portland State University Library (2012). The C.R.A.P. Test in action. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhwB4zQD4XA&t=139s

Purdue University. English 106/108: Scholarly Sources and Peer Review. https://guides.lib.purdue.edu/eng106/scholarly-sources-and-peer-review

Samoggia, A., & Riedel, B. (2019). Consumers' perceptions of coffee health benefits and motives for coffee consumption and purchasing. *Nutrients*, *11*(3), 653. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/nu11030653

Sheets, R. (2021, May 18). Personal Interview. (Director of the Business Communication Lab, Walton College of Business. University of Arkansas).

Spencer, J. [https://twitter.com/spencerideas]. (July 3, 2018). Research should be fun. It should feel like geeking out. Twitter. Retrieved May 19, 2021, from https://twitter.com/spencerideas/status/1014178267820118018/photo/1

Taylor, S. R. & Demmig-Adams, B. (2007). To sip or not to sip: The potential health risks and benefits of coffee drinking. *Nutrition and Food Science*, *37*(6), 406-418. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00346650710838063

University of Arkansas Library Research Guide. CRAAP Test for evaluating. https://uark.libguides.com/BENG4933/Evaluation

*CRAAP test developed by Meriam Library, California State University, Chico

Media Attributions

- Girl on computer © Surface is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- sketchplanations social research is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- christina-wocintechchat-com-LQ1t-8Ms5PY-unsplash © Christina is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Man on stage © Product School is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Tape over mouth © Jackson Simmer is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Presenter-visual © Pixabay is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license

---

This page titled 1.10: Research- Finding and Citing Your Research is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.11: Ceremonial Speaking- Identification, Magnification, Narration



Words have incredible power.
They can make people's hearts soar,
or they can make people's hearts sore.
– Dr. Mardy Grothe
psychologist and author

The category of speeches that you are most likely to have to give is ceremonial speeches. Ceremonial speaking, originally called epideictic oratory, includes graduation speeches, wedding speeches, eulogy speeches, after-dinner speeches, award speeches, toast speeches, and tribute speeches. The biggest thing that these have in common is that they have a heavy emphasis on pathos-emotion. When listening to a ceremonial speech, an audience expects to feel something and to feel a part of something. To achieve that, a good ceremonial speech will include identification, narration, and magnification.

> *In many ways, special occasions are the punctuation marks of life.*
> *They are the rituals that draw us together*
> *in celebration of some person or event*
> *Teri and Michael Gamble*
> *communication scholars*

This chapter will look at identification, magnification, and narration and how they function in ceremonial speeches to help you prepare to construct a speech of your own.

Types of Ceremonial Speeches

- Speech of Introduction
- Award Speech
- Acceptance Speech
- Graduation Speech
- Tribute Speech (Can be to a person, occasion, or monument)
- Eulogy Speech
- After Dinner Speech
- Toast Speech

Identification

In all speeches, the audience should feel like you are considering their needs, this is especially true in a ceremonial speech. In a ceremonial speech, your audience in some way becomes part of the speech. To achieve this, you should use a lot of phrases like

“we” and “our.” In the graduation speech by Matthew McConaughey, he uses “we,” and “you” words over 400 times–that is a lot of identification!

Matthew McConaughey Graduation Speech, A Lesson in Identification

VIDEO IS UNAVAILABLE ^ A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://uark.pressbooks.pub/speaking/?p=41

Identification

He uses “you” nearly 250 times and “we” 170 times in a 45-minute speech

- You guys and girls, and young men and women are the reason I’m here.
- I’m really looking forward to talking with you all tonight.
- You heard my dad played football here.
- I thought about what you would want, I thought about what you might need.
- I also thought about what I want to say and what I need to say. Hopefully, we’re both going to be happy on both
- It means you got an education. It means you have more knowledge in a specific subject, vocation. It means you may have more expertise in what your degree is in. But what’s it worth in the job market out there today?
- So, while we’re here, and they’re going to run across the jumbotron, let’s make it a place where we break a sweat. Where we believe, where we enjoy the process of succeeding in the places in ways that we are fashioned to.

Fun fact: Matthew McConaughey is a professor of practice at the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin. https://moody.utexas.edu/faculty/matthew-mcconaughey

Include Phrases That Provide Identification

- We
- Our
- Us
- Mutual

- Together
- Shared
- United
- Unified

More Examples of Identification

Here are a few ways that my students used identification in their speeches.

> *The Survivor Tree, an Elm, still stands as a witness of that day as a symbol of **our** resilience. The same kind of resilience **all Americans** have when faced with a tough obstacle to overcome. Tribute to OK City Memorial*
>
> *My grandpa Jack is like the wind. **We** can’t see him but we can feel him. He is always with **us**.*
> *Lily, Tribute to Grandpa Jack*
>
> *Today, we gather here to honor a famous, and beloved man, Stanley Martin Lieber. **We** all knew him as Stan Lee*
> *He brought **us together***

> *He may be gone but **we** will not forget what for he did for **us**.*
> *David Lester, Tribute to Stan Lee*



Tip for Identification

When I do one-on-one speech consultations. I pull up two or three empty chairs and then I ask the person who I am coaching to tell me who is sitting in the chair and listening to their speech. I ask them to show me how that person is included in the speech. I read parts of their speech out loud with them thinking about people in those chairs and then we talk about how we can reword some things to make sure those folks feel included.

Magnification

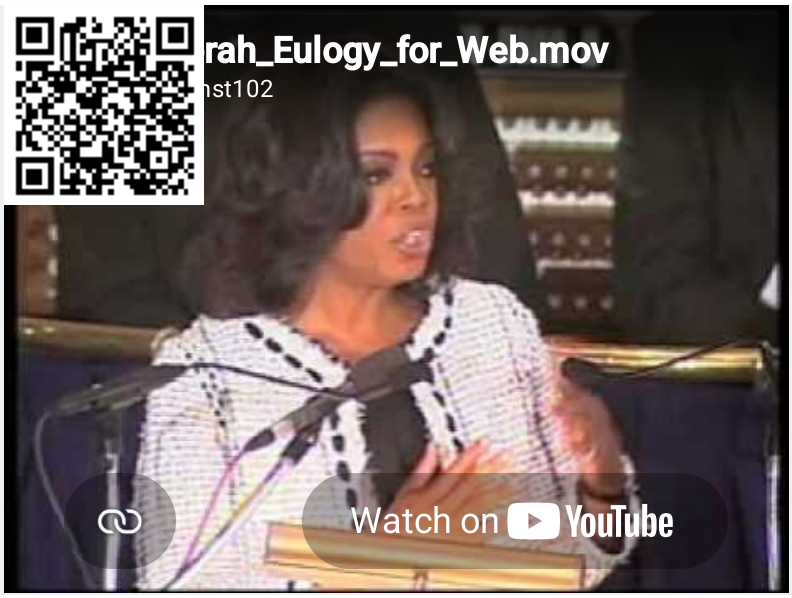
In addition to identification, ceremonial speeches should contain magnification. Magnification is where you take an attribute of a person, and you magnify it and make it seem larger than life. It is where you highlight a positive attribute of a person or group. This works best if you tap into values that the audience share.

These are the most common magnification themes:

- Triumph over obstacles
- Unusual accomplishment
- Superior performance
- Unselfish motive
- Benefit to society
- The greatness of a simple thing
- Celebrate heroic acts and deeds

It is easiest to understand how these work in a speech by way of example. Watch the following speeches to understand how magnification can be achieved.

Oprah Winfrey's Eulogy to Rosa Parks, A Lesson in Magnification: Triumph Over Obstacle



Magnification is where you make an action larger than life. Notice how Oprah Winfrey elaborates on the action of Rosa Parks and makes it large and heroic.

> I grew up in the South, and Rosa Parks was a hero to me long before I recognized and understood the power and impact that her life embodied. I remember my father telling me about this colored woman who had refused to give up her seat. And in my child's mind, I thought, "She must be really big." I thought she must be at least a hundred feet tall. I imagined her being stalwart and strong and carrying a shield to hold back the white folks.
>
> …So I thank you again, Sister Rosa, for not only confronting the one white man who[se] seat you took, not only confronting the bus driver, not only for confronting the law, but for confronting history, a history that for 400 years said that you were not even worthy of a glance, certainly no consideration. I thank you for not moving.
>
> And in that moment when you resolved to stay in that seat, you reclaimed your humanity, and you gave us all back a piece of our own.

Bill Clinton's Eulogy for Muhammad Ali, A Lesson in Magnification: The Greatness of a Simple Thing



Before Mohammad Ali passed, he struggled with tremors. In this eulogy speech, Former President Clinton describes watching him light the Olympic flame. The mere act of walking was a simple thing that was made great by the circumstances.

Finally after all the years that we have been friends, my enduring image of him is like a little reel in three shots: the boxer I thrilled to as a boy, the man I watched take the last steps to light the Olympic Flame when I was president, and I'll never forget it, I was sitting there in Atlanta, by then we knew each other, by then I felt that I had some sense of what he was living with, and I was still weeping like a baby, seeing his hands shake and his legs shake and knowing by God he was gonna make those last few steps, no matter what it took. **The** flame **would be** lit. **The** fight **would be** won. **The** spirit **would be** affirmed. I knew it would happen.

A Lesson in Magnification: Superior Performance



Narration- Tell a Story

In addition to identification and magnification, ceremonial speeches should include stories.



This example is from a University of Arkansas student speech and he is telling the story of picking out his first dog. Notice how the small details help to draw us in and help us to see the event unfold. I left this sample in speech format so you could see how it was written on his manuscript to have a feeling for the rhythm of the speech. (/// slanted lines, signal a pause…the more lines, the longer the pause)

It was a nice day and I can still picture you running towards me
when I really try that is

As we approach the house,///

three little girls

accompanied by their father

open a shed door to the side of the property

I rode my Heelys /// down a small

//concrete sidewalk

Excited to see the little balls of fluff

My parents said to pick a good one

So I picked you /// because you bit my shoe.

Bryan Stevenson Tells a Story in an Award Acceptance Speech

Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* gave this acceptance speech when winning the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and NonFiction. Notice how his use of narration makes us feel something about his grandmother and then we carry those feelings as he talks about racial justice.

> I had a very close relationship with my grandmother. My grandmother was the daughter of people who were enslaved. Her parents were born into slavery in Virginia in the 1840s. She was born in the 1880s, and the only thing that my grandmother insisted that I know about her enslaved father is that he learned to read before emancipation, and that reading is a pathway to survival and success. So I learned to read. I put books and words in my head and in my heart, so that I could get to the places that she needed me to go.
>
> I'm thinking about my grandmother tonight, because she had these qualities about her. She was like lots of African American matriarchs. She was the real force in our family. She was the end of every argument. She was also the beginning of a lot of arguments! She was tough, and she was strong but she was also kind and loving. When I was a little boy, she'd give me these hugs, she'd squeeze me so tightly I could barely breathe. And then she'd see me an hour later and she'd say, "Bryan, do you still feel me hugging you?" And if I said no, she would assault me again!

Did you notice the magnification (the greatness of a simple thing) in learning to read and in hugging?

Did you notice his use of identification by saying, "She was like lots of African American matriarchs?"

Speaking of identification, check out how he uses "we"

We need to change the narrative in this country about race, and poverty. We're a country that has a difficult time dealing with our shame, our mistakes. We don't do shame very well in America, and because of that we allow a lot of horrific things to go unaddressed.

Read the whole speech here:
https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/awards-and-prizes/article/67546-is-this-the-greatest-book-award-acceptance-speech-ever.html

You can use identification, magnification, and narration in all your speeches, but these three elements are especially important in ceremonial type speeches. Maya Angelou said, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Identification means to relate to your audience.
- Magnification means to find traits about the person you are talking about and magnify them.
- Narration means to tell a story to help your audience feel something.
- Ceremonial speeches should always include identification, magnification, and narration.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Albanese, A. (2015). Is this the greatest book award acceptance speech ever? *Publisher's Weekly.* *https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/awards-and-prizes/article/67546-is-this-the-greatest-book-award-acceptance-speech-ever.html*

Clinton, B. (2020). Bill Clinton's eulogy for Muhammad Ali. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feGjy5bKMb0 Standard YouTube License.

Gamble, T. & Gamble, M.W. (1998). *Public Speaking in the Age of Diversity.* Allyn and Bacon.

Justis, T. (2019). Photo of graduation speaker, Anna Francis Chandler.

Lester, D. Tribute to Stan Lee. University of Arkansas.

McConaughey, M. (2016). Matthew McConaughey University of Houston Speech. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmCTQ_mkzHU

Rigsby, R. (2017). The most inspiring speech: The wisdom of a third-grade dropout will change your life. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bg_Q7KYWG1g Standard YouTube License.

Samovar, L. A., & McDaniel, E. R. (2007). *Public speaking in a multicultural society*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.

Saylor Academy (2012). *Stand up speak out: The practice and ethics of public speaking.* Saylor Academy.

Snippe, E. (2016). 101 quotes to inspire speakers. Angelou, M. Quote. https://speakerhub.com/blog/101-quotes

Thibodeau, P.H and Boroditsky, L. (2011). Metaphors we think with: The role of metaphor in reasoning. Stanford University.

Winfrey, O. (2010). Oprah eulogy [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cfhtfNfIPE&t=1s Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Anna-Frances at University of Arkansas Graduation © Tuesdae Justis is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- kelly-miller-BL6XQLZeXpg-unsplash © Kelly Miller is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- mia-anderson-xzE4-0gSYuo-unsplash © Mia Anderson is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.11: Ceremonial Speaking- Identification, Magnification, Narration is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.12: Professional Speechwriting- Using Colorful Language in Your Speech



Antithesis is not only a revered literary device that only the best wield,
but it's a rhetoric device some of the most famous speakers in history
have used to emphasize their points.
It's rousing in a speech when you juxtapose
two opposites to show a contrasting effect that's as wide as the ocean.
Prowriting Aid

Taking your speech to the next level means being intentional with each word. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how several different colorful language devices are used in speeches. By carefully crafting your word choices, you can deliberately control the tone and emotion in your speech. I believe the best way for you to learn is to be saturated by great examples and then be challenged to use what you have learned in your own speeches. To get the most out of this chapter, take your time and read these examples out loud. Feel the emotion, get into the rhythm, let yourself experience the difference that these language devices make.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of initial sounds in neighboring words. When Emily Dickinson said, "The soul selects her own society," she was using an alliteration. A well-used alliteration sounds pleasing and elevates your content. it helps emphasize certain words and can help create the mood. Read these examples of alliteration to understand how they operate.

Repeated D

> *President Mandela, we salute you, for you are a man that had a **d**ream, a **d**ream **d**edicated to **d**esire, the **d**esire to make the world a better place.*
> *Tribute Speech to Nelson Mandela by Tanica van As, University of Arkanas*

Repeated P

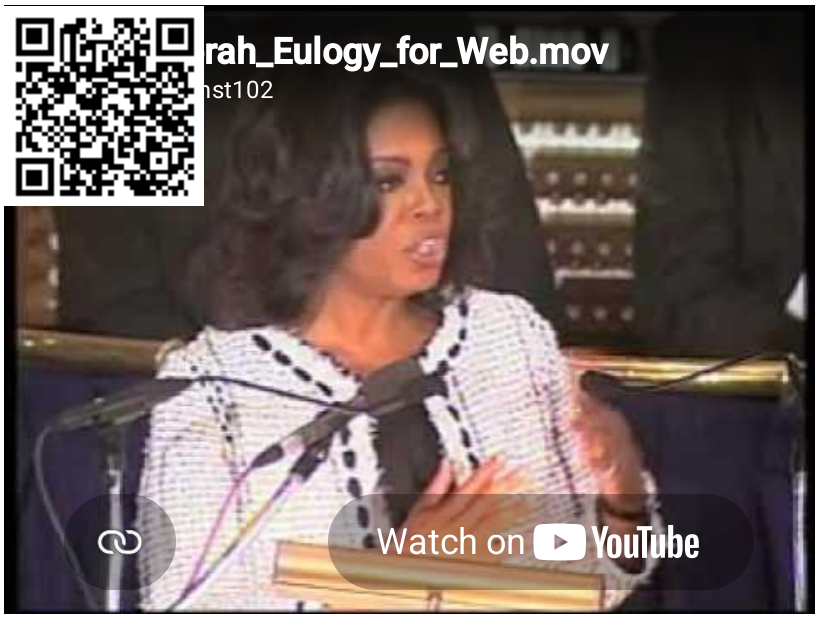
> *We have seen **p**eace **p**revail in most **p**laces for a half century.*
> *Women's Rights are Human Rights by Hillary Clinton*
>
> *And here's the last **p**art. It's up to you to couple every **p**rotest with **p**lans and **p**olicies, with organizing and mobilizing and voting.*
> *Don't Ever Let Anyone Tell You That You Are Too Angry, Commencement Speech by Michelle Obama*

There are too many alliterations to count in this two-minute persuasive speech. I take that back, there are not too many to count– you should listen and try to count them. Take it as a challenge.



Repeated G

> *And after our first meeting, I realized that **G**od uses **g**ood people to do **g**reat things. Eulogy to Rosa Parks by Oprah Winfrey*



Repeated M

> *You've got **more** role **m**odels, more road **m**aps, **more** resources than the civil rights generation did. You've got more **t**ools, **t**echnology and **t**alents than my generation did. No generation has been better positioned to be warriors for justice and remake the world. Graduation Speech 2020 by Barack Obama*

Parallel Construction

The next rhetorical device is parallel construction. In short, it means to repeat the same word or phrase. If it occurs at the beginning, it is called an anaphora, if it occurs at the end, it is an epistrophe. These are the easiest of the advanced techniques to write and it has the application in the most places. It can be used in almost any type of speech.

Anaphora: Repeat the Beginning

Anaphora (to bring again) (an-NAF-ruh). An anaphora is the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of sentences. The repetition of words creates a building sensation lending to a sense of importance. Anaphora helps create rhythm, gives emphasis, and boosts speech to a higher level. Look at the following examples for how it can be used in various types of speeches.

Anaphora in Eulogy

> ***He taught me***
> *that I don't always have to be the same as the crowd.*
> ***He taught me***
> *that no matter what my passion is, I should follow it.*
> ***He taught me***
> *that you can't wait for opportunities to fall into your lap,*
> *you have to go get them.*
> *Eulogy to Grandpa by Logan Dold.*

Anaphora in Tribute Speech

> *Magic in one way or another*
> *had a huge part to play in our childhood.*
> ***Maybe you** thought you were a fairy princess*
> ***Maybe you** believed in Santa Clause or the Tooth fairy*
> ***Maybe you** were like me*
> *and made "potions" in your bathroom sink.*
> *Tribute to Harry Potter's Influence on My Childhood by Blake Cole*

Anaphora in Graduation Speech

> ***It feels like just yesterday,** you Casey, Kara, and I were playing stuck in the mud, hot lava upstairs in the game room, monopoly, and orange juice pong at the lake.*
> ***It feels like just yesterday,** Casey was the first of us girls to get a pair of platform heels. Size 5, chunky, black, and we were dying to wear them, but we had to wait until it was our turn.*
>
> ***It feels like just yesterday,** you were writing boy's names in chalk on the driveway with little hearts around it, drooling over them because they were a 'hunk a hunk a cheese.'*
> ***It feels like just yesterday,** you were a sophomore in high school.*
> *Graduation Speech to Her Little Sister by Kendall Cleveland*

Anaphora in Persuasion Speech



Indifference elicits no response.
Indifference is not a response.
Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end.
And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor — never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten.
The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees — not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own.

Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment.
The Perils of Indifference, Elie Wiesel

> ***It is a violation of human rights*** *when women and girls are sold into the slavery of prostitution for human greed — and the kinds of reasons that are used to justify this practice should no longer be tolerated.*
> ***It is a violation of human rights*** *when women are doused with gasoline, set on fire, and burned to death because their marriage dowries are deemed too small.*
> ***It is a violation of human rights*** *when individual women are raped in their own communities and when thousands of women are subjected to rape as a tactic or prize of war.*
> ***It is a violation of human rights*** *when a leading cause of death worldwide among women ages 14 to 44 is the violence they are subjected to in their own homes by their own relatives.*
> ***It is a violation of human rights*** *when young girls are brutalized by the painful and degrading practice of genital mutilation.*
> *Women's Rights are Human Rights by Hillary Clinton*

Anaphora in Political Speech

> ***Let there be*** *justice for all.*
> ***Let there be*** *peace for all.*
> ***Let there be*** *work, bread, water, and salt for all.*
> *Nelson Mandela, Inaugural Address*
>
> ***Yes we can*** *to justice and equality.*
> ***Yes we can*** *to opportunity and prosperity.*

> ***Yes we can*** *heal this nation.*
> ***Yes we can*** *repair this world.*
> ***Yes we can.***
> *New Hampshire Speech by Barack Obama*

> ***If there's a*** *child on the south side of Chicago who can't read, that matters to me, even if it's not my child.*
> ***If there's a*** *senior citizen somewhere who can't pay for her prescription and has to choose between medicine and the rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it's not my grandmother.*
> ***If there's an*** *Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties.*
> *Democratic National Convention Speech by Barack Obama*

> *Senators, let me be clear:*
> *We are more determined than our opponents, and we will keep fighting.*
> ***When*** *bad actors try to use our site,*
> ***we will*** *block them.*
> ***When*** *content violates our policies,*
> ***we will*** *take it down.*
> *And* ***when*** *our opponents use new techniques,*
> ***we will*** *share them so we can strengthen our collective efforts.*
>
> *Opening Statement to Congress on Facebook Accountability by Sheryl Sandberg*

Parallel Construction - Epistrophe: Repeat the Ending

Epistrophe (after stroke) (eh-PiSS-truh-FEE–rhymes–rhymes with apostrophe) is the repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences. The repetition makes the lines more memorable. Depending on the execution, it can give a cadence to eh speak and makes the speech feel dramatic. It is especially effective when the repeated word connects to the overall speech theme.

> *This is not, however, just America's* ***fight.***
> *And what is at stake is not just America's freedom.*
> *This is the world's* ***fight.***
> *This is civilization's* ***fight.***
> *This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism,*
> *tolerance and freedom.*
> *Address to a Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks by George Bush*

> *For no government is better than the men who compose it,*
> *and I want* ***the best****,*
> *and we need* ***the best****,*
> *and we deserve* ***the best****.*
>
> *Wittenburg College Speech by John F. Kennedy*

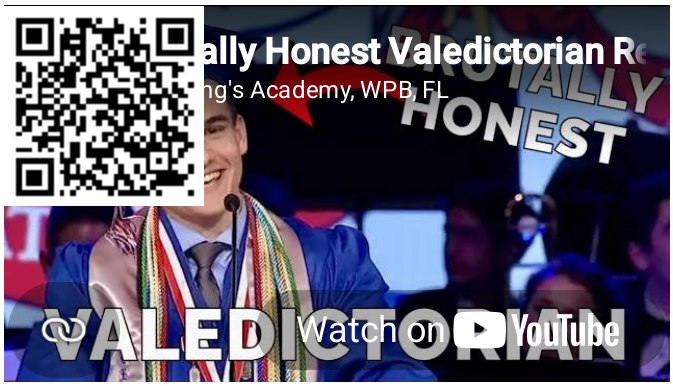
> *I would like to thank all the people who make the King's Academy excellent*

To the Board of Governors for the wisdom you bring, the prayers that you pray, and the vision you lay out for TKA, ***we thank you***

For the administration, for the godly oversight you bring ot the school and for making the tough calls when needed, ***we thank you***

To the faculty who give your all eachand every day laboring to provide us with an education and pushing us to do our best even on the days that we don't want to learn all the while talking the extra time to buld relationships that for some will last a life time, ***we thank you***

To the staff who worked tirelessly coordinating our lives and events while supporting us and the faculty, ***we thank you***



Graduation Speech to The King's Academy by Kyle Martin

This time last year, I found out that I was in the running for this title,
it was then I decided I wanted ***it,***
so I worked hard ***for it,***
I sacrificed ***for it,***
and yes, I stressed ***for it,***
and I got ***it.***

Graduation Speech to The King's Academy by Kyle Martin

Market forces cannot educate us or equip us for this world of rapid technological and economic change.
We must do it ***together****.*
We cannot buy our way to a safe society.
We must work for it ***together****.*
We cannot purchase an option on whether we grow old. We must plan for it ***together****.*
We can't protect the ordinary against the abuse of power by leaving them to it; we must protect each other. That is our insight. A belief in society.
Working ***together****.*
Blackpool by Tony Blair



Watch this speech by Queen Rania Al Abdullah as she speaks before the United Nations. Notice her repeated use of parallel construction as she starts of her speech with, I wish…, I wish…, I wish…

Tricolon–Repeat it three times.

Omne Trium Perfectum means everything that comes in threes is perfect. Humans love threes. In our culture, three provides a sense of the whole, complete, roundness. The rule of threes suggests that ideas presented in threes are easier to remember, more interesting, and more enjoyable. The three could mean have three main points of the three could mean have the items to a sentence. It could also mean explaining something in three different ways.

Also discussed in the chapter on speech organization

The time for healing the wounds has come
The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.
The time to build is upon us.
Inaugural Address by Nelson Mandela

***The** flame **would be** lit.*
***The** fight **would be** won.*
***The** spirit **would be** affirmed.*
Eulogy to Muhammad Ali by Bill Clinton



And when the night grows dark,
When injustice weighs heavy on our hearts,

> *When our best-laid plans seem beyond our reach,*
> *Let us think of Madiba*
> *Barack Obama Memorial to Nelson Mandela*

Personification:

A personification gives abstractions and inanimate objects human qualities. These qualities may be physical, spiritual, or emotional qualities. The easiest example I can think of is the saying, "My computer hates me! I know it is out to get me because it acts up every time, I have an important paper due." A computer is not alive. A computer cannot hate. Look at these speech examples for how personification is used in a variety of contexts.

> *My father taught himself how to read, taught himself how to write, decided in the midst of Jim Crowism, as* ***America was breathing*** *the last gasp of the Civil War, my father decided he was going to stand and be a man, not a black man, not a brown man, not a white man, but a man. The Wisdom of a Third Grade Dropout Will Change Your Life -Graduation Speech by Rick Rigsby.*

> *It's [COVID-19] one of these scenarios which we have been warning against for a couple of weeks already — that countries have to be prepared for the* ***virus literally knocking at their door****. Christian Lindmeier, Feb 2020 WHO Press Briefing*

> *To the fans in Chicago, St. Louis, and Atlanta, I wanna say 'thank you' for your support. Your chanting of 'B-r-u-u-u-c-e' as I entered the game always gave me chills. I wish I could trot out there and get that feeling again, but* ***Father Time has caught up with me****. First,* ***he took my arm,*** *then* ***he took my hair****, then* ***he took the color from my beard****. But* ***he cannot take the great friendships and memories I have from being a baseball player.*** *Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Address, Bruce Sutter.*

Antithesis

The Klingon in Star Trek said it best, "It's better to die on our feet than to live on our knees." This is an excellent example of an antithesis. An antithesis is the pairing of opposites in a parallel arrangement. To be an antithesis, there need to be two contrasting ideas. It is not enough that the ideas are opposite, they must also be intentionally juxtaposed in a balanced form. In my opinion, this is the highest form of rhetorical device. Effectively writing and using the antithesis will put you in league with the masters!

Let's start off by looking at some famous examples. Probably the most famous of all was uttered by Neil Armstrong when he said, "that's one small step for a man, one giant leap for all mankind." Talk about quotable! A well-written antithesis rolls off the tongue and begs people to nod and gasp a little. That is just what happens when famous speakers use them and it is also what happens when my students use them in class. Look at these examples for inspiration.

> *The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of*
> *being a beginner again less sure about everything.*
> *Commencement to Stanford by Steve Jobs*

> *And when I say, "Life doesn't happen to you, it happens for you." I really don't know if that's true. I'm just making a conscious choice to perceive challenges as something beneficial so that I can deal with them in the most productive way. You'll come up with your own style. That's part of the fun.*
> *Graduation Speech, Jim Carrey*

> *There is nothing wrong with America*
> *that cannot be cured by what is right with America.*
> *First Inaugural Address by Bill Clinton*

> *We think we know what we want*
> *but we often have no idea what we need.*
> *USC School of Dramatic Arts Commencement by Kristin Bell*

If you want to be really impressed, check out four antitheses in a row

> *We find ourselves rich in goods*
> *but ragged in spirit,*
> *reaching with magnificent precision for the moon*
> *but falling into raucous discord on earth.*
> *We are caught in war,*
> *wanting peace.*
> *We're torn by division,*
> *wanting unity.*
>
> *First Inaugural Address, Richard Nixon*

Watch my students in action as they master the antithesis in eulogy speeches

> *A woman whose spirit was always soaring*
> *even when her feet were planted firmly on the ground.*
> *Kayla Cross, Eulogy for her grandmother who was a pilot. University of Arkansas*

> *I realize that it was never about your flower garden.*
> *It was really about tending to the things of the heart*
> *Tasha Smith, Tribute to Grandma. University of Arkansas*

Recipe for a Powerful Antithesis

A. Statements that are Opposites

The first ingredient of an antithesis is opposites. I find it easiest to see the opposites by creating a box like this.

cannot help	many who are poor
save	few who are rich

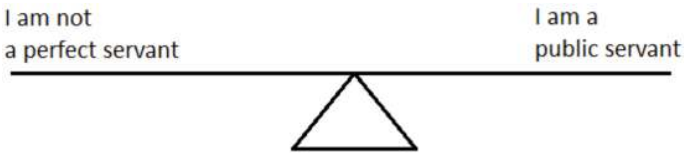
If a free society cannot help the many who are poor,
how can they save the few who are rich. John Kennedy

live together	brothers
perish together	fools

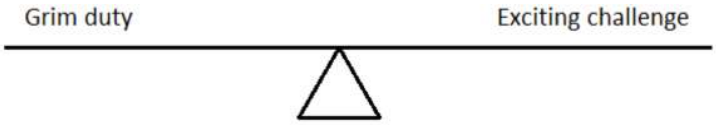
We must learn to live together as brothers
or perish together as fools. Martin Luther King, Jr.

B. Evenly Balanced

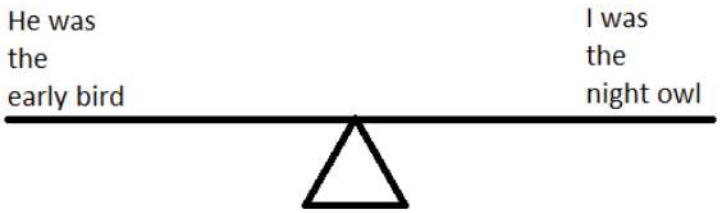
> *Ronald Carpenter suggests drawing a teeter-tooter and putting words on either side to see if they are balanced. The phrases should be closely balanced in terms of how many beats are on each side. Let us look at an example.*
>
> *I am not a perfect servant.*
> *I am a public servant*
> *doing my best against the odds.*
> *Jesse Jackson*



> *Let us accept his challenge, not as grim duty, but as an exciting challenge.*
> *Richard Nixon, Presidential nomination acceptance speech.*



> *He was the early bird*
> *and I was the night owl.*
> *Eulogy to Kobe Bryant by Vanessa Bryant*



Consider Bill Clinton's acceptance address to the 1992 Democratic Convention. "And yet just as we have won the cold war abroad, we are losing the battles for economic opportunity and social justice here at home. While this sentence has opposites, it does not have balance. As Ronald Carpenter suggests "a simple change would have made it not only opposite, but balanced: "We have won the cold ware for political democracy abroad but are losing the heated battle for economic opportunity at home." A little bit of balancing made a good statement great.

Here is one more example that improves with a little fix. This is George Bush's Graduation speech at West Point.

> *We're determined that before the sun sets on this terrible struggle, our flag will be recognized throughout the world as a symbol of freedom on one hand and of overwhelming power on the other.*

A simple addition of three words, "and a symbol," on the second phrase takes this good sentence and gives it balance:

> *We're determined that before the sun sets on this terrible struggle, our flag will be recognized throughout the world as a symbol of freedom on one hand and a symbol of overwhelming power on the other.*

Go back and read those examples again to feel the difference. Now, read Martin Luther King Jr's famous quote and notice that it has both a pairing of opposites and balance.

> *I have a dream that my four little children*
> *will one day live in a nation*
> *where they will not be judged by the color of their skin*
> *but by the content of their character.*
> *I have a dream today!*
> *I Have a Dream by Martin Luther King, Jr.*



And that's what John Lewis teaches us. That's where real courage comes from.

Not from turning on each other, but by turning towards one another.
Not by sowing hatred and division, but by spreading love and truth.
Not by avoiding our responsibilities to create a better America and a better world,
but by embracing those responsibilities with joy and perseverance and discovering that in our beloved community, we do not walk alone.

President Obama Eulogy for John Lewis

Can You Identify the Antithesis that is Opposite and Balanced?

Which of the following antithesis has the most symmetry from balancing opposites?

A. After this initial defeat, we seek ultimate peace

B. After this defeat, we seek victory and ultimate peace.

C. After this initial defeat in war, we seek ultimate victory in peace.

D. After an initial defeat, we seek ultimate peace.

E. After defeat in war, we seek ultimate victory and lasting peace.

From Choosing Powerful Words: Eloquence That Works.
The correct answer is C.

C. End the Antithesis with the Positive Statement

You should have a pairing of opposites that are evenly balanced, but you can really impact an audience by the order of the opposites. Listeners will pay the most attention to the last word in the antithesis, if you want it dark, end in a heavy word, if you want it hopeful, end in a positive word. Most of the time, you want to end with a positive word. Look at the difference between these two, which one sounds better? One ends in darkness and the other ends with a candle.

> *When other people cursed the darkness, she lit a **candle.***

> *She lit a candle when other people cursed the **darkness.***

Yes, of course, it sounds better to end with, "she lit a candle." Always try to end on the upbeat.

D. Use as Few Words as Possible.

So now we have a pairing of opposites that are evenly balanced that end with the positive and now we want to add economy of words. Say the same thing with as few words as possible.

> *Because life doesn't happen to you,*
> *it happens for you.*
> *Maharishi International University Commencement by Jim Carrey.*

> *A real dream is something that not only hangs on to you*
> *but you will hang onto it.*
> *Steven Spielberg, Some Good News Graduation*

? Test Your Skills: There are five antitheses and one parallel construction in this speech, can you find them all?

Now, John McCain is my colleague and my friend.
He has served our country with honor and courage.
But we don't need four more years … of the last eight years.
More economic stagnation … and less affordable healthcare.
More high gas prices … and less alternative energy.
More jobs getting shipped overseas … and fewer jobs created here.
More skyrocketing debt … home foreclosures … and mounting bills that are crushing our middle-class families.
More war … less diplomacy.
More of a government where the privileged come first … and everyone else comes last.

Democratic National Convention by Hillary Clinton

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Using rhetorical devices, colorful language, in your speech can elevate your speech writing, create impact, produce rhythm, and help the audience remember your message. There are numerous devices that are effective in speech.
- Alliteration-Repeat initial sounds of words.
- Parallel Construction–Repeat words or phrases at the beginning or end.
    - Anaphora–Repeat words or phrases at the beginning.
    - Epistrophe–Repeat words or phrases at the end.
- Personification–Giving innate things human characteristics.
- Tricolon–Make lists or statements in threes.
- Antithesis–Pairing of opposite phrases in parallel sentences.

Side Note: I have tried to include speech samples from various cultures, various people groups, and various political leanings. I purposefully chose speeches that represent a variety of topics to show all the different ways these speech devices are used. You may not agree with the point of view of some of the speakers (there are some of them I do not agree with), but that doesn't keep us from respecting their ability to construct a good speech.

References

Abdullah, R.A. (2009). UNRWA is a way of life. It is a way of living. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaqwxUFdU9w Standard YouTube License.

AP (2019). Armstong's famous "one small step' quote-explained. https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/07/13/armstrongs-famous-one-small-step-quote-explained/

Bell, K. (2019). USC School of Dramatic Arts Commencement. https://singjupost.com/kristen-bells-commencement-speech-2019-at-usc-full-transcript/

Blair, T. (1994). Leader's Speech, Blackpool. http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=200

Bryant, V, (2020). Eulogy to Kobe Bryant. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/sports/kobe-bryant-memorial-vanessa-bryant-s-full-eulogy-kobe-gianna-n1142176

Carey, J. (2014). Maharishi International University Commencement by Jim Carrey https://www.miu.edu/graduation-2014 Standard YouTube License.

Carpenter, R. H. (1999). *Choosing Powerful Words.* Boston, Allyn, and Bacon.

Cleveland, K. Graduate Speech to Sister. Student in Advanced Public Speaking at the University of Arkansas.

Clinton, B. (1993). First Inaugural Address of William J. Clinton. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/clinton1.asp

Clinton, B. (2016). Bill Clinton's Eulogy to Muhammad Ali, Louisville, KY. https://www.si.com/boxing/2016/06/13/muhammad-ali-funeral-bill-clinton-eulogy-speech

Clinton, H. (2008). Hillary Clinton's Speech at the Democratic National Convention. https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Conventions/story?id=5663211&page=1

Clinton, H. (1995). Women's Rights are Human Rights. https://www.pbs.org/video/washington-week-hillary-clinton-declares-womens-rights-are-human-rights/

Cole, B. Tribute to Harry Potter's Influence on My Childhood. Student in Advanced Public Speaking at the University of Arkansas.

Dold, L. Eulogy to Grandpa. Student in Advanced Public Speaking at the University of Arkansas.

Heston, C. (2008). From my cold dead hands. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ju4Gla2odw Standard YouTube License.

Jackson, J. (1984). Keynote speech, Democratic National Convention. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jessejackson1984dnc.htm

Jackson, S. Tribute to the Boat. Student in Advanced Public Speaking at the University of Arkansas.

Jobs, S. (2005). Steve Jobs Commencement to Stanford. https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/ Standard YouTube License.

Kennedy, J.F. (1960). Speech of Senator John F. Kennedy, Wittenburg College, Springfield Ohio. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/speech-senator-john-f-kennedy-wittenburg-college-stadium-springfield-ohio

King, M. (1963). I have a dream. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm

Lindmeier, C. (2020). WHO Press briefing. https://www.cnbc.com/2020/02/25/coronavirus-who-warns-virus-will-be-literally-knocking-at-the-door.html

Martin, K. (2019). Brutally honest valedictorian regrets being top of the class. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T76FdtKreNQ Standard YouTube License

Nixon, R. (1968). Presidential nomination acceptance challenge. http://www.4president.org/speeches/nixon1968acceptance.htm

Mandela, N. (1994). Nelson Mandela Inaugural Address. American Rhetoric. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/nelsonmandelainauguralspeech.htm

Obama, B. (2004). Speech at the Democratic National Convention. http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/bobama.html

Obama, B. (2008). Barack Obama's New Hampshire Primary Speech-Yes We Can. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamanewhampshireconcessionspeech.htm

Obama, B. (2013). President Obama speaks at a memorial service for Nelson Mandela. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SggOsfjsL0c Standard YouTube License.

Obama, B. (2020). Barack Obama delivers a powerful eulogy at John Lewis funeral. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/KPeqVow2hKQ?t=2328 Standard YouTube License.

Obama, B. (2020). President Obama's commencement speech, Dear class of 2020. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGEvASSaPyg Standard YouTube License.

Obama, M. (2020). Don't ever let anyone tell you that you're too angry. *The Washington Post* https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/06/07/michelle-obama-graduates-dont-ever-ever-let-anyone-tell-you-that-youre-too-angry/?arc404=true

Professor Buzzkill. (2017). Eleanor Roosevelt: It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. https://professorbuzzkill.com/qnq-21-churchill-americans-2/

ProWriting Aid. Antithesis. https://prowritingaid.com/Antithesis

Rigsby, R. (2017). The wisdom of a third-grade drop-out will change your life. Graduation speech. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Bg_Q7KYWG1g Standard YouTube License.

Sanberg, S. (2018). Opening statement to the Senate intelligence committee on Facebook and foreign influence. American Rhetoric. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/sherylsandbergcongressstatement.htm.

Spielberg, S. (2020). Some Good News Graduation Advice. Rolling Stone. https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-news/oprah-winfrey-steven-spielberg-give-graduates-advice-on-john-krasinskis-some-good-news-993413/

Sutter, B. (2013). Baseball Hall of Fame induction address. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/pyeYj_UJbn0 Standard YouTube License.

Van, As, T. Tribute Speech to Nelson Mandela. Student in Advanced Public Speaking at the University of Arkansas.

Wiesel, E. (1999). The perils of indifference. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpXmRiGst4k Standard YouTube License.

Winfrey, O. (2005) Eulogy to Rosa Parks. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cfhtfNfIPE Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Man writing © Scott Graham is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- antithesis
- antithesis 2
- antithesis 3

This page titled 1.12: Professional Speechwriting- Using Colorful Language in Your Speech is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.13: Professional Speechwriting- Metaphor, Simile, and Theme



Tombstone of a Jewish woman depicting broken candles as a visual metaphor for the end of life.

It's time to take your speechwriting to the professional level. To do that, you need to learn how to effectively use metaphors and similes and you need to learn how to weave those into a theme.

Let's start with some definitions. Similes and metaphors both make comparisons. A simile makes an explicit comparison usually using like and as. According to Merriam Webster, a metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy. You can use a variety of metaphors throughout a speech, but if you stick to one consistent topic, you have a theme. A theme is where you pick a comparison, and you use it throughout your speech. This gives a sense of unity and overall elevates the level of your speech.

What is needed for an effective metaphor?

An effective metaphor uses emotional phrases properly

> *According to an article in Psychology Today, "Metaphors are not just a literary technique; they are a very potent psychological technique." In a study, people were told about climate change using a war metaphor or a race metaphor. Those hearing the war metaphor found the climate change situation more urgent and were more likely to increase their conservation behaviors.*

> *Metaphors have a profound impact on how we think and act on social issues. In the study by Thibodeau and Boroditski, participants read about a crime-ridden city where the criminal element was a beast preying upon innocent citizens (animal metaphor), or was a disease that plagued the town (disease metaphor). When subjects were asked for a solution on how to solve the problem, those who heard about the animal metaphor supported strategies such as increasing police presence and imposing stricter penalties. Those who heard the disease metaphor favored seeking out the primary cause of the crime wave and bolstering the economy. The researchers concluded, "We find that exposure to even a single metaphor can induce substantial differences. People chose information that was likely to confirm and elaborate the bias suggested by the metaphor – an effect that persisted even when people were presented with a full set of possible solutions." In short, the metaphor influenced how they saw the problem and what type of solution would fit the problem.*
>
> *Interestingly, while the metaphor influenced their opinions on the issues, they remembered the issue and not the metaphor. The researchers suggested that even when the metaphor is covert, it affected the subject's decisions.*

An effective metaphor uses something simple to help the audience understand something complex.

> *Metaphors take hard-to-understand ideas and compare them to simple-to-understand ideas. Take, for example, the ever famous, "Life is a box of chocolates." It takes something abstract, in this case, love, and compares it to something familiar and understandable, a box of chocolates.*

An effective metaphor is one that is understood by the listeners.

> *A good metaphor works because the audience understands the thing that is being compared. When I told my son, he sounded like a "broken record," he had not idea what I was talking about. One speaker told me that he made a reference to the "one ring to rule them all" to realize that only half of the audience had never seen the Lord of the Rings movies. He said, "I used a metaphor of a movie they had never seen to explain a concept they didn't understand. Any understanding they might have had of the concept was lost because their attention was now focused on trying to understand a movie. "*

An effective metaphor fits the cultural context.

> *In a study, students were given an argument about whether their university should require a senior thesis. Football phrases such as "handoff," "touchdown," and "fumble" were used. The results suggested that those who liked sports found the metaphor more engaging than those who did not like sports. For the non-sports fan, the metaphor had no more effect than the arguments that contained no metaphor.*

An effective metaphor fits the situation.

> *The right metaphor is one that fits the occasion. Metaphors such as "passed on" and "candle dimmed" are used in eulogy speeches. "Beginning a new chapter" and "starting a new journey" are used for graduation speeches. "Retirement is a blank sheet of paper. It is a chance to redesign your life into something new and different." This quote by Patrick Foley is an example of how retirement metaphors work. Other retirement phrases may be "unshackled" or "beginning a new highway."*

Check out this website about international metaphors for death

---

The greatest thing by far
is to be a master of metaphor
Aristotle

The big idea here is that it must be the right metaphor for the subject and the audience. Metaphors can help you understand complex ideas and can take everyday ideas and make them more interesting. To some degree, metaphors help you show, not tell. A well-told metaphor can help you create visuals in the mind of your audience. When it comes to this advanced language technique, I like to show, not tell. Let's look at how metaphors have been used in speech, I'll start with examples of metaphors in presidential speeches.

Presidential Metaphors

Presidential speeches

Watch this movie version of the 272-word Gettysburg Address and listen for references to birth and conception.



Let's look at a few more examples of how presidents have used metaphors in their speeches.

- We are now engaged in a great Civil War, testing whether this nation or any nation **so *conceived*** and so dedicated can long endure. Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address
- And you have changed the face of Congress, the Presidency, and the political process itself. Yes, you, my fellow Americans, have **forced the spring.** Now we must do the work the season demands." Bill Clinton Inaugural Address
- You can be the new majority who can lead this nation out of a***long political darkness* –** Democrats, Independents, and Republicans who are tired of the division and distraction that has **clouded** Washington; who know that we can disagree without being disagreeable; who understand that if we mobilize our voices to challenge the money and influence that's stood in our way and challenge ourselves to reach for something better, there's no problem we can't solve – no destiny we cannot fulfill. Barack Obama
- America was targeted for attack because *we're the* **brightest beacon** for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that **light** from shining. George W. Bush, Speech after 911 Attacks.

Persuasive Metaphor

> *Metaphors can be very persuasive. Picking a metaphor that the audience relates to is especially important–most people can relate to pizza so that is the comparison that this TED speaker chose. Al Vernacchio criticizes the use of baseball as a metaphor for sex where there is a winner and loser– scoring, getting to first base, etc. He suggests instead that people think of sex as shared pleasure, discussion, and agreement–he suggests the metaphor of pizza. It's an eight minute, easy to listen to speech, you won't want to miss this.*



Metaphor in Leadership

Simon Lancaster says metaphors are one of the most powerful pieces of political and leadership communication because they move us towards things or make us recoil. He looks at phrases like the “financial storm” and the “dung heap of capitalism” as ways in which the use of words influences our perception of an issue.
(Watch the four-minute clip where he talks about metaphor. It is cued to start at the part where he talks about metaphor.)



If you have time, watch the whole talk to see how he shares his six rhetorical techniques: Three breathless sentences, three repetitive sentences, balancing statements, metaphor, exaggerative statements, rhyming statements

Enduring Metaphors

There are metaphors that seem to stick around through the years. You will see these come up a lot in literature, in songs, and in speeches. These are sometimes referenced as archetypal metaphors. According to communication scholar Michael Osborn, “archetypal metaphors are grounded in prominent features of experience, in objects, actions, or conditions which are inescapably salient in human consciousness.” Because the human experience aspect is so crucial to these metaphors, you tend to find them in some of the most significant speeches in history. The timelessness of these metaphors increases the likelihood that the speech will outlive its author.

Here are a few of the most prominent enduring metaphors. I’ll give you examples of each.

- Light, Dark
- Storm, Sea, Set Sail
- Disease
- Battle, war
- Seasons, Sunrise, Sunset
- Journey, Road

Seasons, Sunrise, Sunset

Winter in our Hearts

At the dawn of spring last year, a single act of terror brought forth the long, **cold winter in our hearts**. The people of Oklahoma City are mourning still.
Al Gore, Oklahoma Bombing Memorial Address

Winds of Change
The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.
Harold MacMillian, British Prime Minister

New Birth of Spring

This year a new **birth** will occur. The physical being that will be its **offspring** will be like the **new beginning** which occurs when the **spring** rains wash away the dead leaves of winter and give life to the summer green which, as an expression of the rhythm of the seasons, blankets our earth. That **new birth** will signal the wonder that we have begun to construct a new social

order.
Nelson Mandela, Address to the African National Congress

Light and Dark Metaphor

"If you want a love message to be heard,
it has got to be sent out.
To keep a lamp burning,
we have to keep putting oil in it."
Mother Teresa

Only when it's **dark** enough can you see the stars.
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I See the Promised Land Speech

The **light** has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the **light** that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The **light** that has **illumined** this country for these many years will **illumine** this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that **light** will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts.
Jawaharlal Nehru, Eulogy to Mahatma Gandhi

The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, **sunlit** uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a **new Dark Age** made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the **lights** of perverted science
Winston Church Hill, The Finest Hour

John Kerry will be sworn in as president, and John Edwards will be sworn in as vice president, and this country will reclaim its promise, and **out of this long political darkness, a brighter day** will come.
Barack Obama, Democratic National Convention

Journey, Travel, Destination

I believe we can give our middle-class relief and provide working families with a **road** to opportunity.

I believe that we have a righteous wind at our backs and that as we stand on the **crossroads of history**, we can make the right choices, and meet the challenges that face us.

Barrack Obama, 2001 Democratic National Convention

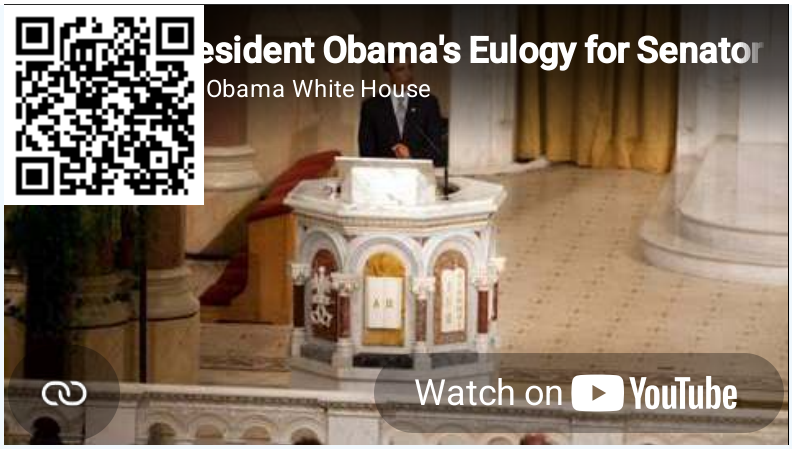
Storm, Sea, Sail

Storm

That **storm** sweeps across the human habitat. Like the spring rains, it seeks to drive away the pestilences that continue to afflict the world of living beings, the universal malignancies which seem to have found a home in our diseased society.
Nelson Mandela, Address to African National Congress

Stormy Sea
It's been quite a journey this decade, and we held together through some **stormy seas.** And at the end, together, we are reaching our destination.
Ronald Reagan, Farewell Address

Navigate Choppy Waters
It's been my privilege to launch Baylor upon this exciting journey of Baylor 2012 and lead the university beyond the inertia of the status quo. Now that the **voyage** is well underway, it's time for someone new to **navigate** these sometimes **choppy waters** while continuing to aim for the carefully **charted destination** ahead. President Robert B. Sloan, Baylor University



Sails into the Wind

Ted Kennedy has gone home now, guided by his faith and by the **light** of those he has loved and lost. At last, he is with them once more, leaving those of us who grieve his passing with the memories he gave, the good he did, the dream he kept alive, and a single, enduring image – the image of a man on a boat; white mane tousled; smiling broadly as he **sails** into the wind, ready for what **storms** may come, carrying on toward some new and wondrous place just beyond the horizon. Barack Obama Eulogy for Ted Kennedy.

Battle, War

In an analysis of war metaphors in public discourse, researchers concluded that war metaphors are omnipresent because they draw on a common theme that can be communicated in many different situations. War metaphors work because they express an urgent negative emotion that captures attention and can motivate action.

Here are a few examples of the battle/war metaphor that come up in speech.

- I am battling a headache.
- My friend beat cancer.
- He confronted his worst fear.
- I've got to tackle my taxes tonight.
- He attacked every weak point in my argument.
- His criticisms were right on target.
- I demolished his argument.
- I've never won an argument with him.
- If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.
- He shot down all of my arguments.
- Attack a position.
- Physicians battle against death.
- The disease attacks our bodies.
- War on poverty/plastic/drugs/Christmas

I challenge you to spend one day writing down all the war and battle metaphors you hear, I think you will be surprised. Now that we agree that they are ever-present, let's look at a few speech examples.

We are engaged in a great civil war and this campus is one of the many **battlegrounds.** The **war** I'm referring to is cultural rather than military, but something very vital is at stake. Today the **battle** is for your hearts and minds, for the freedom to think the way you choose to follow that moral compass that points to what is right.
Charlton Heston, NRA, Free Thought and Freedom

So, will you join in the **battle** to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin? Will you join in the **battle** to give every citizen an escape from the crushing weight of poverty? Lyndon B. Johnson, The Great Society

Simile

A simile makes a comparison using like or as.

A room without books is like a body without a soul. Cicero

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving. Albert Einstein

A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it is not open. Frank Zappa, Musician

When I joined Apple in 1998, I couldn't believe my luck. I was going to get to spend the rest of my professional life working for Steve Jobs. But **fate comes like a thief in the night.** The loneliness I felt when we lost Steve was proof that there is nothing more eternal, or more powerful, than the impact we have on others. Tim Cook, Ohio State Commencement.

Rain, somebody said, **is like confetti from heaven**. So even the heavens are celebrating this morning, joining the rest of us at this wonderful commencement ceremony." USSC Justice John Roberts, Cardigan Commencement Address

Theme

The use of theme and figurative language separates the amateurs from the pros. Sometimes a theme is referred to as an extended metaphor. Taking your comparisons and weaving them into an overall speech theme takes work, but it elevates your speech. It's time you learn to be one of the pros. I want to demonstrate how to brainstorm a theme and then give you numerous examples to show you how it works in a speech.

Do This Before You Begin to Write Your Speech

> *When using a theme, make a chart of the word and all the synonyms you can think of. After you have exhausted your ideas, then you should look into a thesaurus. Write any words related to the topic. For example, when looking at the word, "foundation," the words "build" and "construct" are related. Finally, make a column of all the opposite words you can think of on your topic.*

Brainstorm the Word Foundation	Words Related to Foundation	Words Opposite of Foundation
• Foundation • Bedrock • Firm footing • Solid Ground • Well-grounded • Understructure • Underpinning • Substructure • Footing • Groundwork • Base • Backbone • Root • Fundamental • ABC's • Genesis	• Support • Build • Construct • Bridge • Build up • Nuts and bolts • Infrastructure • Genesis • Spring • Grounds • Architecture • Fabrication • Develop • Keystone • Pillar • Establish	• Shaky ground • Crumbling foundation • Sand • Groundless • Teardown • Cut out from under • Undermine • Undercut • Destroy • Decrease • Capstone • Climax • Crown • Pinnacle • Culmination

> *A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the **foundation** of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the **foundation of America.** These acts shattered steel but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.*
> *George W. Bush, Speech After 911 Attacks*

When you are developing your speech, you can use a stand-alone metaphor, or you can weave it into a theme. Ceremonial speeches lend themselves to themes. Funerals, tributes, graduation speeches, and toasts, all work well when given a theme. Sometimes that theme is picked because it carries the emotion and sometimes, the theme is picked because it fits the person. Let me give you some examples. In the first example, Tasha Smith a student in my class was giving a tribute to her grandmother who was a gardener. It lends itself to a speech wide theme:

> *Plucking the **weeds** out of my life and out of the lives of others. I realize that it was never about your **flower garden.** It was really about **tending** to the things of the heart. Tasha Smith, Tribute to Grandma.*

For the next example, my student, Drew Oglesby gave a best man toast. Because he and his friend often took road trips together, he used the theme of travel. He told stories of their road trips, of maps, of getting lost, and of the journey. In the wedding toast, he passes the map and the title of "road trip captain" off to the new bride.

> *I trust these hints are helpful the next time you two are **traveling.** Remember, it is not the **road trip** that I will always cherish, but the great guy I was able to share it with. So today, I raise a glass to you two. Mr. and Mrs. ___ because I know you are going to experience far greater **adventures** than I could ever imagine. I am confident you two will love each other with every **wrong turn** in life and you will love each other with **every flat tire** and **detour.** I know you will always be there for each other, and I am positive you (the bride) will make the perfect **road trip captain!***

Filmmaker, Steven Spielberg used the theme of dreams in his 2020 graduation address.

> ***Dreams** are a great test. Because a dream is going to test your resolve, and you're going to know a **dream** from a **pipe dream**. You're going to know a **dream** from a casual brush with something that you got excited about, and then it evaporates. A real **dream** is something that not only hangs on to you but you will hang onto it. And it will power you through every obstacle that people and your environment will throw against you.*
>
> *Because if we're in service of our **dreams** versus our **dreams** being in service to us it becomes something greater. It allows us to be game and it allows us to get over our fear to go forward no matter what obstacles are thrown in our path.*

Former president Ronald Reagan spoke to the nation after the space shuttle challenger crashed. He masterfully used the theme of exploration. Listen carefully as he uses words such as "Pioneer, daring and brave."



President Ronald Reagan used the exploration, pioneer, and frontier theme in his speech about the Challenger crash.

> *For the families of the seven, we cannot bear, as you do, the full impact of this tragedy. But we feel the loss, and we're thinking about you so very much. Your loved ones were* ***daring*** *and* ***brave****, and they had that special grace, that special spirit that says, "Give me a* ***challenge*** *and I'll meet it with joy." They had a hunger to* ***explore*** *the universe and discover its truths. They wished to serve, and they did. They served all of us.*
>
> *We've grown used to wonders in this century. It's hard to dazzle us. But for 25 years the United States space program has been doing just that. We've grown used to the idea of space, and perhaps we forget that we've only just begun. We're still* ***pioneers.*** *They, the members of the Challenger crew, were* ***pioneers.***
>
> *And I want to say something to the school children of America who were watching the live coverage of the shuttle's takeoff. I know it is hard to understand, but sometimes painful things like this happen. It's all part of the process of* ***exploration*** *and* ***discovery****. It's all part of* ***taking a chance*** *and* ***expanding man's horizons****. The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the* ***brave****. The Challenger crew was* ***pulling us into the future****, and we'll continue to* ***follow*** *them.*
>
> *I've always had great faith in and respect for our space program, and what happened today does nothing to diminish it. We don't hide our space program. We don't keep secrets and cover things up. We do it all up front and in public. That's the way* ***freedom*** *is, and we wouldn't change it for a minute. We'll continue our* ***quest*** *in space. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space. Nothing ends here; our* ***hopes*** *and our* ***journeys continue.***
>
> *There's a coincidence today. On this day 390 years ago, the great explorer* ***Sir Francis Drake*** *died aboard ship off the coast of Panama. In his lifetime the great* ***frontiers*** *were the oceans, and a historian later said, "He lived by the sea, died on it, and was buried in*

> *it." Well, today we can say of the Challenger crew: Their **dedication** was, like Drake's, **complete.***
>
> *The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their **journey** and waved good-bye and "slipped the surly bonds of earth" to "touch the face*

When Using a Theme, Use Consistent Metaphors

When creating a speech with a unifying theme, it is helpful to be consistent with your metaphor. Not only does it help listeners to understand, but it also elevates the theme. Just for fun, look at this mixed metaphor from President Obama.

> *Even though most people agree that I'm being reasonable; that most people agree I'm presenting a fair deal; the fact they don't take it means I should somehow do a Jedi mind-meld with these folks and convince them to do what's right.*
> *Barack Obama messing up Star Wars and Star Trek references while working with Republicans in Congress.*

I think this is likely a mess up rather than a mixed metaphor, it does bring up the point that our minds struggle when given two different metaphors to work with.

? Kenneth Burke's Four Master Tropes

Literary theorist Kenneth Burke popularized a vocabulary that allows us to think about various rhetorical devices so we can make sense of experiences. He believed that by understanding them we could discover and describe "the truth." Let's begin with a definition. What is a trope? It is a way of presenting thought in language. So, Burke wanted to look at how we think based on the language that is being used.

Do you need to know these words to write a good speech? Not at all. This discussion is here to help you understand the theory that you will need in other classes, it is here to give you a vocabulary to impress your friends, but most of all it is here to help you consider the thought behind the language.

1. **Metaphor:** A metaphor substitutes one word for another or one idea for another based on some semblance.
2. **Synecdoche:** Synecdoche substitutes one part for the whole. A coach who says he needs "fresh legs" or "fresh eyes" means that they want the whole person–not just the eyes. To have "boots on the ground" means to have the whole soldier on the ground. When someone is "counting heads" they are counting more than just the head and the Navy a navy officer saying, "All hands on deck" is expecting more than just hands.
3. **Metonymy:** A metonymy elaborates by reducing a concept. It reduces a larger idea to a single word or phrase. When we say, "the White House issues a statement" we don't mean the building itself. "Hollywood is corrupt" is a reference to something larger and "beware of the bottle" is not a warning about a bottle, but about the effect of alcohol.
4. **Irony:** Substitutes a statement for its opposite. What is said contradicts what is meant. When you see that you have a flat tire and say, "That's great." You mean just the opposite.

Kenneth Burk in *Grammar of Motives*

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- A metaphor is a comparison.
- A simile is a comparison that uses "like" or "and."
- A theme is a type of extended metaphor.
- An effective metaphor: uses emotional phrases properly, uses a simple thing to help the audience understand something complex, is understood by listeners, fits the cultural context

Side Note: I have tried to include speech samples from various cultures, various people groups, and various political leanings. I purposefully chose speeches that represent a variety of topics to show all the different ways these speech devices are used. You may not agree with the point of view of some of the speakers (there are some of them I do not agree with), but that doesn't keep us from respecting their ability to construct a good speech.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Annas, G. J. (1995). Reframing the debate on health care reform by replacing our metaphors. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *332*(11), 744-748.

Aristotle, (1954). *Poetics*. trans Ingram Bywater Modern Library.

Brooks, R. (2017). Metaphors for death from around the world. The Langauge Blog. https://k-international.com/blog/metaphors-for-death-around-the-world/

Burke, K. (1954). *Grammar of Motives.* Prentice-Hall.

Burke, K. (1941). Four master tropes. *The Kenyon Review 3(*4), 421-438.

Burkely, M. (2017). Why metaphors are important. *Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-social-thinker/201711/why-metaphors-are-important

Bush, G. W. (2001). 911 Address to the Nation. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothenation.htm

Clinton, B. (1993), Bill Clinton Inaugural Address. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/clinton1.asp

Enelow, D. (1999). The four master troupes. http://faculty.headroyce.org/~denelow/English%2011/rhetoric/Mastertropes.htm;

Churchhill, W. (1940). The finest hour. https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1940-the-finest-hour/their-finest-hour/

Jorgensen-Earp, C.R. & Staton, A.Q. (1993). Student metaphors for the college freshman experience. *Communication Education*, *42 (*2), 123-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529309378920

Cook, T. (2020). Ohio State University. Commencement speech. https://news.osu.edu/apple-ceo-tim-cook-delivers-ohio-state-commencement-address/

Flusberg, S.J., Matlock, T. & Thibodeau, P.H. (2018) War metaphors in public discourse, *Metaphor and Symbol*, *33 (*1), 1-18, DOI: 10.1080/10926488.2018.1407992
Available for download https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322238852_War_metaphors_in_public_discourse

Flusberg, S. J., Matlock, T., & Thibodeau, P. H. (2017). Metaphors for the war (or race) against climate change. *Environmental Communication*, *11 (*6), 769-783. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2017.1289111

Geary, J. (2009). Metaphorically speaking. TED Global 2009. https://www.ted.com/talks/james_geary_metaphorically_speaking?language=en

Gladkoff, M. Word Nerd. Writing speeches using similes, metaphors, and analogies for greater impact. https://www.word-nerds.com.au/writing-speeches-using-similes-metaphors-and-analogies/

Graves, M.P. (1983). Functions of key metaphors in early Quaker sermons, 1671–1700. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69(4), 364-378. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638309383663

Jensen, J.V. (1983). Metaphor in argumentation. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 13(3-4), 201-207. https://doi.org/10.1080/02773948309390696

Johnson, L. (1964). The great society. http://www.umich.edu/~bhlumrec/c/commence/1964-Johnson.pdf

King, M.L. (1968). I see the promised land. http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/speeches/mlk_promised_land.html

Lancaster, S. (2016). Speak like a leader. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGBamfWasNQ

Lakoff, G & Johson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* University of Chicago Press.

Lincoln. A. (1863), Gettysburg Address. http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm

Mandela, N. (1994). Address by Nelson Mandel to the African National Congress National conference on reconstruction and strategy, Johannesburg. http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/1994/940121_recon.htm

Macmillion, H. (1960). The wind of change speech. https://web-archives.univ-pau.fr/english/TD2doc1.pdf

Mere Rhetoric. (2015). Four master tropes. https://mererhetoric.libsyn.com/four-master-tropes

Metaphor. Merriam Webster. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor

Nehru, J. (1948). Mahatma Gandhi's Eulogy. https://www.funeralwise.com/celebration-of-life/ceremony/eulogy/gandhi/

Obama, B. (2003). Democratic National Convention keynote address. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/convention2004/barackobama2004dnc.htm

Obama, B. (2008). New Hampshire primary concession speech. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamanewhampshireconcessionspeech.htm

Obama, B. (2009). President Obama's Eulogy for Senator Edward Kennedy. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK5-uJc3EnY

Ogollsby, D. Roadtrip Captian. University of Arkansas.

Osborn, M., & Ehninger, D. (1962). The metaphor in public address. *Speech Monographs 29(3).* 223-234. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637756209375346

Osborn, M. (1967). Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric The Light-Dark Family. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 53*. 115-126. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335636709382823

Osborn, M. (1977). The evolution of the archetypal sea in rhetoric and poetic. *Quarterly Journal of Speech 63*, 347-363.https://doi.org/10.1080/00335637709383395

Pollio, H.R., Barrow, J.M., Fine, H.J. & Pollio, M.R. (1977). *The Poetics of Growth: Figurative Language in Psychology, Psychotherapy, and Education*. Lawrence Erlbaum

Reagan, R. (1986). President Ronald Reagan's Speech on Space Shuttle Challenger. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqilE4AAa-M[Standard YouTube License.

Reagan, R. (1989). Farewell Address to the Nation. https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/farewell-address-nation

Roberts, J. (2017). Cardigan Mountain School Commencement Address. American Rhetoric. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/spe...mmencement.htm

Sargent, L.D., Bataille, C.D., Vough, H.C., Lee, M.D. (2011). Metaphors for retirement: Unshackled from scheduled. Journal of Vocational Behavior. 79:2, 315-324. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.03.002

Smith, T. Tribute to Grandma. University of Arkansas.

Spielberg, S. (2020). Some Good News Graduation. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IweS2CPSnbI Standard YouTube License

Thibodeau P.H., & Boroditsky L (2011) Metaphors We Think With: The Role of Metaphor in Reasoning. PLoS ONE 6(2): e16782. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0016782

Ventura, J. (2016). Sh*t politicians say The funnies, dumbest, most outrageous thins ever uttered by our leaders. Skyhorse Publishing.

Vernacchio, A. (2012). Sex needs a new metaphor. Here's one. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/al_vernacchio_sex_needs_a_new_metaphor_here_s_one Standard YouTube License

Wise, A. (2020, April 17). Military metaphors distort the reality of COVID-19. Scientific American. https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/military-metaphors-distort-the-reality-of-covid-19/

University of Arkansas Student Speech Samples from Tasha Smith, Tribute to Grandma, Drew Oglesby, Roadtrip Captain.

Media Attributions

- Broken Candle is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license

This page titled 1.13: Professional Speechwriting- Metaphor, Simile, and Theme is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.14: Professional Speechwriting- Vivid and Sensory Words Make Your Speech Come Alive



"I want pictures in my mind," I tell my students. "Paint me pictures. Give me word pictures." The more I can see, feel, taste, and smell what is happening in the speech, the more I am engaged. This chapter is about how to give your students a sensory experience when you speak. It is about using vivid and sensory words to engage the audience. I want to "show" you what this looks like by giving you several quality speeches to experience for yourself.

The tongue can paint
what the eyes can't see.
Chinese proverb.

Listen as Will Smith describes jumping out of an airplane. By describing the light colors and what is going on in his mind, we begin to feel his story.



Consider This

Which of these two sentences gets your attention?

The glass shattered into tiny pieces
or
the glass broke

If you are like most people, the sentence that says the "glass shattered into tiny pieces" captured your attention and caused you to visualize the breaking glass. You might have even thought of the last time you broke a glass. It works because it used vivid language.

Listen as Matthew Dicks explains what it is like to be homeless and taken in by a family that has a pet goat that chews on his hair at night and then he continues to tell his story of being robbed at gunpoint. Notice how you can "see" his story in your mind's eye.



In an experiment of investing in the market, researchers tested whether or not language would affect investor judgment. They tested vivid words versus pallid words. In this study, a vivid phrase was "sales *jumped*...analysts viewed this as very *impressive" and the pallid phrase was "* sales *increased*..analysts view this performance as *positive*." The vivid phrase showed stronger results. In other words, how you tell people to invest can impact the outcome. This is just one of many studies that show the impact of vivid language on thoughts and behaviors.

In other research studies, vivid messages created greater desirability for the product, caused people to have more favorable beliefs toward an idea and even influenced judgments. Why do they work? Vivid messages work, in part, because they hold our attention.

For vividness to be effective, it must do all the following:

(a) Emotionally interesting.
(b) Vivid enough to produce sensations or visual images.
(c) Relatable. It must be consistent with the audience's experiences and knowledge.
(d) Related to the central thesis.

At the center of it all, is the audience. The key to making vividness work is audience understanding. For example, A cenote is a pool of water made by a sinkhole that exposes groundwater. This water is usually very clear, very clean, and very cool. Unless you've been to a cenote, you may have no idea what a cenote is and therefore would have no idea when a speaker says the lake water was like the cool, clear, water of a cenote. Instead of evoking images, it only produces confusion. Vividness works when the audience can relate, and they can call up the sensations or visual images.

It is also important that the vivid statements relate to the thesis. Researchers Guadagno, Rhoads, and Sagrins tested why sometimes vividness worked and other times it did not. With testing, they found that vivid words persuaded only when the message was strong and the vivid words regarded the central thesis. When vivid information was introduced that did not relate to the main point, it became a distraction. It seems that vividness enhances persuasion, but only when purposefully used, otherwise it is just a distraction that undermines persuasion. Oh yeah, no surprise here, but vividness can't save a weak argument.

Angelina Jolie Speaks at World Refugee Day

Let's look at a strong speech that uses vividness.

- Stripped of home and country, refugees are buffeted from every ill wind that blows across this planet.
- They guided me into a small dirt house with no roof to keep out the scorching heat, and they dusted off the two old mats that they ate, slept and prayed on. And we sat and we talked, and they were just the loveliest women. And then with a few twigs and a single tin cup of water, they made the last of their tea and insisted on me to enjoy it.
- He had a dusty face, the brightest green eyes I have ever seen but such a sad look but she explained that he's always asking for more food. And it hurts her to say that they have nothing. And she asked if we would consider taking him, would we take her sons so he could eat. And she said it with tears in her eyes with such desperation.
- He sat on the dusty floor; he's been shot on the back and left paralyzed. And he crawled forward to shake my hand, he was no more than fifteen. He had big pretty eyes, big wide sparkling smile, and after all he'd been through, he's full of laughter and love. Later that night I asked whether he'd not been taken to a hospital or at least given a wheelchair and I was told that the boy's entire family had been killed so there was no one to look after him.



Angelina Jolie World Refugee Day transcript

After you read this chapter, revisit this speech. While looking at the transcript, try to make a list of all the vivid and sensory words. Categorize them based on the sense they activate.

Use Sensory Words

One type of vividness comes from sensory words. Research demonstrates that we process those words faster than other words. By sensory words, I'm talking about words that have to do with seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching. For just a moment, imagine you are in Paris and you look up to see the top of the Eiffel tower where the structure touches the sky. Chances are, as you thought about this, your eyes went up. You sensed with your body the words that were being spoken. When you hear or read sensory words that you can relate to, your brain lights up. Your brain lights up in the same area that the actual experience would occur–it is as if you are experiencing the word and not just hearing it. When someone talks about the "sweet, gooey cookie pulled out of the oven, and the sweet aroma fills the air and you look down at the partially melted chocolate chips and are eager to take a bite. " This sentence caused many of you to taste and see the cookie and your brain lights up as if you are eating one. Words that evoke a mental image are the most likely to evoke a sensory image. The more you create "word pictures" that we see in the movie of our minds, the more likely we are to experience it with other senses.

What follows is a chart of the main senses and with examples of the words associated with that sense.

The Power of Sensory Words

Touch Sensory Words

Tactile words describe the texture of how something feels. You can also use them to describe feelings and abstract concepts.

gritty, creepy, slimy, sticky, rough

Examples of touch words:

- *Two minutes into the interview, I knew his **abrasive** personality would be an issue if we hired him.*
- *With a forced smile, I put on the **itchy** Christmas sweater my grandmother bought me.*

Sound Sensory Words

Words related to hearing often describe the sound.

crashing, thumping, piercing, thundering, squeaking

Examples of hearing words:

- *He had a big, **booming** voice.*
- *The sound of **screeching** tires was soon followed by the **deafening** sound of a car horn.*

Sight Sensory Words

Visual words describe the appearance of something. They may indicate color, shape, or appearance.

gloomy, dazzling, bright, foggy, vibrant

Sight word examples:

- *Her **golden** hair looked **disheveled** thanks to the gust of wind.*
- *He was a **towering** presence.*

Taste and Sensory Words

Taste words are interesting because often they are a metaphor for something else. For example, a “bitter rejection” has nothing to do with taste.

zesty, tantalizing, sweet, stale

Examples of taste words:

- *It’s a **bittersweet** situation.*
- *The **scrumptious** jalapeno poppers comforted Karl after his **bitter** rejection.*

Smell Sensory Words

Words related to smell describe — yes, you guessed it — how things smell. Often underutilized, sensory words connected with smell can be very effective.

putrid, flowery, stinky

Examples of smell words:

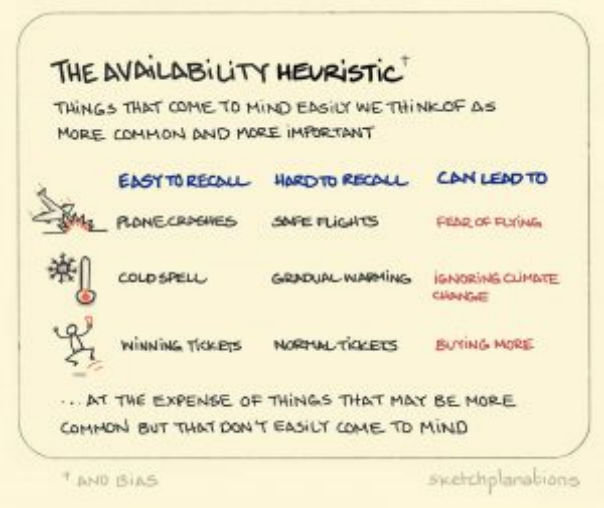
- *The **pungent** smell was unmistakable: someone in this elevator was wearing Axe Body Spray.*
- *No matter the expiration date, it was clear from its **rancid** stench the milk had gone bad.*

Many of these examples are from smartblogger.com and exchangedmarketing.com.

Notice how Brene Brown describes a situation–She has on white slacks and a pink sweater set and how she dropped her coffee on the tile floor, and it splashed on her. She goes on to say that she blamed her husband. She uses it to make a powerful point about blame and accountability and demonstrates for us the power of how vivid descriptions can draw us in and make us want to listen.



Considerations of Using Vividness



The easier that information is for me to think about, remember, and recall, the more that information influences my decisions. Your goal should be to give the information in such a way that people can process that information. The availability heuristic suggests that when making decisions we tend to base those decisions on things that come to our mind easily. If information is recent, vivid, and fits into our thought patterns, it is more available and therefore is more likely to influence our decision-making.

We are likely to think crime is a threat if there has been a recent break-in in our neighborhood. We are more likely to feel afraid if we watch a lot of crime shows or if there has been a featured news story on assaults. Since that information is recent in our mind and the stories were told to us in a vivid manner, we are more likely to pay attention to that information and then bring it to mind when someone suggests taking a self-defense course.

This collection of motivational stories is powerful because they are real and because in each case, they are told with vividness.



In this next video, the founder of charity water, Scott Harrison tells how he got involved in charity water and what his organization does. Watch this documentary and speech video as he talks about drinking from “scummy swamps.” And how he describes how the women are “breaking their backs to get it.” (You can stop watching at the statistics part –but I warn you it may be hard to stop). What is the point here? The point is for you to notice how he infuses speech, powerful visuals, and vivid words to persuade us to act and to help others to get clean water.



If you watched the video, you saw a worm in the water. Some of you likely had a visceral reaction. For many of you, it caused you to sympathize with the cause, for others, it may have gone too far, and you protected yourself by not watching or by making fun of the video.

If you try to take vividness too far, it can backfire on you. Thoughts that are too uncomfortable, might cause people to suppress the information or deny it altogether. This is particularly true when creating messages that instill fear.

The Extended Parallel Process Model looks at how people respond to messages that create fear as a way to drive positive health outcomes. For example, to get someone to wear a condom, a speaker might activate fear and make them afraid that they will get a sexually transmitted disease. A speaker might share statistics, gruesome stories, and even show slides of infections (flashback to high school health class). The challenge is that people have different reactions to fear-invoking situations–they either minimize their fear–"That's not going to happen to me, I could tell if my partner has an infection" or they minimize the danger and wear a condom. So what makes the difference?

A speaker who is trying to use research and analogies that produce fear has to find the "sweet spot" in order to get the audience to react in a way that produces a positive health outcome. If the danger feels like it is too much, the listener will just panic or deny the danger. Describing things in too vivid of detail can often backfire and cause people to worry but do nothing or deny that the situation is real.

The goal should be to use just enough vividness that it is memorable and to direct examples towards the specific audience, so they are relatable. Most importantly, fear messages work best when coupled with a specific plan of action. If people feel like there is a do-able way to get rid of the fear, and they are capable of doing it, they are more likely to react.

To recap. For an audience to be impacted, the message has to be relatable. It should be vivid enough to be memorable and activate the senses–but not so vivid that it overwhelms the main message. Vivid descriptions should support the central message. If you are trying to persuade an audience and you use vividness to produce fear, you need to offer them specific, manageable ways to act. Vividness is one more tool in your public speaking toolbelt. Use it wisely!

Key Takeaways

Remember this!

- For vivid words to work they must be emotionally interesting, vivid enough to produce sensations or visual images, relatable to the audience, and related to the central thesis.
- Vivid messages are easier to remember and can be more persuasive.
- When using fear appeals, make sure you could the fear with an action that the audience is capable of performing.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Brown, B. (2015). Brene Brown on blame. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8&t=31s Standard YouTube License.

Dicks, M. (2016). Live like you are 100 years old. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnatyrn6DFE Standard YouTube License.

Duncan, K.J. (2021). 583 Sensory words to take your writing from bland to brilliant. https://smartblogger.com/sensory-words/

Goalcast. (2020). Top 5 legendary speeches: Motivation for when life gets hard. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZ8cuBjoS-w Standard YouTube License.

Guadagno, R, & Rhoads, K. & Sagarin, B. (2011). Figural vividness and persuasion: Capturing the "elusive" vividness effect. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *37*, 626-38. doi: 10.1177/0146167211399585

Hales, J., Kuang, X. & Venkataraman, S. (2011) Who believes the hype? An experimental examination of how language affects investor judgments. *Journal of Accounting Research*, *49*(1), 223-255. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-679X.2010.00394.x

Harrison, S. (2020). The Spring-the charity: water story. [Video]. YouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdBG5V O01e0 Standard YouTube License.

Henneke. How to arouse the magic of sensory words (Even in Business Writing). Enchanting Marketing. https://www.enchantingmarketing.com/sensory-words/

Hey, J. Availability heuristic and bias. Image. Sketchplanations. https://sketchplanations.com/the-availability-heuristic-and-bias

Jolie, A. (2009). Angelia Jolie speak on World Refugee Day 2009. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtt1Vs9Lcp0 Standard YouTube License.

Juhasz, B. & Yap, M. & Dicke, J. & Taylor, S. & Gullick, M. (2011). Tangible words are recognized faster: The grounding of meaning in sensory and perceptual systems. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 64. 1683-91. doi:10.1080/17470218.2011.605150.

Lacey S, Stilla R, Sathian K. (2012). Metaphorically feeling: Comprehending textural metaphors activates somatosensory cortex. Brain Lang, 120(3), 416-21 DOI:10.1016/j.bandl.2011.12.016

McGili, A. L., & Anand, P. (1989). The effect of vivid attributes on the evaluation of alternatives: The role of differential attention and cognitive elaboration. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *16(*2), 188-196. https://doi.org/10.1086/209207

Melcher, C. (1999). *Provocatively and evocatively vivid language: An extension of language expectancy theory* (Order No. 9934847). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304495279). Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/provocatively-evocatively-vivid-language/docview/304495279/se-2?accountid=8361

Nisbett, R., & Ross, L. (1980). Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgment. Prentice-Hall.

Ralston, S. M., & Thameling, C. A. (1988). Effect of vividness of language on information value of reference letters and job applicants' recommendations. *Psychological Reports*, *62*(3), 867–870. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1988.62.3.867

Shedler, J., & Manis, M. (1986). Can the availability heuristic explain vividness effects? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *51*(1), 26–36. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.1.26

Smith, W (2017). Will Smith on Skydiving. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hpd61o6TvXM Standard YouTube License.

Speakola (2009). Angelina Jolie: 'I am here today to say that refugees are not numbers,' World Refugee Day–2009. https://www. speakola.com/ideas/angelina-jolie-world-refugee-day-2009.

Tversky, A. and Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, *185*, 1124-1130. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1738360

Witte K, & Allen M. A (2000).meta-analysis of fear appeals: implications for effective public health campaigns. Health Education Behavior. (5):591-615. doi: 10.1177/109019810002700506.

Witte, K. (1992). Putting the fear back into fear appeals: The extended parallel process model. *Communication Monographs*, *59*(4), 329–349. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759209376276

Witte, K. (1994). Fear control and danger control: A test of the extended parallel process model (EPPM). *Communication Monographs*, *61*(2), 113–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759409376328

Media Attributions

- rhondak-native-florida-folk-artist-_Yc7OtfFn-0-unsplash © RhondaK Native Florida Folk Artist is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- The Availability Heuristic © Jono Hey is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 1.14: Professional Speechwriting- Vivid and Sensory Words Make Your Speech Come Alive is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Presenting a Speech

2.1: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Brain

2.2: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Body

2.3: Delivery Advice- Do Not Imagine the Audience Naked! Managing Eye Contact, Movement, and Gestures

2.4: Using a Microphone Effectively- Turn It Off Before Going to the Bathroom

2.5: Why Your Voice is the Most Important Part of Your Speech- If They Can't Hear You It is Only a Frustrating Exercise in Lip Reading

2.6: Speaking to a Camera- Making Eye Contact is Key

2.7: Delivery Methods- Which One Should I Use?

2.8: Speaking from a Manuscript- How to Read and not Look Like You Are Reading

---

This page titled 2: Presenting a Speech is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.1: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Brain



Face your fears!

There are two types of speakers:
Those that are nervous and those that are liars.
Mark Twain

Normal People Get Nervous

Most people will tell you the thought of making a speech makes them apprehensive. In fact, a poll by the National Communication Association found that only 24% of Americans are very comfortable giving a speech. You may be part of the 24%, or you may be like the rest of the population–uncomfortable at the thought of speaking in front of others. “According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.” This quote from actor and comedian Jerry Seinfeld is funny because it is true. Researchers at the University of Nebraska conducted research to see if indeed students feared public speaking to that extent, so they surveyed 2,543 college students. The answer was “yes.” Public speaking ranked up there with death as the most common fear.

So, there you have it. If the thought of a speech makes you feel apprehensive, you are Normal. Normal people have all kinds of physical reactions when delivering a speech or even thinking about delivering a speech:

- Sweaty palms
- Accelerated heart rate
- A knotted stomach
- Dry mouth
- A lump in the throat
- Shortness of breath

Can you relate to any of these feelings? If you have any of these, you are not broken, you are not doomed for speech failure, quite the contrary. If you experience any of these, you are NORMAL.

At this point, you may be thinking pointing out your anxiety does not make you feel any better. Hang in there and keep reading. The goal of this chapter is threefold. It is to help you to realize that if you are anxious, apprehensive, or nervous about public speaking, then you are normal. It is to help you understand most people will have some physical responses to being anxious and it is how you think about these responses that make a difference. The biggest takeaway of all is for you to learn to be intentional with your thoughts and to change your mindset. In doing these things, you will prepare the path for future speaking success.

Time to Check Your Brain’s Check Engine Light



A man's life
is what his thoughts
make of it.
Marcus Aurelius

There is a dashboard warning light in my car that lets me know something is wrong. When I take it to specialists, they plug in my car and "read the code" and they tell me exactly what the problem is. Let's assume, your brain's dashboard warning light is on and letting you know you may have a thinking problem. Let's "read the code" to see what the issue is so we can fix it. You may have some faulty reasoning happening that is causing your speech anxiety. Time for a diagnostic. See how many of these relate to you.

All or Nothing Thinking:

All or nothing thinking assumes your self-meter has two options: all perfect or total failure. If you have ever given a speech and forgotten a part or misspoke a word and then declared the speech a disaster, you might have all or nothing thinking. A speech can be good- even great-and still contain speech mistakes. In fact, most speeches contain at least one mistake.

> ***What's the Fix for All Or Nothing Speaking?*** *The fix for all or nothing thinking is to realize a perfect speech rarely exists. A great speech is one that communicates an idea to an audience. If you do that, you have accomplished the goal. If you mess up, or should I say when you mess up (because normal people make mistakes), then all is not lost. Recognize that the speech can be good and contain mistakes. You might say, "Overall the speech was great, I just wish I would have had a stronger ending. I will write it out next time."*

Overgeneralization:

Overgeneralization is the belief that a single failure is a universal sign of failure. If you are on a diet and you eat a cookie and then declare yourself a diet failure, you have overgeneralized. If you *have* a failure, it doesn't mean you *are* a failure. If you have ever had a less than perfect speech moment, and then declared yourself a bad speaker, you have overgeneralized.

> ***What's the Fix for Overgeneralization?*** *The fix is to recognize that one mistake does not make you a mistake. One failure, does not make you a failure. If you make a mistake, recognize it and make a plan to correct it in the future. The most important thing of all is to realize you are not defined as a failure because you made a mistake.*

Fortune Telling:

Have you ever told yourself, "I know this is going to be a disaster?" If you predict your speech will go badly, then you have a fortune-telling problem. The more you fortune tell your speech will be a disaster, the more you undermine your own success. By fortune-telling (also known as self-fulfilling prophecy), you are wishing you will fail and then you will make your own negative predictions come true. Some people even delight in their own misfortune, "See, I told you I wasn't cut out for public speaking."

> ***What's the Fix for Fortune Telling?*** *The fix to the fortunetelling problem is to take control and to stop. Predicting your own failure is just your own way of not trying. If you*

> *want to predict something, predict that if you practice, you will get better. If you focus on the needs of the audience, you will connect with them. If you do vocal exercises, you will strengthen your voice. Throw the darn crystal ball away, it was negative, unreliable, and you have outgrown it now.*

Reality Check

At one time or another, most of us have gotten caught up in our failures or we have created scenarios in our head about the terrible things that may happen. It is just plain silly the way we torture ourselves. Most of us get worked up and miss out on sleep worrying about things that never even happen. Sometimes you just have to have a reality check.

> *So, what if you say the wrong word and they laugh….*
> *Will they fire you—probably not.*
> *Will they walk out—unlikely.*
> *Will they hate you—not likely*
> *Will your face turn red—maybe, but so what?*
> *Is it really that awful? ——no*

One professional speaker commented no matter what happens in a speech that she can turn it into something good. She suggests if everyone walks out on her, she can still use that. Next time I speak, I can say, "Last time I gave this talk the whole room walked out on me."

Change Takes Effort

Whether you are a seasoned speaker or just getting started, it is important to realize everyone's mind and motivation need a tune-up from time to time. It is difficult to break out of faulty patterns of thinking and it is not enough to just recognize it, you have to do something about it. Motivational speaker, Mel Robbins, illustrates this in a talk to executives. After reminding them that they came to the conference to network and to make new connections, she asks each of them to raise a hand if they sat by someone they already know. Most people laughed and raised their hands because they know they are supposed to network and yet most of them are playing it safe and sitting with friends. They, like us, were motivated to change, and yet they fell back on old patterns of behavior. As a conference activity, Robbins then proceeded to make them change seats and sit by someone new. They looked uncomfortable, grumbled a bit, and then changed seats. She reminded them we want to change, but change is hard and change is uncomfortable.

It is one thing to be motivated to think about change and it is another thing to be motivated to actually make the change. Making the change causes discomfort and leads to resistance, even if you are the one telling yourself the do it. Change is uncomfortable, but growth is worth it.

What's the point? The point is you likely recognize that there are areas you need to work on. You likely already know what you need to do. You are already motivated to think about improving (that is why you are reading this book or taking a speaking class). It is not enough to want to change, you have to act on it. To do the next step, you must recognize that change causes discomfort. You are going to have to be vigilant to begin making those changes. Change is uncomfortable, make a plan, and stick to it.

Choose Which Self to Wear to Your Speech



In the morning, I go into my closet and I look at all the clothes that I have to wear. I pick out which ones to put on for the day. I decide whether to dress like *casual Lynn* or *professional Lynn.* I make a decision on how to dress each day. In the same way, I decide which self to wear each day. I decide who to be each day. One of the most powerful things I learned about identity is that I don't have one identity, I have many to pick from. Just like picking which outfit to wear for the day, I pick which "me" to be for the day.

Think about the "self-clothes" you wear every day. If you are like me, there are times when you have felt unsure of yourself, maybe you lowered your eyes when people looked at you, maybe you talked in a powerless voice–on that day, you were wearing your shy self. On a different day, you felt like the expert, you were able to tell people how to accomplish a task, and you used your assertive voice–on that day, you were wearing your powerful self. Which was the real you? They both were. The people around you, the situation you were in, your mood at the moment, all contributed to which self you brought out for the day.

This is also true for which speaker you will be. You make the decision about which self you bring to your speech. You can bring the brave, outspoken "you" that has great things to say or you can bring the "you" that decides to play small.

A lot of growth can happen when you learn you are *not* an attribute, but rather you *act* out an attribute. You are *not* shy, you *act* shy. You are *not* bold, you *act* boldly. You are *not* nervous, you *act* nervous. Once you realize you are not going against your biology or against your personality to be a powerful, confident speaker, then you can give yourself permission to wear a powerful self to your speech. That "power self" outfit will look good on you, so try it on!

Consider This

I often have students play a game where they stand up in groups and each group talks at the exact same time as the other group with the goal of competing for the audience's attention. In this game, students wave their arms, make direct eye contact, and raise their voices. They laugh and they have fun. I do this to let them know that they can speak loudly, use gestures, and have fun in front of an audience. I remind them they have just demonstrated to me they are capable of expressive movement and dynamic voice projection. Later when they tell me, they "just can't project their voice" or they "just aren't a person who gestures," I remind them of the exercise where they demonstrated to me they can do both. I let them know they are capable of it; sometimes they decide to do it and other times they decide not to do it but they must own the fact that it is a choice they made.

Even after this activity, an occasional student will try to tell me, "I can't project my voice" or "I'm just not assertive." I never argue, I ask them if they have siblings. If they answer, "yes," I ask them if they have ever yelled at their sibling to get out of their stuff. They usually laugh and say, "Oh, yes." I then ask them to tell me of places they feel comfortable, and they act assertively. They tell me of a club they are in, a friend pack they hang out with, or a role where they feel confident. I remind them that clearly, they know how to project their voice because they have done it before. Clearly, they know how to be assertive because they have been assertive before. I remind them they know how to talk to others and be confident because they have acted confidently before. They have the ability; they just choose when to use that ability.

Now, I want you to think of a time you have chosen to define yourself as weak, shy, or unassertive. I want you to ask yourself why did you decide that for yourself? Think of at least three settings where you brought your "big self" to the situation. Think about a time, you have projected your voice. Think about a time you felt the power of your own words. You know you have the ability, what causes you to not want to bring it out?



We All Feel Like Imposters

Feel powerless or insecure? You are not alone. When interviewed, top executives, college professors, leaders of all kinds admit they often feel powerless. They often feel like they don't belong, they aren't smart enough, they are not good enough, and they don't speak clearly enough. And yet, they put on their assertive selves and act the part until they begin to fully feel the part. They

decide just because they have feelings of smallness does not mean they should act small. They have the choice not to act on the powerlessness they feel. In fact, for most, it pushes them to try harder. These leaders decide even if they sometimes feel like an impostor, they can still act the part and be powerful. They can put on their "big self" and so can you.

What's the point? You decide how you are going to act in a speech. You control which you to wear for the day, you control whether you act powerful, and you control whether you bring your "big self" to the presentation. I hope you decide to try on the powerful you. You owe it to yourself to see what you can do. You might just decide it is a good fit.

? Who Will You Decide to Be?

Don't Do This	Do This Instead
Awfulizing Me "What if I mess up? I always mess things up."	**Overcomer Me** "I'm tough and can take on any challenge." "It may not be easy, but I can do it."
Insecure Me "What if they don't like me? They will hate me."	**Confident Me** "I've got this because I have practiced and I know my stuff."
Hater Me "Speech is stupid. I can't believe I have to do this."	**Powerful Me** "I've got great things to say, and I know it will cause them to think."
Downer Me "I know I'm going to mess it all up. I always do. Why even try?	**Optimistic Me** "I may not be perfect, but I have something important to share." "I've been given this opportunity to speak, I'm going to make the most of it."

You are capable of being all these.
Which one will you pick on your speech day?

What's the Worst That Could Happen?

Sometimes, you can create fears to keep yourself from fully trying. If that happens, the best thing you can do with your fear is to take it to its logical absurdity.

> *What if I mess up?*
>
> *So what?*
>
> *People will laugh at me!*
>
> *So what?*
>
> *They won't like me!*
>
> *So what?*
>
> *No one will be my friend.*
>
> *Really, So what?*

> *If no one in the class will be my friend, then I will be lonely.*
>
> *So what?*
>
> *No one will talk to me outside of class and I will be so lonesome I will drop out of college.*
>
> *Are you sure? So, then what?*
>
> *I will drop out of college, never have good relationships which means I will never get a job.*
>
> *So what?*
>
> *I will be homeless living under a bridge with a stray dog.*
>
> *All that because you messed up on your speech in college. Really?*

As I said, we take it to its absurdity. So, what if you mess up. Usually, the worst that can happen is you get a little embarrassed at the time and have a good story to tell for a lifetime.

Use the A.W.A.R.E Method to Beat Anxiety

If you feel anxiety is getting too much, do what nurses are trained to do and be aware. The **A.W.A.R.E.** method can help:

Accept that you feel anxious. Fighting it will not take away the anxiety.

Watch your anxiety. What changes are you noticing in your body, your thoughts, and your perception?

Act normal. Breath normally and act as if you feel confident and calm. This will pass and your anxiety will fade away.

Repeat the three steps above until your anxiety reduces to an acceptable level.

Expect the best. Invest your time and energy in what can help you, don't worry about what might go wrong.

Day-Calder, M. (2017). Conquer your fear of public speaking. *Nursing Standard (2014+)*, *32*(3), 37.

I was once given the advice to think of emotions like a river. Emotions flow into us and will flow through us and out of us as long as we don't try to dam them up.

Know That They Can't Tell How Nervous You Are

You know the feeling that goes through your mind: "I'm so nervous. I bet everyone can tell"? Well, guess what—they can't. At least this is what research suggests. If you have felt like people could peer into your very soul and see your insecurity, you are not alone. The illusion of transparency is the tendency for people to overestimate the degree to which their personal mental state is known by others. Because our emotions feel so strong to us, we are sure that they "leak out" and that everyone can tell just how we feel. When researchers put it to the test, they found that observers just are not very good at picking up on a speaker's emotional state. The speakers thought the audience could sense their insecurity and could see their hands shaking and could hear their voice shaking, but the audience noticed very little or not at all. Researchers in an article titled, *The Illusion of Transparency and the Alleviation of Speech Anxiety*, suggest:

> *What's inside of you typically manifests itself too subtly to be detected by others. You should just relax and try to do your best. Know that if you become nervous, you'll probably be the only one to know.*

The researchers found simply telling people the audience could not see through them made them less anxious as speakers. The bottom line is this: speaker anxiety is not very accurately detected by audiences. Simply knowing this can help set you free. Do not worry, they can't see through you. Now you know, you can let it go.

Know That You Are Likely Misinterpreting Cues

"I saw that guy in the back make an angry face, I know he hated my speech." It is easy when you are nervous to look at the audience and the looks on their faces as hostile. I once got a note from a student who told me he thought I hated his speeches because I gave him mean looks. I thought about it long and hard because I really liked the student, and I really liked his speeches. Maybe it was because I had been wearing the wrong glasses and squinted a little, maybe it was because the room and windows created weird light streaks that made it hard to see his slides, maybe it was because I had a headache that day, or maybe it was because I just make weird facial expressions (my kids tell me this one is true). The problem is I liked his speeches and he thought I hated them.

I found an article in the *Psychophysiology Journal* that might explain what happened. In this study, researchers told participants that they would have to give a speech. While waiting for their turn to give the speech, participants looked at a series of facial expressions and were tested by an electroencephalogram. The researchers found that participants who thought they were fixing to give a speech were more likely to judge the faces they saw as angry.

Think about it. This implies that when you are ready to give a speech, you may see neutral faces as angry. The famous lawyer Gerry Spence wrote about something similar. Every time he spoke, he noticed one of the jurors would look stern and cross his arms across his chest. He just knew that juror was really opposed to his message. He was shocked when all the jurors voted in favor of his client. How could that be? What about the man with his arms crossed? Later, the juror said, his crossed arms weren't in opposition, he just had a big belly, and it is a nice place to rest his arms. Be aware of the tendency to interpret other's nonverbals in a negative way.

You do not know what is going on in the minds of your audience so always assume the best.

Realize That Stress Can Be Helpful

Health psychologist Kelly McGonigal shares her surprising revelation-stress can be a good thing. In her TED Talk, *How to Make Stress Your Friend*, she reveals that when it comes to stress, a rapid heartbeat and fast breathing are not the problem. The problem is what we *believe* those physical reactions mean. It is how we label the stress that matters most. Think about it. Your heart pounds and your breath quickens in moments of joy. Your heart pounds and your breath quickens before acts of great courage. Your heart pounds and your breath quickens in anticipation of special events. A pounding heart and quickened breath can be a good thing. When you interpret those physical symptoms as something good, it opens your blood vessels and sends extra oxygen to your brain and you feel energized and prepared. When you label that fast heartbeat and rapid breathing as helpful, you feel more confident, less anxious, and less stressed out. McGonigal suggests it is when you interpret these reactions as bad that it constricts your blood vessels leading to health issues.

Football players and other athletes often do things to get pumped before running out on the field. These players believe an adrenaline rush means they are going to play well. They think of adrenaline as a gift that means they are charged up. They believe the adrenaline will help them run faster and be more alert. If you are a speaker and you experience an adrenaline rush, be like these players and think of it as a sign your body is awake, alert, and ready to go. Just remember that most people experience some version of butterflies before they speak. If you are nervous, you are normal. Good speakers channel energy into making a good speech. Good speakers know you do not want to get rid of the butterflies, you just want them to fly in formation.

So, what does that mean for you? It means your pounding heart and heavy breathing have prepared you for action.

Watch the full video on stress here.



The Surprising Side Effect of Stress

Ready for the bonus feature?

Now you have watched the video, you know there is another great side effect to stress–you become more social. McGonigal suggests that when you are stressed, not only do you release adrenaline, but you also release oxytocin. It is the release of oxytocin that makes you want to spend time encouraging people and being around people. All these years, I have joked that my public speaking students have bonded so fiercely because they bonded through pain, and now I know it is literally true. Since they were together in times of high excitement during speeches, they felt closer and more bonded (much like a sports team).

McGonigal also suggests that an oxytocin reaction is a form of self-healing. When you have an oxytocin reaction, you tend to want to seek and give support. All of this wonderful oxytocin protects, regenerates, and strengthens your heart.

What does this mean for you? It means if you feel anxious about an upcoming speech, call a friend or get a hug from your mom. That feeling you have makes you want to tell someone how you feel is your body's way of helping you to be successful and healthy. Your body knows what it needs, it doesn't need to run from speech, it needs to connect with people who care about you. In your anxiety, you should encourage others. In doing so, you help yourself along the way. Your body knows what to do- listen.

Let Fear Propel You

It is normal to have physical reactions when thinking about public speaking and it is how we frame these feelings that makes all the difference. Many famous speakers tell of wrestling with fear and Gerry Spence, lawyer and author of *How to Argue and Win Every Time and Win Your Case*, is one of them. I will let him describe his battle in his own words.

> *"In the courtroom, I sometimes carry on a silent conversation with myself about my fear, while the jurors look on wondering, as they must, what occupies this strange man who stands silently before them looking down at his feet. My conversation with myself most often sounds like this:*
>
> *"How are you feeling, Gerry?" I ask.*
>
> *"The jury is watching, waiting for me to begin my argument," I reply. "I can't just stand here saying nothing."*
>
> *"I asked you, how are you feeling?"*
>
> *"You know how I feel.*
>
> *"What is the feeling?"*
>
> *"You know what the feeling is."*
>
> *"Are you afraid to say it?"*

"All right. I'm afraid."

"Well, you should be. Big stakes. The prosecutor wants to destroy your client. He wants to destroy you."

"I don't want to think about it. Not now. Not standing here."

It's all right to be afraid. You should be afraid. Go ahead. Feel it.

"But the jury's watching."

"They can wait a few seconds more.
Fear is energy.
If you feel your fear, you can also feel its power, and you can change its power to your power."

Suddenly, I look up at the waiting jury. I hear myself address them in a clear, quiet voice, "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury." Suddenly, I am vaguely aware that something is happening to my fear. I have looked it in the eye. I have stared it down. It retreats like a whimpering cur that is now afraid to face me! The pain of it recedes. I feel a new power well up. And my argument begins…

I have learned not to be ashamed of my fear, but to embrace it. One cannot be brave without it, for is not our bravery merely the facing of our fear?"

Can you see a pattern emerge with these things? Fear is not the problem, it is how we allow fear to cripple us or give us the power that matters.



Believe That with Practice, You Can Improve

When you think about speaking are you tempted to believe, "Some people are just born good speakers" or "I just wasn't made for this public speaking stuff." If that is you, you may have what Stanford researcher Carol Dweck calls a "fixed mindset." It does not have to be that way, Dweck found when people left their options open and believed that they could improve, they did. One way to keep your mind open is to add the word "yet" to the end of the sentence. It's easy. Let's try it: "I haven't mastered this…yet. I haven't learned to gesture without thinking about it…yet."

Another way you can help yourself have a growth mindset is to pick a few growth mindset quotes and place them where you can see them every day. Look at them, read them out loud, and think about where you want to be. Let a growth mindset become your new habit.

Here are a few of my favorite quotes:

- It’s not always about being the best. It’s about being better than you were yesterday. –Jigoro Kano
- No matter how many mistakes you make or how slow your progress, you are still way ahead of everyone who isn’t trying. –Tony Robbins
- Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it. –Charles Swindoll
- Courage is like a muscle. We strengthen it when we use it. –Ruth Gordon
- Sometimes what we call “failure” is really just that necessary struggle called learning.–Louis Armstrong
- May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears. –Nelson Mandela
- A comfort zone is a beautiful place but nothing ever grows there. –John Assaraf
- You won’t always be motivated; you will have to learn to be disciplined.–Author unknown
- Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will. –Suzy Kassem
- You have not failed unless you have quit trying. –Gordon B. Hinckley



Change the Way You Think About Things

Whatever you do, do not think about the pink elephant. Stop!

Don’t think about the pink elephant with cute pink ears. Do not think about an elephant with a hot pink tail. How are you doing? If you are like most people, not too well.

Now, try this. Think about a green monkey. Go ahead. Picture its green curly tail and its fluffy green fur. So, here’s the question, when you were thinking of the green monkey, did your image of the pink elephant go away? For most people, it did.

What’s the point? The point is before a speech, most people tell themselves, “I won’t be nervous, I won’t be nervous, I won’t think of the pink elephant.” Do you see where I’m headed with all of this? Telling yourself not to be nervous rarely helps. The more you say, “I won’t be nervous,” the more you feel nervous.

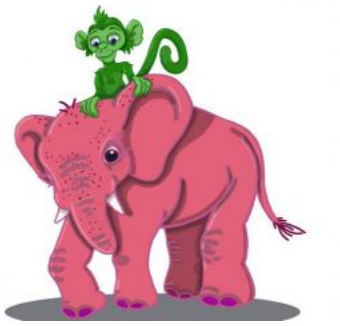
So how do you stop thinking of the pink elephant? By thinking of the green monkey of course. Apply this to speaking. Instead of saying, “I won’t be nervous” or “I won’t forget what to say,” say things like, “This speech is going to be great! I can do this.” or “My audience will love the part where I…” Speech teacher, Donn King calls this harnessing your green monkey, and researchers call it cognitive restructuring. You will restructure the way you think about things.

Conquer your fear with positive self-talk. Tell yourself you will be relaxed, articulate, and confident…and you will be.

Cognitive Restructuring

Don’t Say (Pink Elephant)	Do Say (Green Monkey)
• I’m afraid my voice will crack. • I’ll mess up and say the wrong words. • I’m so nervous. • I hate doing speeches.	• I can do this. • The audience will like my topic. • I am confident. • I know my stuff. • I am smart and capable. • I will speak with power and authority.

I often use the green monkey analogy when making presentations to groups. I say, “When you think about the green monkey, the pink elephant goes away. Except for some of you, some of you imagine the green monkey riding the pink elephant (the audience always laughs). You are the special ones who do things differently.” I said this in a special presentation to Panamanian Engineering students and their director Michael Rau sent me a picture and a note that said, “This is me.”



Thanks to Michael Rau for letting me use his illustration.

This made my day and I keep it on my desk as a reminder–we all do things differently. Sometimes the green monkey (positive thinking) can erase the pink elephant (negative self-talk). For others, the self-doubt may still be there but the monkey (positive thinking) eventually learns to drive the fear to work towards great things. Each of us finds different ways to believe in ourselves and harness our fears. Each of us is working to find our way, so find what works for you.

Focus On What You Want More Of

If you think, I am energized.

If you think, I am going to speak confidently.

If you think, I am going to share important things and they will want to listen

Then, you’ll get more of those feelings.

Think about things you actually want to increase.

Plan on Recovering Well

I Hope You Mess Up At Least Once—I Really Mean It!

I hope you mess up so you can get it over your unrealistic expectation of perfection.

I love hearing stories of how people messed up in speeches. My favorite one is of a mega-church pastor who attempted to say ‘the church is a living organism’ but he accidentally said another much more embarrassing “O” word. Guess what? He is still preaching.

I love showing videos of where Obama says there are 52 states and I laugh at how Bush says “Americans are working to put food on their family.” Guess what? They still managed to get things done.

I love to see the video of where the local TV anchor’s tooth falls out during a broadcast. Guess what—he is still the anchor.

Being human and making mistakes makes you human; how you deal with those mistakes can make you more approachable. One of my first jobs was as a cashier at a convenience store. Whenever I made a mistake, I would lower my eyes and look ashamed and repeatedly tell the customer how sorry I was. One day, my boss came up to me and said I needed to find a better strategy for when I messed up. He said by repeatedly apologizing, I was making it a bigger deal than it was. The next time, I messed up, I looked at the customer and said, “This very special hamburger is only sixty-five dollars and twenty cents.” The customer laughed and made a remark about how it had better be a darn good burger. I assured him it was a great hamburger while I fixed my mistake. He left smiling.

What’s the point? The point is that mistakes will not kill you. Mistakes give you good stories to tell. I hope you mess up at least once so when you are sitting around with friends who are willing to listen to your stories that you can tell them of your most embarrassing speech blunder. I hope everyone can have a good laugh. And laughter after all…is good for you.

Besides, perfect people are boring. Robert Glover, psychotherapist, and author says, “In general people are not drawn to perfection in others. People are drawn to shared interests, shared problems, and an individual’s life energy. Humans connect with humans. Hiding one’s humanity and trying to project an image of perfection makes a person vague, slippery, lifeless, and interesting.”

Just remember the audience doesn’t expect perfection. They don’t judge that you made a mistake, but rather how you recover from it. When you do mess up, don’t make a big deal of it. Most of the time, you are better off not even mentioning it at all. If you are quick on your feet, you might say one or two funny words but then go on. You have great things to say, don’t let a little bump in the road slow you down. Practice your speech and plan on being perfect, but if that doesn’t work out, plan on recovering well. Try again. Fail better.



> *If you pretend you didn’t make a mistake,*
> *chances are the audience won’t notice, and certainly won’t dwell on it.*
> *Interrupting your speech by apologizing or panicking*
> *will make your mistake more noticeable and will throw you off.*
> *Jennifer Conner*
> *University of Arkansas Speech Student*

Realize the Audience is On Your Side

Chris Anderson of TED Talks gives the following wisdom:

> *Acknowledging nervousness can also create engagement. Showing your vulnerability, whether through nerves or tone of voice, is one of the most powerful ways to win over an audience, provided it is authentic. Susan Cain, who wrote a book about introverts and spoke at our 2012 conference, was terrified about giving her talk. You could feel her fragility onstage, and it created this dynamic where the audience was rooting for her—everybody wanted to hug her afterward. The fact that we knew she was fighting to keep herself up there made it beautiful, and it was the most popular talk that year.*

I share this example for a couple of reasons. One, notice you can hear her nervousness and yet you get so carried away with her message you forget about it quickly. Two, many of you may think of yourself as an introvert who is just not the “public speaking” type, and yet, here she is speaking powerfully and giving examples of other introverts who speak powerfully.



? Key Takeaways

Remember this!

- Most people get nervous at the thought of public speaking. If you are nervous, you are normal.
- It is not the physical reaction of stress that is the problem, it is how you think about it. Think of the adrenaline rush as excitement. The way you feel is your body getting you ready to succeed.
- You have permission to be powerful. Have a growth mindset and allow yourself to try.
- Decide what you have to say is more important than any discomfort you have.
- Focus on what the audience needs to hear. Move your focus from what the audience needs to hear more than your need you have to be comfortable.
- By now, you should have identified you have some ways of thinking that may be holding you back. You are armed with the knowledge that you can choose which self to bring to your speech. Now, it is time to try it out.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Anderson, C. (2016). *TED talks: The official TED guide to public speaking*. Mariner.

Anderson, C. (2013). How to give a killer presentation. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2013/06/how-to-give-a-killer-presentation

Ayers, J. (1995). Comparing self-constructed visualization scripts with a guided visualization. *Communication Reports 8,* 193-199. https://doi.org/10.1080/08934219509367626

Ayres, J & Hopf, T. (1992). Reducing speech anxiety and enhancing performance. *Communication Reports* 5(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/08934219209367538

Behnke, R. R., Sawyer, C. R., & King, P. E. (1987). The communication of public speaking anxiety. *Communication Education*, *36*(2), 138–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528709378654

Bergland, C. (Jan. 2013). Cortisol: Why "the stress hormone" is public enemy number one. *Psychology Today.* https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes- way/201301/cortisol-why-the-stress-hormone-is-public- enemy-no-1

Buchan, V. (1991). *Make presentations with confidence*. Barron's Educational Series.

Bulard & Carrol (1993). *Communicating from the inside out.* Kendall Hunt.

Cain, Susan. (2012). *The Power of introverts.* TED.com. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts Standard YouTube License.

Cuddy, A. Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are. TED.com. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Day-Calder , M. (2017). Conquer your fear of public speaking. *Nursing Standard*, *32*(3), 37. doi: 10.7748/ns.32.3.37.s42

Dominus, S. (2017). When the revolution came for Amy Cuddy. New York Times Magazine. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/magazine/when-the-revolution-came-for-amy-cuddy.html

Dweck, C. (2016). *Mindset: The new psychology of success.* Random House.

Dweck, C. (2014). *The power of believing you can improve. [Video]. YouTube.* https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Dwyer, K.K & Davidson, M.D (2012). Is public speaking really more feared than death? *Communication Research Reports 29*(2). DOI: 10.1080/08824096.2012.667772

King, D. (n.d). *Managing speech anxiety*. http://donnellking.com/

King, D. (n.d.) Managing stage fright. http://www.soapbox orations.com/squiggles/stagefright.htm.

McCluen, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT Press.

McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Oral communication apprehension: A summary of recent theory and research. *Human Communication Research*, 4(1), 78-96. http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/publications/074.pdf

McGonigal, K. (2013). *How to make stress your friend. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?language=en*. Ted.com. Standard YouTube License.

Osborn, Osborn, & Osborn (2012). *Public speaking: Finding your voice*. Allyn Bacon

Robbins, M. (2018). *Stop Giving a Shit. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_B6mJRpg-A* Standard YouTube License.

Savitsky, K. & Gilovich, T. (2003). The illusion of transparency and the alleviation of speech anxiety. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *39*, 618-625. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-1031(03)00056-8

Snyder, K. (n.d). *Controlling nerves*.http://www.presentation-pointers.com

Stevanoni, E. & Salmon, K. (2005). Giving memory a hand: Instructing children to gesture enhances event recall. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 29(4). /DOI: 10.1007/s10919-005-7721-y

Toastmasters International. *(n.d). 90 Tips*. https://www.toastmasters.org/About/90th-Anniversary/90-Tips

Toastmasters. (2013). *Managing fear. [Video]. YouTube.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1u7THOudfw Standard YouTube Licence.

VanEdwards, V. (n.d.) *Five secrets of a successful TED Talk.* https://www.scienceofpeople.com/secrets-of-a-successful-ted-talk/

Weiser, M.J., Pauli, P., Reicherts, P., & Muhlberger, A. (2010). Don't look at me in anger! Enhancing the processing of angry faces in anticipation of public speaking. *Psychophysiology 47*(2), 271-280. DOI: 10.1111/j.1469-8986.2009.00938.x

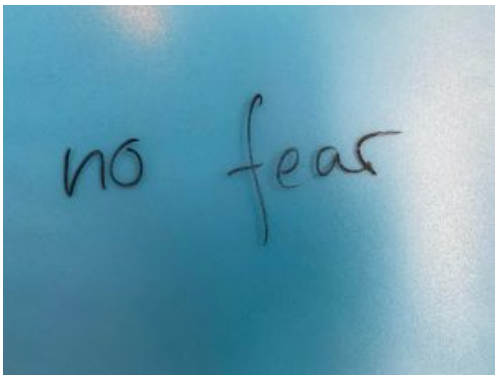
Wenner, M. (2009). Smile it could make you happier. *Scientific American.* https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/smile-it-could-make-you-happier/

Media Attributions

- Jumping on beach © Guille Alvarez is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Check engine light © Stephen Mellentine is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Closet
- poser © Alan Levine is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- alysha-rosly-6GZQo28ecoE-unsplash © Alysha Rosly is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Pink Smoke © Pawel Czerwinski is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Green Monkey Pink Elephant My Michael Rau © Michael Rau is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- unnamed

This page titled 2.1: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Brain is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.2: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Body



You will never be more aware of your body than when giving a speech. Things like eye contact and gesturing, suddenly feel unnatural. The good news is there are many ways to harness your fear and turn it into power. There are many thought experiments you can do and many ways to "hack your body" to deal with the anxiety that comes from giving a speech. In this chapter, we will talk a little about thought and a lot about action.

Visualize Yourself Giving Your Speech

Visualize yourself giving your speech. Imagine yourself rising from your chair and walking towards the podium. Imagine delivering your first few words with power. Imagine your audience smiling and nodding. Imagine using your visuals effectively. Imagine thunderous applause at the end and imagine confidently walking back to your chair.

Researchers who study communication apprehension in public speaking reported that 80% of college students who used positive visualization strategies were able to reduce their level of apprehension. When students visualized giving a speech, they could reduce negative thinking and lower their communication anxiety. Not only that, but students who visualized giving their speech had better gestures and fewer "ums."

Visualization, it is easy, it is free, and it works. Try it!



Talk About Yourself in Positive Ways

It's time to start talking nice to yourself. In the book, *Communicating from the Inside Out*, the authors noted the thoughts you have about yourself trigger up to 100 times more brain activity than random thoughts. In addition, when you talk out loud to yourself, your brain activity increases1,000-fold. Did you catch that? When you talk about yourself, you activate your brain in a powerful way. When you hear your own voice talk about you, you activate your brain even more, because not you have involved the listening center. It makes sense when you think about it. When I say, "I've got this," I activated the part of my brain that had the thought, I activated the part of my brain associated with speech, and I activated the part of the brain associated with listening. That

is a lot of brainpower given to one sentence. When you say things, good or bad, you hear yourself loud and clear. It is as if you sat in the car and cranked the volume up. When you do that, make sure the "song" you are playing to yourself is a good one.

The lesson here is this—be careful what you tell yourself because you are listening more than you know. Take charge of your thoughts and replace any negative thoughts with positive ones. Talk nice…. Your brain is listening.

Say Positive Things About Public Speaking

Your brain communicates with the firing of neurons. These neurons are like an interstate system in your brain. The more often a neural route is used, the larger it becomes. When you take the same road over and over in your thoughts, the messages transmit faster and faster. If the road is used repeatedly, then those thoughts become automatic. Think of it like the familiar road back to your house, you can drive there without even thinking about it–it's automatic. That's why when you practice — playing the piano, driving a car, or putting a golf ball, it becomes easier. Eventually, it is like you are on autopilot.

If you think positive thoughts over and over, then those positive thoughts become automatic. If you think negative thoughts over and over, those thoughts become automatic. That is why you have to beware of any negative thoughts you have about public speaking because if you keep thinking negative thoughts, you will make the pathway so large and strong it eventually becomes your default setting. Once those thoughts are on autopilot, they will keep playing over and over until you do something to consciously stop them.

To stop the automatic negative thoughts concerning public speaking, you need to consciously take control. You need to (1) recognize that negative thoughts are a choice and you can choose to think positive thoughts, (2) say positive things out loud and often and, (3) use visualization techniques to visualize yourself being successful at presentations. Repeat this often so these pathways become automatic.

Say "I Am Excited"

Never say, "I am nervous;" instead say, "I am excited." When you feel nervous acknowledge it. Acknowledge that you are having a physical reaction and then take control of the interpretation. Think, "I can feel my heart beating fast. I'm nervous because I'm about to do something of consequence. It is normal for me to feel like this. I am going to interpret this feeling as excitement. I am excited."

Give a Talk, Instead of a Speech

Instead of saying, "I have a speech to give on Monday", say, "I am giving a talk on Monday." A speech is fear-inducing. A talk is something simple that you do every day. Think about it, they are called TED Talks not TED Speeches.

Exercise, Laugh, and Breathe to Reduce the Effect of Cortisol

Cortisol is the stress hormone released when you are anxious, upset, or scared. Since public speaking can be a source of stress, it benefits you to work on ways to reduce the cortisol reactions. Changing how you think about stress helps, but you also need to "burn off" stress.

Exercising before and after a speech can be a powerful way to help your body reduce the effects of cortisol. A Psychology Today article, *Cortisol: Why "the Stress Hormone" is Public Enemy Number One*, suggests several ways to lower your cortisol levels.

1. Physical activity: exercise, walk, do yoga.
2. Meditation and deep breathing.
3. Spend time with friends.
4. Laughter.
5. Listen to some of your favorite music.

Get started on your public speaking playlist today! After that, go hang out with friends. Take a walk together.

? Tips from Toastmaster's International

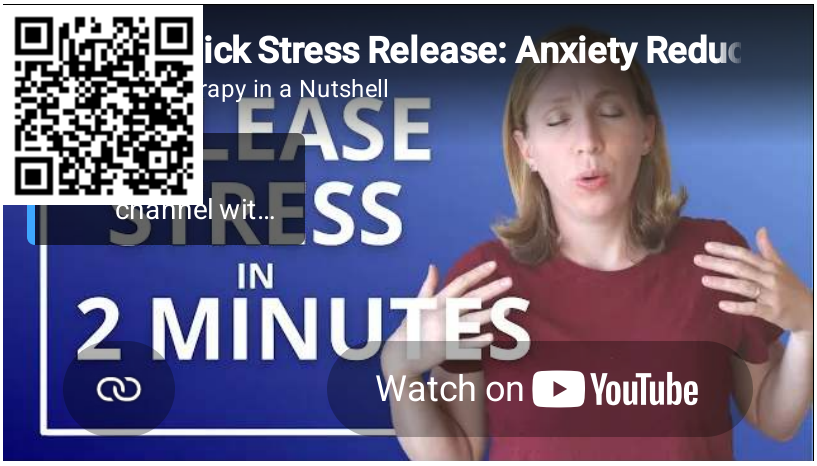
- **Breathe out.** Take slow deep breaths in and then release your breath from the bottom of your abdomen to get the maximum benefits of release and relaxation.
- **Get rest.** Try to get an adequate amount of sleep prior to your speech to ensure optimal mental alertness.
- **Fuel your mental engine.** Eat a light meal at least 20 minutes prior to your speech.

Release the Tension in Your Body

How can you make your body work for you, you ask? You can stop many of your nervous reactions by releasing the tension in your muscles.

- Roll your shoulders, loosen your arms.
- Close your eyes and notice any tight muscles. When you notice a tight muscle, first tense it– then relax it.
- Sit with your palms open and facing up on your lap.
- Consciously try to slow down your breathing.
- Make funny faces to relax your cheeks and facial muscles.
- Notice if your neck and facial muscles are tense. If they are, make a point to relax them. (See video below)

In this video, family therapist, Emma McAdam illustrates a quick way to release stress. She suggests stress is like an angry toddler that won't be ignored and has to be acknowledged.

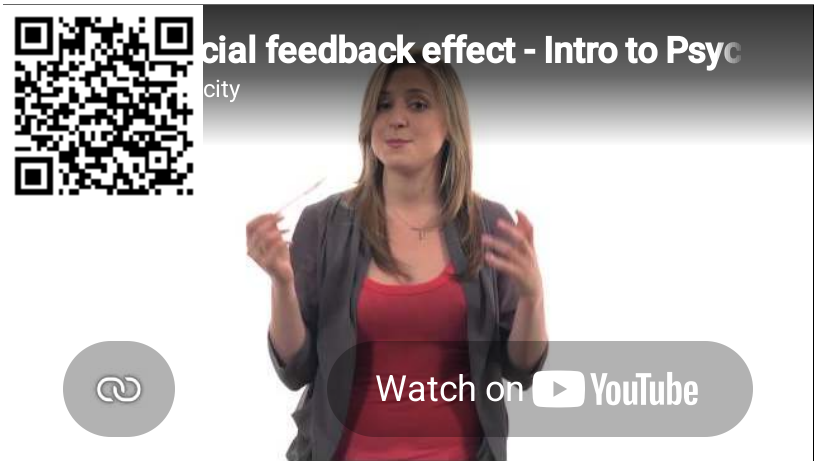


FAKE CONFIDENCE

When you get nervous, your body responds in very direct ways. Your breathing gets short and your muscles begin to tense up. Here's the good news! Your body and your mind work in a feedback loop. Let me give you an example: If I am mad, I make a mad face and if I make a mad face, I feel mad. Now that you know there is a feedback loop, you can break into it. In the example I just gave you, I could break the mad feedback loop by smiling. If I smile long enough and add a "happy thought," then my body tells my mind that I am happy.

The same is true with what happens when you experience communication apprehension. When you begin to feel nervous, your muscles tighten, and your breathing becomes shallow. The more your body acts nervous, the more your mind believes you are nervous. The good news is you have the power to break into the cycle. You can stop or slow down the physical reaction of nervousness.

The Facial Feedback Hypothesis states that when you make a facial expression, it can influence the emotion that you are feeling. For example, when you force yourself to smile, you begin to enjoy the moment more. The more you smile, the more you may alter your own perception of the situation. As a speaker, when you fake confidence with your body and face, you may actually begin to feel more confident. Amy Cuddy says, "Fake it until you become it." Watch this quick video to explain more about the facial feedback effect.



STAND LIKE WONDER WOMAN



Stand like Wonder Woman (or Superman) with your legs spread and your hands on your hips. Now hold that pose for two minutes. Do you feel powerful yet? Amy Cuddy, Harvard Researcher, had test subjects' power pose (tall stance open arms, open torso) for as little as two minutes before subjecting them to a stressful job interview. Those who stood in a power pose reported feeling more confident and less nervous.

But wait, there's more. When they asked the job interviewers what they thought of the interviewees, those conducting the interviews preferred those who had power posed before the job interviewer. The effect not only influenced the speakers, but also the listeners.

When observers view you acting confidently, they treat you like you are confident which guess what….makes you feel more confident.

Act confident to feel confident.

*** Reference the NY Times Article for challenges to some of Amy Cuddy's research.

Pretend To Be Someone Else

Are you still feeling a little unsure about yourself? No worries—just pretend like you are an actor playing the part of someone who is confident. Think about a confident speaker you know. When you are mentally preparing for your speech, imagine you *are* that person: How would *they* walk, how would *they* talk, how would *they* gesture? When I make a professional presentation, I often think about my former boss who is a powerful communicator. I ask myself, how would he enter the room and shake hands? How would he walk to the podium? How would he move around during the speech? I steal his confidence to get started. When you start your speech, imagine you are that powerful person. Use their confidence going into the speech. I'm always amazed at how much confidence I gain by starting my speech as someone else. As I continue to speak that confidence that I borrowed slowly becomes mine.



Gesture to Help Release Nervous Energy

I love the movie clip from Talladega Nights where the race car driver, Ricky Bobby, is being interviewed and he keeps making his hands float up awkwardly. After struggling with his hands a while, he finally blurts out, “What do I do with my hands?” I am always amazed at how I don’t even think about my hands most days, but when I get up to give a speech, suddenly, I am aware they exist, and I have no idea what to do with them. If you are like me and like most speakers, you struggle with your hands during presentations.

Nonverbal researchers did a study where they had people describe what they did that day. When the participants told the story using their hands, they added more details to their story, spoke more fluidly, and were able to think better. Gestures seemed to help the speaker to recall information and to speak more fluidly. Did you know that even people who are blind from birth, gesture? It seems to serve the purpose of helping the speaker to think of words and maintain a flow in the speech.

Gesturing doesn’t just help the listener; it helps the speaker. But what does this mean for you? It means you are meant to gesture. It suggests that when you gesture, you will be able to think of ideas more clearly and thus speak with better fluidity. In addition, gestures can help you to release nervous energy. When you gesture, you can relieve cognitive stress, you can relieve nervous energy, and which makes you appear more confident.

Gestures also help the audience listen and understand. Studies show that speakers who gesture are seen as more persuasive, more likable, and as having more leadership potential. In a major study of the most popular TED Talks, the researchers discovered that the more gestures, the more views, and likes for the speech.

Gesturing—good for the speaker, good to relieve stress, and good for the audience!

> **?** Quick Tips with Your Hands
>
> Make the OK sign with one hand. The act of touching your fingertips together relieves stress. This is a good trick to try when you feel a little anxious because it really is going to be “OK.”
>
> Sweaty palms? Have an ice-cold water bottle that you hold in your hand to reduce the temperature of your hands.

Memorize Your Opening and Closing

Opening and closing a speech are the times when speakers tend to get the most nervous. For that reason, you should memorize the first few sentences and the last few sentences of your speech. When you start off powerfully, you feel powerful, and the audience expects you to be powerful. Carefully write out the first few words. Practice those over and over until you can say them with confidence and power.

When you begin to wind down your speech, your audience is preparing to clap. They don’t want to clap too soon or too late, so they are on high alert. Having a planned out closing, not only helps you own the last point, but it also gives them a definitive notion of when to clap. If you are like most of us, you might get a little extra nervous near the end. That’s why you should memorize your ending. By memorizing the closing, you are helping to relieve that tension and finish in a way that demonstrates your confidence and knowledge.



PRACTICE UNTIL IT FEELS COMFORTABLE

PRACTICE AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

The best way to practice speaking is to practice speaking. It may sound obvious, but it is true. Make sure you practice your speech at least 5-10 times from start to finish.

PRACTICE GETTING FUNKY

After you have practiced your speech with your notes, I suggest you go someplace comfortable and practice your speech without note cards. Don't worry if you don't know all the details—just wing it! I like to call this "Getting funky." Do something a little crazy like sing your speech, do your speech in a wrestler's voice, rap your speech, or dance around while saying your speech.

Relax, have fun, get funky. This will help you associate speech with being relaxed and having fun. For "funky" speech practice, it is less important to get the words right and it is more important to relax your body, put a smile on your face, and have fun. After doing this exercise, go back and do your speech with notes and in a serious tone. You will be amazed at how much more relaxed you feel.

PRACTICE TO A LIVE AUDIENCE

It is one thing to practice to a mirror, it is another to practice to a living thing. Find a friendly face, a roommate, a friend, or a dog, and practice your speech to a live audience member. Practicing with a set of watching eyes makes a big difference.

PRACTICE BY RECORDING YOURSELF

Record yourself giving your speech. Sit back and watch your video recording and make notes of areas where you need to make adjustments.

PRACTICE BY VISUALIZING YOUR SPEECH

Sit in your chair and imagine yourself giving your speech. Imagine your confidence as you walk to the podium. Imagine your strong opening, image the audience smiling at you. Imagine their nods of approval as you give your powerful ending.

> *We are what we repeatedly do.*
> *Excellence is not an act*
> *but a habit.*
> *Aristotle*

WRITE YOURSELF ENCOURAGING NOTES

On top of your speech notes, put positive messages to yourself. Write "I've got this" in bright colors on the top of the page. Add a little cartoon character that makes you smile. Put a picture of your loved one making a funny face, a picture of your dog, a cartoon picture that makes you happy. One TED Talk speaker said she wrote on her notes, "This Matters, I've got this!"

I still get nervous on the first day of class, so I draw a smiley face on my notes and the phrase, "I love being a teacher."



BREATHE: BELLY BREATHING

One way to manage stress is to do deep breathing. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach. Take a deep breath in through your nose. Feel the breath go in. Let the breath completely fill up your lungs—inhale for 15 seconds. You should feel the hand that is on your stomach rise. Now, open your mouth and let the air out slowly over 15 seconds. Repeat this. Each time try to fill up your lungs fully. Taking as few as 3 belly breaths can increase your oxygen allowing you to relax.



BREATHE: THE NOSTRIL SWITCH

Put your finger on the side of your nose and push the nostril closed.
Breathe in through the nose and out through your mouth.
Now, push the other nostril closed.
Breathe in through the nose and out through your mouth.
Do this until you have taken 3 breaths on each side.
Now, take 3 big breaths in through the mouth and out through the nose with both nostrils open.
This should deepen your breathing and relieve some of the stress.
Most importantly——Don't just read about deep breathing—- DO IT!

Taking a deep breath, faking that I'm confident,
and focusing on the topic helped me manage my anxiety.
After a few seconds, I would forget about the anxiety
and really get into what I was speaking about!
Tara Johnson
Advanced Public Speaking Student, University of Arkansas

✔ Think of Giving a Speech as a Conversation with Friends

Your goal is not to be Winston Churchill or Nelson Mandela. It's to be you.
If you're a scientist, be a scientist; don't try to be an activist.
If you're an artist, be an artist; don't try to be an academic.
If you're just an ordinary person, don't try to fake some big intellectual style; just be you.

You don't have to raise a crowd to its feet with a thunderous oration.
Conversational sharing can work just as well.
In fact, for most audiences, it's a lot better.
If you know how to talk to a group of friends over dinner,
then you know enough to speak publicly.
— Chris J. Anderson, Curator TED Talks

? Key Takeaways

- Visualize yourself being successful at speaking.
- Talk about public speaking in positive ways. Say, "I'm excited!" instead of "I'm nervous."
- Exercise, laugh or meditate to reduce the cortisol reaction.
- Do exercises to release tension. Beware of tension and relax your muscles.
- Pretend to be confident, borrow someone else confidence if needed. Fake confidence and it will become you.
- Memorize your opening and closing.
- Write yourself positive notes.
- Practice, practice, practice.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

✔ Sources of Anxiety and Ways to Overcome

1. Situational — When talking to friends, we may not be nervous but if asked to say the same thing as a speech, we get nervous. The solution is to think of a presentation as a conversation rather than a performance.

2. Audience –Sometimes we are nervous because of who is in the audience. The solution is to visualize your speech and the audience's positive reaction.

3. Goal –We may get anxious when we think about the goal of the speech. Often times we have a future goal that we are worried about. The solution is to focus on the moment–exercise, play a video game, do a tongue twister.

No Freaking Speaking: Managing Public Speaking Anxiety by Matt Abrahams



✔ Developing Self Confidence

Lessons from soccer coach, Dr. Ivan Joseph on how to develop self-confidence.

- Practice and keep practicing. Repetition is important for learning a skill.
- Self-talk. Be aware of the things you say to yourself.
- Get away from the people who will tear you down.
- Catch yourself doing good and record it.

The Skill of Self Confidence by Dr. Ivan Joseph



References

Abraham, M. (2012). No freaking speaking: Managing public speaking anxiety. Toastmasters. [Video] YouTube. . https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZH5GpdMmlO8. Standard YouTube License

Ayres, J. & Hopf, T.S. (1985). Visualization: A means of reducing speech anxiety. *Communication Education*, *34*(4), 318-323. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528509378623

Bergland, C. (2013). Cortisol: Why "the stress hormone" is public enemy number one. *Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201301/cortisol-why-the-stress-hormone-is-public-enemy-no-1*

Bullard, B & Carroll, K. (2012). *Communicating from the inside out*. Kendal Hunt.

Cuddy, A. (2015). Game changer: Amy Cuddy, power poser. [Video] YouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IICi5Zw9jY4. Standard YouTube License.

Cuddy, A. (2018). Tips for Success in Public Speaking. [Video] YouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hI9kJuWEuIo. Standard YouTube License.

Dominus, S. (2017). When the revolution came for Amy Cuddy. New York Times Magazine. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/magazine/when-the-revolution-came-for-amy-cuddy.html

Joseph, I. (2012). The skill of self-confidence TEDxRyersonU [Video] YouTube.. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-HYZv6HzAs&vl=en Standard YouTube License.

Kamath, A., Urval, R. P., & Shenoy, A. K. (2017). Effect of alternate nostril breathing exercise on experimentally induced anxiety in healthy volunteers using the simulated public speaking model: A randomized controlled pilot study. *BioMed Research International*. https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/2450670

Keysers, C., & Gozzola, V. (2014). Hebbian learning and predictive mirror neurons for actions, sensations, and emotions. *Philosophical Transitions. Royal Society of Biological Science.* 369(1644), 20130175. https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2013.0175

LeFebvre, L., LeFebvre, L.E. , & Allen, M. (2018). Training the butterflies to fly in formation: Cataloguing student fears about public speaking. *Communication Education*, *67*(3) , 348-362. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2018.1468915

LeFebvre, L., LeFebvre, L.E. , Allen, M, Buckner, M.M. & Griffin, D. (2020). Metamorphosis of public speaking anxiety: Student fear transformation throughout the introductory communication course. *Communication Studies*, 71 (1), 98-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2019.1661867

LeFebvre, L., LeFebvre, L.E. , & Allen, M. (2020). “Imagine All the People”: Imagined interactions in virtual reality when public speaking. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9. https://doi.org/10.1177/0276236620938310

McAdam, E. (2018). Stress Release: Fast anxiety reduction technique. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrhPTqholcc

McCroskey, J. C. (1972). The implementation of a large-scale program of systematic desensitization for communication apprehension. *Speech Teacher*, *21*, 255–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634527209377961

Sessinghaus, R. (2017). Visualization and Mental Rehearsal. Perform For Success. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dS63aaXjGo. Standard YouTube License.

Udacity. (2015). Facial feedback effect – Intro to Psychology. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lh0bL7p5eN4 Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- No fear © Etienne Girardet is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Bronze statue of girl with hands on her hips © Hyunwon Jang is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Don’t worry sign © Paolo Bendandi
- Breathe © Max van den Oetelaar is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 2.2: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Body is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.3: Delivery Advice- Do Not Imagine the Audience Naked! Managing Eye Contact, Movement, and Gestures



You can speak well
if your tongue can deliver the message of your heart.
– John Ford, celebrated Irish American director

In this chapter, I will give you some practical tips to help you strengthen your presentation skills and I want to steer you away from some of the bad advice out there. The best things you can do when it comes to presentation skills are (1) believe you can improve with practice and (2) realize connection, not perfection is the goal.

Believe You Can Improve

When you think about speaking are you tempted to believe, "Some people are just born good speakers" or "I just wasn't made for this public speaking stuff." If that is you, you may have what Stanford researcher, Carol Dweck calls a "fixed mindset." She suggested that we have a *fixed mindset*– people are just born to be good at things or we have a *growth mindset*–people, with effort, can learn new skills.

When it comes to public speaking, you should work on having a growth mindset and acknowledge that effort is needed for mastery. You can improve, but it may take work. Especially with public speaking, practice equals progress. Adjusting your belief to a growth mindset frees your self-limiting beliefs and allows you to move beyond what you thought was possible.

Those who think they got their success from effort often can go farther than those who believe success is due to their natural ability. The key to making the change is to continually recognize your effort: "I gave it my best, I really stretched myself today, I put a lot of time into this, and I can tell it made a difference." In addition, Dweck suggests the simple change of adding the word "yet" to your self vocabulary helps keep you growth-focused. Instead of saying, "I'm not good a public speaking," say "I'm not good at public speaking yet." Believe if you work hard enough, and practice enough, and get help when needed, you can improve and grow.

✔ The Power of YET

Avoid saying, "I can't do this"
but rather say "I can't do this yet"

In one case, you are telling your brain to quit trying
in the other version, you allow yourself to be open to possibilities.

Never say, "I'm not good at public speaking."
but rather say, "I may not be a perfect speaker yet but what I have to say is important
so I will work and keep getting better at it."

Believing you can improve is an important first step. In my many years of teaching public speaking, I have witnessed some of the most insecure, timid speakers rise to become confident, and powerful in only a few months. I have seen a student who ran out of the class crying on her first speech, be voted the best speaker by her last speech. I have watched a student who stumbled over every word, evolve into a powerful speaker who delivers speeches to large groups every week. Some people seem to know how to succeed at public speaking naturally, but for most of us, it takes work. Realize with practice, you can improve as a speaker. If you are one of those lucky natural speakers, realize you too have room to improve. Now, let's talk about two specific presentation skills where you can improve–eye contact and gestures.

To get started, I want to tell you some of the worst speaking advice I have ever been given.

Eye Contact

Bad Advice–Look at Their Foreheads

I had a teacher in high school who told me, “Don’t make eye contact with the audience because they will make you nervous. Don’t look at their eyes–look at their foreheads.” Just for fun, walk up to a friend and begin to speak to their forehead to see how they react. Really, try it. It just looks weird. Chances are your friend will say, “What the heck are you doing?” That is the same thing your audience will think if you stare at their foreheads. Honestly, it is harder to focus on foreheads than it is to look in the eyes.

Bad Advice–Imagine Your Audience Naked

A well-meaning friend told me, “Just imagine your audience naked.” Maybe you too have heard this advice, and it is the worst. If you are in my audience and I imagine you naked, I guarantee there will be NO EYE CONTACT. No eye contact at all! One speech coach said, “Depending on your audience, this is too exciting or too disgusting.” This piece of advice is designed to make you feel more at ease, but it doesn’t work. I do not know about you, but the thought of speaking to a room full of naked people does not make me feel relaxed.

Bad Advice– Stare at Random Spots Above Their Heads

I have heard this one multiple times from well-meaning teachers. “Look at the back wall.” If you look over the person, you miss the person. Ask yourself, why is eye contact so frightening? Is it because there is a person connected to those eyes? Is it because if we look at the person, we have to acknowledge their existence? One nonverbal researcher says, “Eye contact makes interaction an obligation.” If I make eye contact, I must recognize I am speaking to a real person with feelings, expectations, and dreams. If I make eye contact, I must realize a speech is an interaction and I have an obligation to that person. If I make eye contact, I become much more aware they expect something from me and I feel obligated not to waste their time.

The other reason this is bad advice is it makes you look odd, and you will lose credibility with the audience. It is a strange thing to talk to walls. If you are a speaker, it looks strange for you to look over the audience’s heads to stare at the wall. I guarantee the audience feels strange when you do it. Even in a large audience where you can’t make eye contact with everyone, you should at least find people throughout the room to look at.

Bad Advice– Follow the Eye Contact Formula

A lot of well-meaning advisors will say things like “Make eye contact for 3-5 seconds with each person” (the three-second rule) or “scan the audience from left to right” (the lighthouse technique) or “find three places in the room and look to those” (the umpire technique). The advice is not entirely bad, but the problem is it puts too much pressure on the speaker. If I am counting the seconds or working on the perfect eye contact pattern, then I am missing the point of being conversational.

Good Advice on Eye Contact

The most important advice I can give you on eye contact is to JUST DO IT. Find friendly faces around the room and look at them. Find those nice people who smile and nod and then begin looking at them in the room. Looking at them helps you gauge whether they are listening.

When speaking to a large audience, you may have to make audience contact instead of eye contact. Look at various areas where the audience members are seated to create the feeling that you are looking at them.

Benefits of Eye Contact

There are many benefits to making good eye contact. Communication researcher Steven Beebe conducted a study where he discovered an increase in eye contact increases a speaker’s perceived credibility. Other research suggests eye contact impacts focus memory, and recall. Eye contact helps the audience to see you as credible, and to remember your message more–what is not to love about that?

Watch the video, below by Dananjaya Hettiarachchi and notice how he looks directly at audience members. It is obvious why he is the world champion.



Practical Tips for Maximizing Eye Contact

- If you struggle with eye contact, at the top of every page of your notes write–"Make eye contact."
- Have your friends sit at various places throughout the room so you have a few friendly eyes you can talk to.
- Practice with people. Sure, it is helpful to record yourself, to practice talking to a wall, and to speak to a mirror, but those are no substitutes for what happens when you speak to people. Find some friends and practice with them. Chris Anderson, of TED, says: "Perhaps the most important physical act onstage is making eye contact. Find five or six friendly-looking people in different parts of the audience and look them in the eye as you speak. Think of them as friends you haven't seen in a year, whom you're bringing up to date on your work."



Eye Contact in Online Presentations

Increasingly, business presentations are being made in the online environment. The pandemic forced schools to use online learning tools where teachers give lectures online and students give presentations online. In addition, many businesses are conducting job interviews through virtual platforms. It is likely you will encounter an online speech and it is helpful to understand the unique differences. If you are making your presentations online, eye contact means looking into the camera. Draw a smiley face on a notecard and tape it beside your camera to remind you to look at your audience. It is tempting to try to make eye contact with the faces on your screen, and it is OK to look at the faces on the screen to remind you of your audience but spend the majority of your presentation time looking into the eyes of the camera.

It can be helpful to tape your notecards on a wall behind your computer or phone screen so you can glance at them briefly and then speak directly to your audience. Do not try to read your speech off your computer or phone screen; it will be obvious to the audience you are reading.

? Cultural Note

Eye contact can vary from culture to culture and person to person. Just because an audience member looks away from you, it may not mean they are not interested. Consider the following differences.

- In some cultures, it would be considered inappropriate to make eye contact with someone of different gender (or sex).

- When in a high-power culture (a culture where those in power are given higher status and have deferential body language), you may notice those in lower status lower their eyes or avoid eye contact with those of higher status.
- Arabs, Latin Americans, and Southern Europeans tend to make direct eye contact
- Those from Asia and parts of Africa tend to make less eye contact.
- Those on the Autism Spectrum may avoid eye contact to help them focus on the words you are saying.

"All you need is something to say,
and a burning desire to say it…
it doesn't matter where your hands are."
Lou Holtz, former Arkansas Razorback football coach

Gestures

Isn't it funny how we rarely notice what our hands are doing while we are talking? When we get up there to give a speech, suddenly we are aware of our hands, and we can't figure out what to do with them. One of the frequently asked questions I hear is, "What do I do with my hands?" The short answer is to relax and gesture naturally. Vivian Buchan, author of *Make Presentations with Confidence* suggests, "The only place a gesture comes from is inside you. Gestures come from your heart and soul, your instincts, your interests, and your involvement." She suggests focusing on your speech and your passion and the gestures will work themselves out. The more you practice your speech, the more you will feel confident gesturing.

"Great speakers keep their body open" according to Dananjaya Hettiarachchi, 2014 Toastmasters International world champion of public speaking. "Failing to make gestures or holding your hands tightly in front of you makes you look insecure. When you're nervous, you try to cover your vital organs." It is OK to *feel* nervous, the goal is to try and not *look* nervous. Public speaking instructor Cathy Hollingsworth offered this nugget of advice:

> *So many times, when speakers are telling a story to their friends in person or even via the phone, gestures are big and descriptive but when speakers get in front of an audience, all of sudden, arms and hands become appendages that have no apparent purpose. This is what I tell speakers: Use your gestures as "bodily visual aids". Pretend you are in a situation in which there are no electronics to show slides nor is there a whiteboard. How will you get your ideas across to the audience? Easy! Just use your gesturing to take the audience along with you on the speech. Be brave enough to make those gestures big and at least shoulder high. This is not charades, but it is close.*

Gestures help you look like a polished speaker. Vanessa Van Edwards did a study and found the top TED talk speakers made an average of 465 gestures in 18 minutes while the less popular speakers made 272 gestures. The top speakers gestured almost twice as much. Gestures not only increase a speaker's credibility but speakers who gesture are seen as more persuasive and more likable. According to Vanessa van Edwards, "It's not what you say; it's how you say it." She found people rated speakers similarly on charisma, credibility, and intelligence whether they saw the speech with the sound on or off.

When speakers gesture, listeners are better able to learn the content. People who were instructed to gesture while learning new information, had better recall of information. That sounds like a good study tip!

It's not just your audience that will be helped by your gestures, you will be helped as well. Did you know people who are born blind gesture in some of the same ways sighted individuals do? How do they know to gesture? Why do they gesture? They gesture because it seems to be something they are hardwired to do. They gesture because it seems to help the speaker to think and speak more clearly. I often have my students sit on their hands and then tell a story about their weekend or give directions to their favorite restaurant. It is amazing how many of them struggle to think of directions when they can't move. It might be said you think with your hands. In a study where they asked children to talk about a game they played, those who gestured while speaking told more details and they spoke with fewer hesitations. The authors suggested gesturing reduces cognitive load. It is easier to hold up your hands and say "The fish I caught is this big" than it is to say, "the fish I caught was big. He was about 10 inches long." Gestures give us a shortcut to speaking.

In addition, gestures beat out the rhythm of the speech. They help us synchronize our words to our speech. Typically, we speak in chunks of about four to five syllables called a phonemic clause. At the end of that chunk, we tend to gesture. Try it for yourself. I

wrote the phrases as most people say them (phonemic clause). Say these phrases out loud and see what gestures you do naturally.

I don't know where they are

I've looked everywhere

I simply cannot remember

where I put my keys.

They were right there table

last night.

Read it again. This time, notice you naturally gesture right before the last beat of the phrase. Gestures don't come after the phrase, they come during the phrase. You can tell if someone has been speech coached poorly because they will gesture after the phrase. It looks unnatural.



Gestures are Good

- They are good for the audience's attention to your speech.
- They are good for the audience's recall of the speech.
- They help you as a speaker to be more fluid in speaking.
- They help to reduce your cognitive load.
- They help you keep the rhythm in your speech.

With all this information, you know you should gesture throughout your speech. One way to loosen up and find your own gestures is what I call, "getting funky." After you have your speech written, sing your speech, say it in a funny accent, or rap it while in the shower. As silly as this sounds, it will help relax you and in those funky practices, you will find you begin having more free-flowing gestures.

Students in Dale Carnegie classes often do the Box Factory activity to help them learn to use their whole bodies in their speech.

Dale Dunphy posted as part of a Dale Carnegie course, he had to tell a story of the Box Factory with enthusiasm and emphasize certain words. Other participants talked about the importance of telling the story with their whole bodies.

The Box Factory

I found myself yesterday near a huge box factory located on a high hill.
Running all around this building was a picket fence about this high.
I walked up to the factory, threw open the door, walked in, and found myself in a long hallway.
At the far end of the hallway was a spiral staircase.
I walked up this spiral staircase, pushed open a sliding door, and found myself in a big room piled high with boxes.
There were big boxes, middle-sized boxes, and very small boxes.
Suddenly, the boxes came tumbling down around my head!
I woke with a start, yawned, stretched, and went back to sleep.
Watch this short clip from Dale Carnegie Training of Western CT as they do this activity.
https://www.facebook.com/296319280422649/videos/686754148045825
As silly as activities like this one may seem, they help speakers to relax and to use their whole bodies in speeches.

What NOT to Do with Your Hands

- Do NOT put both hands in your pockets.
- Do NOT jingle keys or change in your pocket.
- Do NOT hold hands clasped behind your back.

- Do NOT fidget with your pen, necklace.
- Do NOT tap or pound on the podium.
- Do NOT rest your hands on the podium.
- Do NOT wring hands.
- Do NOT play with your hair.
- Do NOT fidget with your clothing.
- Do NOT pick your fingernails.
- Do NOT fiddle with notecards.

✔ Pro-Tip

When you feel yourself getting nervous, touch your index finger to your thumb, it is a self-soothing gesture

Advanced Gestures

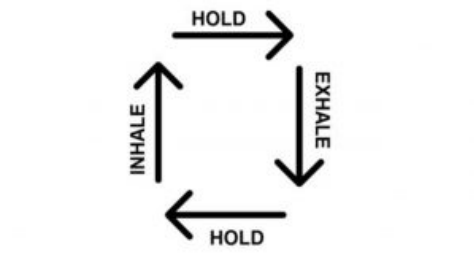
Some of you are still working on relaxing enough to gesture. That is OK, it takes time and like any other skill, with practice, you will get better. Others of you have spoken long enough you are wanting to take your gestures to the next level, this section is for you.

Sabina Nawaz, speech coach recommends people "air out their armpits" when they gesture. That is her way of reminding people to make their gestures large and noticeable and to move their arms away from their torso. Dale Carnegie Trainer, Larry Prevot, says speakers who keep their arms too close to their body remind him of old westerns where the hero is tied up. The rope is around his chest and arms bound tightly, but below the elbow, his hands are free allowing him to finally escape, "Be that hero today. Remove the perceived constraints that are pinning your upper arms against your chest and start using everything at your disposal." Darren Tay, Toastmaster's World Champion, said in a Business Insider interview "It's common for novice public speakers to have their gestures centered either too close to their face, which suggests nervousness, or too low, which is distracting. He said the ideal center is around the belly button."

In addition to making the arm movements large, the next pro tip is to gesture palms up. Toastmaster Champion Hettiarachchi, suggests you look at the back of your hand and then look at the palm of your hand. Which one relaxes your eye? The palm relaxes your eye which is why great public speakers tend to open their palms towards the audience (video included in bonus features below). In the TED talk, *Power in the Palm of Your Hand (video included in bonus features below)*, Allan Pease tells of a study where speakers had 20 minutes to present a proposal using palm-up gestures, palm down gestures, or pointing gestures. Here's what he found: The palm-up speakers were described as laid back, friendly, humorous, and engaging. The speakers with the palm up gesture maintained 40% more retention than the speaker who used the palm-down gesture. The palms down speakers were described as authoritative, and the pointing speakers were described with negative adjectives.

✔ How To Stop Shaking When You Are Nervous

In this video, *How to Stop Shaking when You Are Nervous*, Trace Dominguez explains how New York City Police and Members of the Military stop their hands from shaking when they have an adrenaline response. Tactical and box breathing can help you slow down your rapid heart rate and stimulate the vagus nerve. The slower and deeper you breathe, the more relaxed you feel. This technique is done by taking deep breaths through the nose.



How To Do Box Breathing:

1. Exhale all the breath out of your lungs.
2. Breathe in for four seconds. As your chest rises and air enters let your mind travel up the side of the box.

3. Hold for four seconds and in your mind travel across the top of the box.
4. Breathe out for four seconds and let your mind travel down one side of the box.
5. Relax for four seconds and let your mind travel across the bottom.
6. Repeat at least three times.

According to clinical psychologist, Dr. Symington, This visual of the box "provides a helpful anchor for your attention and quickly allows you to get into the flow of rhythmic breathing."

Watch this short video, *How to Stop Shaking When You're Nervous*, as it relates to box breathing.



Your Body Language

When does your speech credibility begin with an audience? At first glance. People start evaluating you the moment they see you. If you are pacing wildly in the hall, if you are sitting submissively while playing on your phone, if you are in the bathroom before your speech having a pep talk and a member of the audience sees you, that is when they start the credibility meter. The moment you arrive at the speech venue, you should walk, talk, and act with confidence. I once worked for a company that insisted our car was clean inside and out because the client might see it out their office window and begin sizing up our credibility. If you are a college student, consider the fact that every day your classmates see you in class, you are either gaining credibility or losing credibility. If you sit passively in class playing on your cell phone every day, if you wear pajama pants to class, if you slump over dismissively when others give their speeches, you will have diminished credibility with that audience.

Posture

Your body tells people how you wanted to be treated. Your body tells people what you want them to think of you. Confident posture tells your audience you believe you are a person of power, and you know what you are talking about. A confident posture shows your audience you are "comfortable in your own skin." When people see someone with good posture and body confidence, they perceive them to have more positive attributes and to have increased competence and power. Your confident posture helps you as well, as Harvard Researcher Amy Cuddy points out, people who hold themselves confidently also feel confident. Individuals with a confident posture had more positive attitudes and were more persistent when engaging in a complex task.

To Move or Not to Move, That is the Question

In some situations, you are expected to stand behind a lectern and in other settings, you are standing there with nothing between you and the audience. You will have to adapt to various contexts in your speaking career. In most settings, it is recommended you put as few barriers between you and the audience as possible. When thinking about movement remember, you are a tree–plant your feet but move your branches naturally in the wind. Ok, you can be a tree that moves a little. When you do decide to walk around, make sure it looks purposeful and not nervous–there is a difference between engaged movement and pacing.

The video in this chapter, *Body Language –Gestures and Eye Contact in Public Speaking* shows a variety of speakers and how each adapts to the speech situation. As you watch it, pay special attention to their feet and arms. One of the things that I like about this video is that it shows that there is no one definitive way to do gestures. Each speaker's unique personality comes out in their body movements. I tell my students that being a good speaker is about learning to be comfortable in their own skin and learning their unique way of connecting with the audience.

Movement for Advanced Speakers

For you advanced speakers, it is time to be even more intentional with your movement. Some speakers use the baseball method of movement where they "walk their points". Imagine a baseball diamond on the floor. When you make your first point, you walk to first base. On your second point, you walk to the second base, and on your third point, you move to the third base. Walking to home plate signals that your speech has come full circle (or full diamond) and you are restating the thesis to show how you are connecting with where you began. This physical representation of your speech can help anchor ideas in the minds of the audience.

Cathy Hollingsworth suggests you use purposeful movement to take your audience with you on the journey.
"For many speakers, the hardest thing to resist is walking aimlessly the whole speech. Then, that movement looks like nervous wandering. Instead, take a few steps during a transition and **STOP**. Stay awhile and talk! When you move to the next point or start to tell a story, take a few more steps and **STOP.** Stay awhile and talk."

I learned one of my favorite tricks at a teacher's retreat. After about an hour of walking around the room teaching, the conference leader looked at us and asked "Do you see where I am standing? Have you noticed every time I make a big point, I stand in the same place?" He went on to tell us throughout the weekend-long conference he had conditioned us to pay attention to his big idea by standing in the same spot every time he drew a conclusion. When he stood in that spot, we knew what he was about to say was important. This same speaker would stomp with one foot at times as he made a point to get our attention. It was like an exclamation point. He even did a hop using both feet once or twice as a double exclamation point.

The distance you are from the audience and the position of your eyes to the audience can also have an effect. You can create intimacy when telling a personal story by walking closer to the audience or even by sitting down. Moving from behind the podium can signal "I am being vulnerable before you." Making your eyes the same level as the audience can signal we are on the same level (though the room and size of the audience can influence this). The key is whatever you do, make movement intentional and purposeful (imagine me doing a two-footed hop here!).

> **Enlist the Help of a Friend.** Chances are you have some presentation area where you need work. Ask a friend to give you an honest assessment of what you do. For example, I used to rock up and back when I spoke. I had a friend who would move his pointer finger up and back to let me know when I was doing it. It took a lot of practice and several "rockin" speeches, but eventually, I corrected the behavior.

How To Dress for Your Speech

How do you dress for your speech? The answer should be "it depends." It depends on the context, the audience, the topic, and the occasion. Kelly Stoetzel, TED's Content Director says the most important thing is you "wear something you feel great in." She also suggests "Believe it or not, your clothing can earn you an audience connection before you've even spoken a word." Here are a few guidelines to consider:

1. **Consider the context, topic, and purpose.** It may give you credibility to wear a lab coat as you talk about your experience working as a nurse's assistant. Wearing hiking gear would be appropriate for a speech on how to rappel, and yoga pants are appropriate for a speech about the sun salutation poses. I'm not telling you to dress gimmicky, but to consider what is appropriate for the topic.
2. **Dress nicer than your audience to enhance your credibility.** If you are talking to other college students in your class and they are wearing jeans and t-shirts, wear nice pants and a collared shirt. If you are presenting to business professionals in suits, wear a suit. It can be a mistake to overdress your audience. If you dress too formally, they will think you are untrustworthy and insincere, however, if you dress too casually the audience might not take you seriously. Whatever you wear, consider the impact. Typically, there is a balance between looking credible and looking approachable. For example, a study of college teachers found teachers who dressed in professional attire were perceived as more organized and knowledgeable while those dressed casually were perceived as more approachable.
3. **Dress professionally to feel credible.** Martin McDermott said, "People elevate their behavior to match their attire." Dressing professionally can make you feel more confident resulting in enhanced cognition and abstract processing.
4. **Avoid distracting clothing and artifacts.** Unless you are comfortable in high heels, you should avoid them in a speech. Be aware that some dress shoes can be very loud and distracting. If you are tempted to fidget with a ring or necklace, it is best not to wear them when you speak.

5. **Practice in your outfit.** It is a good idea to practice your speech in the outfit you will wear to your speech. It will help you identify any issues like sagging straps or an overly tight shirt that restricts gestures.
6. **Consider the sweat factor.** Typically, people perspire more when they are giving a speech. Wear something that minimizes any sweat stains.
7. **Consider the backdrop.** If you wear black pants and a black shirt, you may get lost in front of a black velvet curtain. If possible, get a picture of or visit the venue where you will be speaking to consider how it will impact your clothing choices.
8. **Consider microphones.** If you will be wearing a lapel microphone, you shouldn't wear a floppy cardigan. If you are wearing a microphone with a battery pack, you will need a belt or defined waistline to clip it onto. If you are wearing an over-the-ear microphone, your dangling earrings may make loud noises that are picked up by the mic. Always ask what the microphone set up will be days before the event so you can dress accordingly.
9. **Zip it**. The best advice about clothing rules I have ever received as a speaker is to always check your fly before you speak.

Social psychologist Erving Goffman asks us to consider we are all like actors on a stage. When we are backstage, we may act one way, and when we are on the front stage, we act another. Actors make intentional choices when performing on the main stage; he called this impression management. As actors, we use props, clothing, artifacts, and nonverbal communication to tell people which "character" we are. If we are successful, the audience will view us the way we want to be viewed. Consider which character you will be and be intentional about how to create that character on your "front stage."

? Thoughts for My Blotchy Friends

Sometimes, I get red blotches that start at my chest and crawl up my neck, and land on my face. I'm not alone. Some of my very best speakers, have the same thing happen. I like to think of it as a sign of great speaking. I don't want my badge of greatness to distract the audience, so I always consider how my clothing choices can magnify the issue. A crisp white shirt next to my red neck highlights the issue, whereas a black shirt with a nice necklace breaks up the red and doesn't highlight it so much. If I pull back my hair in a ponytail, there is more of my red neck exposed, so I wear it long.

Of course, the best solution is not to get red. Easy to say, but not so easy to do, huh? Doing deep breathing before a speech, being well prepared, and caring about your speech topic all help. The biggest thing of all is to be aware of your triggers. I get red when I get passionate. If I say, "I love teaching and making a difference in the lives of my students." I may get red. If I think someone in the audience thinks I'm not competent, I may get red. If I wear a hot, itchy fabric, I may get red. If someone has on a certain perfume or if I eat certain foods, I will get red. For some of us, red happens. If red happens to you, it certainly doesn't mean you avoid speaking.

If this is you, you can minimize it, and more importantly, when it happens, the audience can still enjoy your speech. When I see it happen to my students as they passionately pursue their topic, I forget to notice. If you get red, you are in good company. Dress to minimize it, breathe deeply, and focus on the message and your audience will too.

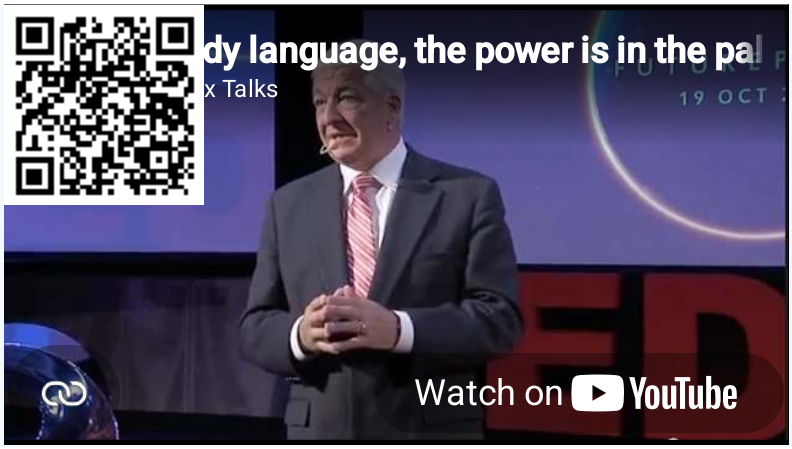
? Key Takeaways

- Public speaking is a skill and with practice, you can improve. Keep an open mindset.
- Make eye contact with the audience being sure to look in different areas of the room.
- Gestures should be natural. Gestures help both the speaker and the listeners.
- Open palms and larger gestures can make you appear more approachable.
- Use confident body posture, not just during your speech, but any time you are in sight of your audience.
- Dress according to the context, speech topic, and audience. Typically, dress a little bit above your audience.

Extra Resources

✔ Watch These Videos That Were Referenced in the Text

He starts talking about the palm at 4.35



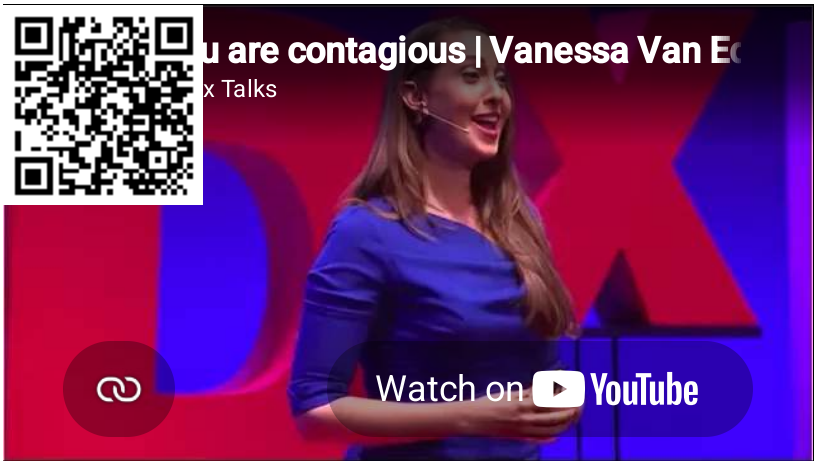




✔ The Power of YET

Carol Dweck explains how “basic human abilities can be grown and how using “Yet” and “Not Yet” influences learning in different classroom settings. Whether you are teaching kids math or teaching yourself to improve as a public speaker, practicing a growth mindset will be crucial for your success.





Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Alisonprato (2015). Does body language help a TED talk go viral? Five nonverbal patterns from blockbuster talks. https://blog.ted.com/body-language-survey-points-to-5-nonverbal-features-that-make-ted-talks-take-off/?fbclid=IwAR1w5nVN6TuRip9LhUQ0OviSKiS15RKfPvoe-k-LKgaFxnsCHXkhhNLl7zA

Alibali, M. W., Kita, S., & Young, A. J. (2000). Gesture and the process of speech production: We think, therefore we gesture. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, *15*(6), 593–613. https://doi.org/10.1080/016909600750040571

Anderson, C. (2013). How to give a killer presentation. *Harvard Business Review* https://hbr.org/2013/06/how-to-give-a-killer-presentation

Beebe, S. A. (1974). Eye contact a nonverbal determinant of speaker credibility. *Speech Teacher*, *23*(1), 21. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634527409378052

Behling, D. U., & Williams, E. A. (1991). Influence of dress on perception of intelligence and expectations of scholastic achievement. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, *9*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X9501300102

Briñol, P., Petty, R. E., & Wagner, B. (2009). Body posture effects on self-evaluation: A self-validation approach. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *39*, 1053–1064. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.607

Buchan, V. (1991). *Make presentations with confidence. Barron's. A business success guide.* Barron's Educational Series.

Business Insider, (2016). Four essential body language tips from a world champion public speaker. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZK3jSXYBNak Standard YouTube License.

Burgoon, J. K., Birk, T., & Pfau, M. (1990). Nonverbal behaviors, persuasion, and credibility. *Human Communication Research*, *17*(1), 140–169. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1990.tb00229.x

Carr, D. Lavin, A. and Davies, T. (2009). The impact of business faculty attire on student perceptions and engagement, *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, 6(1), 41–49. https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v6i1.1180

Cook, S. W., Yip, T. K., & Goldin-Meadow, S. (2010). Gesturing makes memories that last. *Journal of memory and language*, *63*(4), 465–475. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jml.2010.07.002

D News. How to Stop Shaking When You Are Nervous. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJhI0Du5jO4 Standard YouTube License.

Dunphry, D. Facebook post on Dale Carnegie's Box Factory

Dweck, C.S. (2014). Developing a growth mindset with Carol Dweck. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/hiiEeMN7vbQ Standard YouTube License

Dweck. C.S. (2008). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Ballentine Books.

Feloni, R. (2016). Here's a breakdown of the speech that won the 2016 World Championship of Public Speaking. *Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.in/heres-a-breakdown-of-the-speech-that-won-the-2016-world-championship-of-public-speaking/articleshow/53834528.cms*

Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday.

Hettiarachchi, D. (2014). I see something-World Champion of Public Speaking 2014 [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbz2boNSeL0 Standard YouTube License.

Iverson, J. M., & Goldin-Meadow, S. (2001). The resilience of gesture in talk: Gesture in blind speakers and listeners. *Developmental Science*, *4*, 416–422. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7687.00183

Johnson, T.W., Francis, S.K. and L. D. Burns, L.D. (2007). Appearance management behavior and the five-factor model of personality, *Clothing, and Textiles Research Jour*nal, 25 (3), 230–243. https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X07302982

Kelley, D.H. & Gorham, J. (1988). Effects of immediacy on recall of information. *Communication Education*, *37*:3, 198-207. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528809378719

Lidsky, I. (2016). What Reality Are You Creating for Yourself? [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/isaac_lidsky_what_reality_are_you_creating_for_yourself. Standard YouTube License.

McDermott, M. (2014). *Speak with Courage: Fifty Insider Strategies for Presenting with Confidence.* Bedford.

Nawaz, S. (2017). Awkward or awesome? What your hand gestures say when you're giving a speech. https://beleaderly.com/what-hand-gestures-say-when-giving-a-speech.

Nazish, N. (2019). How to de-stress in five minutes, according to a Navy Seal. *Forbes.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/nomanazish/2019/05/30/how-to-de-stress-in-5-minutes-or-less-according-to-a-navy-seal/?sh=5223f3c93046

Pease, A. (2013). Body language, the power is in the palm of your hands. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZZ7k8cMA-4 Standard YouTube License.

Ping, R. & Goldin-Meadow, S. (2010). Gesturing saves cognitive resources when talking about nonpresent objects. *Cognitive Science*, 34:4. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1551-6709.2010.01102.x

Phillips, P. & Smith, L. (1992). The Effect of Teacher Dress on Student Perceptions. ERIC https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED347151

Prevost, L. (n.d.) Five public speaking tips from the Dale Carnegie Course. https://larryprevost.com/2017/08/dale-carnegie-course-gives-5-tips-for-speaking-with-passion

Reid, A., Lancuba, V. & Morrow, B. (1997). Clothing style and formation of first impressions. *Perceptual and Motor Skills 84 (1)*, 237-238. https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1997.84.1.237

Science Daily. Study: Body posture affects confidence in your own thoughts. (2009). *NewsRx Health & Science*, 176. https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/10/091005111627.htm

Slepian, M.L., Ferber, S.N.Gold, J. M., and Rutchick, A. M. (2015). The cognitive consequences of formal clothing. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6 (6). 661–668. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550615579462

Stepper, S., & Strack, F. (1993). Proprioceptive determinants of emotional and nonemotional feelings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*, 211–220. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.64.2.211

Stevanoni, E. & Salmon, K. (2005). Giving memory a hand: Instructing children to gesture enhances their event recall. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 29*(4). DOI: 10.1007/s10919-005-7721-y

Toastmasters International. (2011). Gestures Your Body Speaks. https://www.toastmasters.org/-/media/files/department-documents/education-documents/201-gestures.ashx

Van Edwards, V. (2017). You are contagious. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cef35Fk7YD8 TED Talk. Standard YouTube License

Media Attributions

- Woman giving a speech © Natasha Hall is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- computer meeting © Chris Montgomery is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Man gesturing © Usman Yousaf
- 86-Box-Breathing-Instructions © mindfulreturn is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 2.3: Delivery Advice- Do Not Imagine the Audience Naked! Managing Eye Contact, Movement, and Gestures is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.4: Using a Microphone Effectively- Turn It Off Before Going to the Bathroom



“Testing, check, check, can you hear me?” Your first impression matters and you don’t want your first impression to be a microphone check. The most important part of your speech is the sound–if they can’t hear you, what’s the point? Learn to project your voice when speaking in smaller venues and learn to use a microphone when speaking in larger ones.

In this chapter, I will talk about general principles of good microphone management as opposed to details on how to use a specific microphone.

Test Your Microphone

- You should never have to ask, “Can everyone hear me” during your speech, you should do that when you check out the room and venue.
- Test out the volume for the microphone, don’t yell.
- Have a sound spotter who will tell you if there are volume issues.

Microphone Test Phrases



The Harvard sentences are short sentences used during World War II to test out communications systems used by the military. These sentences were designed to be balanced phonetically and to incorporate different sounds of speech.

You can use these sentences as part of your microphone check.

1. A king ruled the state in the early days.
2. The ship was torn apart on the sharp reef.
3. Sickness kept him home the third week.
4. The wide road shimmered in the hot sun.
5. The lazy cow lay in the cool grass.
6. Lift the square stone over the fence.
7. The rope will bind the seven books at once.
8. Hop over the fence and plunge in.
9. The friendly gang left the drug store.
10. Mesh wire keeps chicks inside.

For the complete list of 72 groupings of ten sentences, go to Harvard Sentences

Understand Your Microphone

- Know how to turn it on and off.
- Know how to mute it.
- Know how to put it on the stand, clip it, hold it.
- Know how to attach it if it is a clip-on/lavalier.

Hand-Held Microphones

- Do not hide your face with the microphone.
- Practice holding it so you know where the “sweet spot” is and where the “dead spot” might be.
- If someone asks you a question, either give them the microphone or repeat the question.

Podium Microphones

- Podium mics are sensitive enough to pick up your voice so you do not need to slouch to lean into the microphone.
- Test how far you can get away from the microphone for it to pick up your voice.
- Stay in place. If you walk away, they won’t be able to hear you.

Microphones can be Tricky



Wearable Lavalier Microphone

- Clip it on 4-6 inches from your mouth.
- Do not wear jewelry that will bang against the microphone (dangly earrings, bulky necklaces).
- Do not let your hair get tangled in the microphone or make noises.
- Do not put it on a floppy jacket.
- Wear clothing that you can easily clip on a microphone.

Computer Microphones

- Test your equipment with a friend.
- Beware of ambient noises –birds, lawnmowers, dishwashers.
- Record your voice on the computer’s microphone so you know what you sound like.
- Know the location of the computer microphone. (I accidentally covered mine with a sticky note and then couldn’t figure out why they couldn’t hear me.)

A Few Other Microphone Tips

- It is about people hearing your speech, if given the option, use a microphone.
- Cough away from the microphone.
- Avoid screaming into the microphone or making loud sounds.
- If you go to the bathroom and you have on a wireless microphone, make sure it is muted. I mean it–this is very important!
- Be sure to mute or turn off your microphone as soon as you are done speaking.

For a great overview of microphone usage as well as some helpful visuals, watch this short video.



A good speech, but notice how he unnecessarily bends to use the microphone.



Just for fun. Watch as everyone tries to keep it business as usual when the Texas mayor leaves his microphone on during a bathroom break.



Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Test your microphone in advance.
- Test your microphone in advance.
- Test your microphone in advance.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Anim, M. (2011). Picture of Irish Sinn Fein Senator Kathryn Reilly, speaking at a commemoration. Wikimedia. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kathryn_Reilly.jpg

Dahl, C. (2015). Best HS graduation speech ever! Weber high graduation 2015. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRiV4KZBoIY Standard YouTube License.

Harvard sentences. http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~hgs/audio/harvard.html

New York News (2015). Texas mayor leaves mic on during bathroom break. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kafVFxP3uaQ Standard Youtube License.

Reed, G. (2017). Microphone test phrases every presenter should know. Ethos 3. https://ethos3.com/2017/03/microphone-test-phrases-every-presenter-should-know/

TMikaelsonJ2 (2019). Jared—6/20/19— 2019- 2020 National Speech and Debate Education Day Spokesperson and Duo Judge. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwq1McgGDfg Standard YouTube License.

Toastmasters. (2018). Toastmasters tips- The proper way to use a microphone. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twuRPGDDD5I Standard Youtube License.

Zhang, S. (2015). The “Harvard Sentences” secretly shaped the development of audio tech. https://gizmodo.com/the-harvard-sentences-secretly-shaped-the-development-1689793568

Media Attributions

- Speaker at Microphone Kathryn Reilly © Mo ainm is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license
- Microphone © Tim Napier is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 2.4: Using a Microphone Effectively- Turn It Off Before Going to the Bathroom is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.5: Why Your Voice is the Most Important Part of Your Speech- If They Can't Hear You It is Only a Frustrating Exercise in Lip Reading



There is no such thing as presentation talent,
it is called presentation skills.
-David JP Phillips, author of How to Avoid Death by PowerPoint

Why Your Voice is the Most Important Part of Your Speech

The most important part of your delivery has to be your voice. You are not an actor in a silent film, a mime in a skit, nor a person giving lessons on lip reading. You are a presenter giving a speech. If they can't hear you and they can't understand your words, then you have failed. Like any other skill, strengthening your voice takes practice, but it is time well spent. This chapter gives you reasons for why you should develop your voice and includes activities and videos to help you improve your voice.

First things first. Let's talk about why it is important to work on your voice. If you have an attractive voice, people tend to attribute other positive characteristics to you. Research highlights that those with attractive voices are believed to be warmer, more likable, and more honest. Those with confident voices are believed to be more dominant and are perceived to be higher achievers. Strengthening your voice can help you with your speech, but it can also help you in other parts of your life. A strong voice will help you in your job interview, in meetings, and in interpersonal relationships.

This chapter is mostly made of exercises for you to try to strengthen your voice. Reading the activities will not help you, doing the activities will. As with all skills, you won't necessarily improve with one try, it takes practice.

Warm Up Your Voice

? Do A Five-Minute Vocal Warm-Up

1. Loosen up and shush: Loosen up your upper body, take a deep belly breath and then say shhhh
2. Tongue Trills: Descending and ascending
3. Hum it Up: Hum up and hum down
4. Chant: Meem, Mime, Mohm, Moom
5. Pronounce: Ma, Pa, Ta

TRY IT: Watch the video below to learn how to warm up your voice using these five steps.



Work on Clearly Articulating Words

Articulation refers to the clarity of the sounds you produce. The opposite of articulation is mumbling. Try putting a pencil in your mouth horizontally and then read your textbook out loud working on keeping your lips off of your teeth to exaggerate the sounds.

Another way to work on articulation is to do the practice drills. Here are some suggestions from *Communication in the Real World*.

- 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*. (To really up the challenge, try saying, “You need, unique, New York.”)

Bring Your Voice Up Front

Bring your voice from the back of your throat to inside your mouth. Practice bringing your voice forward by trying this exercise.

Say the words “coal, coal, coal.”

Now, do it again. Say the words “coal, coal, coal” as you hold one hand in front of your mouth and feel the air pushing out on your hand. Do it several times to feel the air.
Now say the words “coal, coal, coal,” but this time let it drop to the back of your throat. Notice that the air is no longer pushing on your hand.

When people have strong, energetic voices, they have their voices upfront. When people are tired, weak, or unenergetic, they have their voices in the back of their throats. As speakers, we want to have strong energetic voices.

Now you understand what we are trying to do. Try it one more time each way: “coal, coal, coal.” This time, don’t just feel for the air difference, but also listen for the difference in sound.

Practice Regularly

When I first started doing public speaking, I practiced by reading out loud. I can remember reading the book *Jaws* to my sister every night before bed. I would walk around the room with the book in my hand and in my best clearly articulated, well-projected voice, I would read:

> *The great fish moved silently through the night water, propelled by short sweeps of its crescent tail. The mouth was open just enough to permit a rush of water over the gills. There was little other motion: an occasional correction of the apparently aimless course by the slight raising or lowering of a pectoral fin—as a bird changes direction by dipping one wing and lifting the other.*

It is not enough to want to get better; you have to practice. Poet Laurette Amanda Gorman struggled with speech articulation throughout her life particularly struggling with Rs and Sh's. It took practice to have the strong voice that she uses today.

Watch this short video and notice how she clearly articulates each word. At age 22, she is the first poet to perform at a Superbowl.

> Click this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ejbSCjg2qo to watch (Embedding is disabled so you have to watch it on YouTube)

Practice These Phrases

Once you have your voice warmed up, voice coach Graham Williamson suggests you practice these phrases. As you speak them, try to keep an even tone and pace as if you were speaking one long word with no break in between.

1. Many men munch many melons.
2. Mandy made marinade in May.
3. Major Mickey's malt makes me merry.
4. My mom's marvelous modern manicure.
5. Mervin Maclean's mess marred my marmalade.

Magnify Your Voice

Having a strong, clear voice is important for speechmaking. The best way to learn to amplify your voice is with practice. Amplify doesn't mean to scream, it means to use the force of your breath and the amplification provided in your mouth to make the sounds strong and clear.

Try talking to your furniture. Right now, look at a chair that you can see and say, "Hello chair." Imagine seeing your words as rays of light traveling to the chair. Now, look out of a window or a door and see an object farther away and try it again. For example, I may look out the window and say, "Hello tree" and imagine my words traveling to the tree. Try this for various objects at varying distances.

Arguably you may feel silly doing this but trust the process and give it a try. Practice with things inside your room and outside your window. Feel the air and notice the difference.

Practice-Changing Your Volume

To practice changing the volume of your voice, Williamson suggests counting exercises. Try to do it in one breath.

1. Count and gradually increase the loudness.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Count and gradually decrease the loudness.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Count and increase the loudness on every 2nd number.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. … on every 3rd number.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. … on every 4th number.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

6. … on every 5th number.

The monotonous speaker not only drones along in the same volume and pitch of tone but always uses the same emphasis, the same speed, the same thoughts—or dispenses with thought altogether.

Monotony: the cardinal and most common sin of the public speaker.
J. Berg Esenwein, *The Art of Public Speaking*

? Yawn to Open Up

1. Yawn a couple of times really big. Feel the back of your throat open when you are yawning.
2. Now try a big yawn, as you exhale close your mouth, let out a sigh. The goal is to open your throat.
3. Focus on the back of your throat opening up. Now yawn right before taking a big breath to open up the back of your throat. Relax your larynx and your head and neck muscles.

TRY IT: Watch the video below for step-by-step instructions.
(Turn up your volume, the video is very quiet).



? Exercise Your Vocal Folds

1. Grab a straw and prepare to try this technique.
2. Put the straw in your mouth, pinch your nose, and hum.

TRY IT: Watch the video below for step-by-step instructions.



Use Pauses

Watch the video and notice how he uses pauses to give the audience time to laugh. He also uses pauses to give the audience time to anticipate what he is going to say next. In those pauses, you can tell that the audience has guessed what is going to happen by their gasps, laughs, and sighs. One person even says, “Oh, no!”

> *Joy is a concept that is very hard to pin down, but you know it when you see it. And I saw the joy in the eyes of my roommate. The dude is clearly excited about something.*



Advanced Vocal Training

All the activities above are for all speakers. For those of you who want to take your vocal training to the next level, watch this video to find your natural range. She references a piano keypad, so I made one available for you.



You can download a virtual piano keyboard here: https://www.onlinepianist.com/virtual-piano

Speak With Power

Avoid Uptalk

Uptalk is where the voice goes up at the end of sentences. To many listeners, uptalk makes the speaker sound uncertain, insecure, and annoying. Within other circles (groups of uptalkers), the use of uptalk may signal that the speaker is "one of us." UK Publisher, Pearson, interviewed 700 managers on the use of uptalk and this is what they found:

- 85% thought it was a "clear indicator of insecurity."
- 70% found uptalk annoying.
- Of those, 50% said that uptalk would hinder the prospect of employees and interviewers.
- 44% stated that they would mark down applicants with uptalk by as much as a third.

The evidence is clear that in professional circles, uptalk can hurt your credibility. Record yourself while giving a speech and listen for uptalk. Start being aware of when you do it in everyday speech.



Avoid Filled Pauses

Um, uh, ok, like, ya know. All of these happen to even the best speakers, but they are distracting. According to one study, recording yourself and listening to your speech is one way to reduce ums. Another trick is to replace the filler word with the word “period” or “pause” in your everyday speech to help your filler awareness.

Why do we use filler words? We use filler words because we are afraid of silence and pauses. As an advanced speaker, you should begin to think of pauses as a purposeful thing you do for emphasis. Eliminating those “ums” will make you sound more organized and confident.

Keep Your Voice Healthy

Public speaking instructor Cathy Hollingsworth em o “start with real words” (not ok, um, or so). In her classes, she even gives students a do-over and allo with a filler (but only if they catch it themselves).

Watch this fun slam poem by the teacher and poet h filler words.



Stay Hydrated.

> *Staying hyd ix hours for the water y before your speech. You ater.*

Limit Alcohol and C

> *Balance alc for each cup of coffee or*

Humidify.

> *Use a humidifier when the air is dry to keep your throat moist.*

Avoid Inhaling Smoke.

> *Do not smoke and avoid second-hand smoke. This also includes avoiding other airborn pollutants as much as possible.*

Occupational Voice Users Often Abuse Their Voices.

When people think about occupational hazards, few people immediately think of voice damage but studies highlight that occupational voice users are at risk. Teachers, preachers, singers, actors, and coaches are all considered high-risk categories. Their voice damage can cause pain, it can reduce their effectiveness at their jobs, and can even result in loss of income. In 2001, it is estimated that 28 million workers experienced voice problems every day. One in three teachers reports a financial loss due to voice problems. "School teachers report problems with their voices 60% of the time in their lifetime and 11% at any given time", according to the Cleveland Clinic. It may be no surprise that some coaches do a lot of yelling. In a survey of 500 soccer coaches, 28% reported having vocal symptoms such as coughing and hoarseness. Pastors are another group who often experience vocal abuse. Fifty-seven percent of Seventh-Day Adventists pastors who were studied experienced voice clearing and hoarseness. Even though Catholic priests do not shout during a homily, they usually use a microphone, and 14% of those pastors studied reported hoarseness, and hindered work life. In summary, for many professionals, their voice is the tool of their trade and it becomes an occupational hazard to abuse their voice.

Protect Your Voice.

Project your voice, don't scream. Avoid vocal extremes. Too much shouting or too much whispering can damage your voice.

Warm Up Your Voice.

Before you give a speech, sing, or teach. Practice humming and gliding.

Resist Dairy. It Makes You Snotty.

Dairy products can thicken mucus and clog you up. When you get excess mucus, you are likely to damage your voice by repeated throat clearing.

Avoid Throat Clearing and Limit Coughing.

Coughing and throat clearing are hard on your voice. Try sipping water or sucking on a non-menthol or non-eucalyptus cough drops. It is better for your voice to cough than to clear your voice multiple times. The need to clear the voice often comes from thick mucus–staying hydrated thins the mucus and reduces the need to clear your voice.

Avoid Speaking from Your Throat

Use your breath to carry your voice. Speak from your core and use your diaphragm to support your breath. If you speak from your throat, your voice will begin to sound raspy, and you will struggle to maintain volume in even a three minute speech.

What Occupations Experience Voice Disorders?

- Teachers
- Sports coaches
- Radio broadcasters
- Wind instrumentalists
- Attorney
- Business professional
- Fitness instructors
- Cyclists/runners
- Telemarketers
- Customer service representatives
- Tour guides
- Music teachers

Unless you are a musician, actor, or speech professional, you may not have thought about how important it is to protect your voice. Everyone should protect their voice–it is precious. Learning to use your voice safely and in a confident manner can benefit you not just in your speech life. In the words of Jen Mueller, American television and radio sports broadcast journalist, "The only way you find your voice is to use it." Now is your time to find it and use it!

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Having a strong voice can help you as a speaker, but it can also help you professionally.
- Do vocal exercises to improve the strength of your voice.
- Using proper air control helps your voice.
- Avoid vocal fillers and uptalk.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Your Speaking Voice
This is a newsletter put out by Toastmasters that talks about vocal quality. A great resource.
https://toastmasterscdn.azureedge.net/medias/files/department-documents/education-documents/199-your-speaking-voice.pdf

? Focus on Varying Your Voice

There are many factors in your voice you should consider when making a speech.

1. Volume
2. Pitch
3. Pace
4. Timbre
5. Tone
6. Prosody
7. Pace
8. Silence

Watch the video below for examples of each of these.





It only takes one voice,
at the right pitch
to start an avalanche.
Dianna Hardy
International Bestselling Author

References

Anderson, C. (2016). *TED Talks: The official TED guide to public speaking*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Barge, J.K. Schlueter, D. W. & Pritchard, A. (2010). The effects of nonverbal communication and gender on impression formation in opening statements. *Southern Communication Journal 54*(4). https://doi.org/10.1080/10417948909372766

Benchley, P. (1974). *Jaws.* Ballantine Books.

Berry, D. (1990). Accuracy in social perception: Contributions of facial and vocal information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 298-307. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.61.2.298

Buchan, V. (1991). *Make presentations with confidence*. Barron's A Business Success Guide. Barron's Educational Series.

Burgoon, J. K., & Hale, J. L. (1988). Nonverbal expectancy violations: Model elaboration and application to immediacy behaviors. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 58 – 79. https://doi.org/ 10.1080/03637758809376158

Byeon H. (2019). The risk factors related to voice disorder in teachers: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *16*(19), 3675. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16193675

Cannon, J. (2019). Public speaking tips: Use a straw by Jimmy Canonn voice coach. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zUCkRfXamM Standard YouTube License.

Carpenter, C.J. (2012). A metanalysis and an experiment investigating the effects of speaker disfluency on persuasion. *Western Journal of Communication, 76*(5). https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2012.662307

Childs, L. (2016). Voice care: Sorting fact from fiction. UT Southwestern Medical Center. https://utswmed.org/medblog/vocal-cords-care-qa/

Christenfeld, N., & Creager, B. (1996). Anxiety, alcohol, aphasia, and ums. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 70 (3)*, 451-60. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.70.3.451

Clements, P. (2013). Five-minute vocal warm-up for actors and public speaking by Page Clements. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eub7MzfsbdM Standard YouTube License.

Cleveland Clinic. (2020). Ten ways to keep your voice healthy and strong. https://health.clevelandclinic.org/10-ways-to-save-your-voice/

Daily Mail. (2014). Want a promotion? Don't speak like an Aussie: Rising in pitch at the end of sentences makes you sound 'insecure' Daily Mail https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2538554/Want-promotion-Dont-speak-like-AUSSIE-Rising-pitch-end-sentences-make-sound-insecure.html

Engstrom, E. (1994). Effects of nonfluencies on speaker's credibility in newscast settings. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 78, 793 – 743. https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1994.78.3.739

Esenwein, J.B. & Carnagie, D. (2015). The art of public speaking. The home correspondence school. https://library.um.edu.mo/ebooks/b17773544.pdf

Fellman, D., & Simberg, S. (2017). Prevalence and risk factors for voice problems among soccer coaches. *Journal of Voice: Official Journal of the Voice Foundation, 31*(1), 121.e9–121.e15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2016.02.003

Gorman, A. (2021). Amanda Gorman Performs at SuperBowl LV. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8PxYIlEGMo Standard YouTube License.

Ibekwe, M.U. (2019). Hoarseness among preachers in Port Harcourt Metropolis. *Otolaryngology Online Journal, 9*, 25-32. (no doi).

Lyon, A. (2017). What is uptalk? [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEfMwri22SM Standard YouTube License.

Mali, T. (2012). Speak with conviction typology poem by Taylor Mali. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp9Hb8LAgqs Standard YouTube License.

Martins, R. H., Pereira, E. R., Hidalgo, C. B., & Tavares, E. L. (2014). Voice disorders in teachers. A review. *Journal of Voice: Official Journal of the Voice Foundation, 28*(6), 716–724. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2014.02.008

Miller, G. R., & Hewgill, M. A. (1963). The effect of variations in nonfluency on audience ratings of source credibility. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 94, 36 – 44. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335636409382644

Montes, C.C., Heinicke, M.R, Guendulain, M.A., & Morales, E. . (2020) A component analysis of awareness training for reducing speech disfluencies. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* 76. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaba.795

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders Information Clearinghouse. (2021) Taking care of your voice. https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/taking-care-your-voice

Neto, F. & Silva, I. & Madeira, A. & Menezes, C. & Goncalves, L. & Navarro, L. (2009). Analysis of the vocal health of the preachers of the Seventh-Day Adventist Churches. *International Archives of Otorhinolaryngology.* 13.

Phyland, D., & Miles, A. (2019). Occupational voice is a work in progress: active risk management, habilitation, and rehabilitation. *Current opinion in otolaryngology & head and neck surgery*, *27*(6), 439–447. https://doi.org/10.1097/MOO.0000000000000584

Jeffers, J. M., & Underwood, G. D. (1993). Enhancing presentation dynamics through voice projection. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, *24*(5), 234-237. https://doi.org/10.3928/0022-0124-19930901-11

Ramasubamanian, A. (2019). The Moth presents Ashok Ramasubamanian. [Video]. YouTube.https://youtu.be/MvyPn0FFPio Standard YouTube License.

Sereno, K. K., & Hawkins, G. J. (1967). The effects of variations in speakers' nonfluency upon audience ratings of attitude toward the speech topic and speakers' credibility. *Speech Monographs*, 34, 58 – 64. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637756709375520

Shellenbarger, S. (2013). Is this how you really talk? Your voice affects others' perceptions; Silencing the screech in the next cubicle. *Wall Street Journal.*
http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323735604578440851083674898

Szymanowskl, A. R., Borst, K. S., & Sataloff, R. T. (2014). Voice disorders in teachers: Examining the problem and evaluating prevention. *Journal of Singing – the Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing*, *71*(2), 201-206.

Tate, A.S. (2021). Here's what poet Amanda Gorman says about her speech and auditory issues: The only thing that can impose my is myself. *Today.* https://www.today.com/parents/poet-amanda-gorman-has-speech-auditory-processing-issues-t206441

Toastmasters (2011). Your speaking voice. https://toastmasterscdn.azureedge.net/medias/files/department-documents/education-documents/199-your-speaking-voice.pdf

Tomlinson, J. M. Jr., Fox Tree, J. E. (2011). Listeners' comprehension of uptalk in spontaneous speech. *Cognition 119*(1), 58–69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2010.12.005

The University of Minnesota. *Communication in the real world.* Creative Commons Open Resource Textbook. https://open.lib.umn.edu/communication/

Treasure, J. (2013). How to Speak so That People Want To Listen by Julliane Treasure. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_how_to_speak_so_that_people_want_to_listen Standard YouTube License.

University of Michigan Medicine. (n.d.). Maintaining vocal health. https://www.uofmhealth.org/conditions-treatments/ear-nose-throat/maintaining-vocal-health

Van Edwards, V. (2017). Can you make your voice sound better? The Science of Vocal Power. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9wvu4ukcOM Standard YouTube License.

Van Edwards, V. (2019). Five vocal warm-up exercises before meetings, speeches, and presentations by Vanessa Van Edwards. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eDcHZZn7hU Standard YouTube License.

Verdolini, K., & Ramig, L. O. (2001). Review: occupational risks for voice problems. *Logopedics, phoniatrics, vocology*, *26*(1), 37–46.

Warren, P. (2016). Uptalk- The phenomenon of rising intonation. Cambridge University Press.

Williamson, G. (2014). Voice projection exercises https://www.sltinfo.com/voice-projection-exercises/.

Weitzberg, E., & Lundberg, J. O. (2002). Humming greatly increases nasal nitric oxide. *American journal of respiratory and critical care medicine*, *166*(2), 144–145. https://doi.org/10.1164/rccm.200202-138BC

Zuckerman, M. and Driver, R.E. (1989). What sounds beautiful is good. The vocal attractiveness stereotype. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 13*, 67-82. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00990791

Zuckerman, M. Hodgins, H. and Miyake, K. (1990). The vocal attractiveness stereotype: Replication and elaboration. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 14*, 97-112. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01670437

Media Attributions

- Generation Z – Finding Its Voice © AM19 - IMF Inspired is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Man drinking water © Damir Spanic

This page titled 2.5: Why Your Voice is the Most Important Part of Your Speech- If They Can't Hear You It is Only a Frustrating Exercise in Lip Reading is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.6: Speaking to a Camera- Making Eye Contact is Key



Zoom in, Zoom out.
But never lose your focus.

Shikha Td, poet

There are many reasons you will need to know how to speak to a camera.

1. You are in an online class and you have to record your speech to submit it.
2. You are making a conference presentation and the conference is online.
3. You are in a Zoom/Teams (or other online) meeting.
4. You are making a career presentation as part of a job interview.
5. You are a teacher/trainer doing remote training.
6. You are a businessperson making pitches online.

Let's face it, the pandemic elevated the need for video meetings and presentations, and it is likely they are here to stay. Many businesses are doing interviews remotely and several have moved to online platforms for training. This chapter will talk about best practices for using a camera in a live online format and in a recorded and then playback format.

Understand the Context

The first thing you need to do is fully understand the context. Will you be recording and uploading, or will you present live? Is this a one-time presentation? Will this presentation be recorded so others can see it online? All these factors will make a difference.

Check Your Light

Make sure you have adequate lighting.

1. Never be in front of a window where you are backlit.
2. Always have adequate lighting on your face.
3. Use a lamp or lighting system to light your face and adjust it properly.
4. If you use a ring light, try bouncing it off the ceiling so you do not get light rings in your pupils.
5. Avoid using an overhead light because it casts shadows under your eyes.

Check your Camera

I once made a 30-minute video recording of a lecture to realize later that I didn't have the equipment set up correctly. The sound was not recorded. I was so frustrated because I had to do the entire thing over again. Avoid my mistake and record a test segment and then make sure it works before you record too much of your speech. Look at the playback and consider whether the lighting is good enough for the audience to see your face.

If you have an important conference on Zoom or Teams, check your equipment beforehand. The first time I taught online, I practiced with my family. I practiced making the slides work, checking the microphone, the lighting, and the camera angle. Most accounts will allow you to sign up for a temporary free account if you need to practice outside of school or work.

Check the Sound

Record yourself speaking for a minute and then play it back. Is the sound OK? Can the audience hear you clearly? If not, adjust your microphone. Sometimes the sound echoes in the room or there are too many background noises. Make sure your audio is clear

and there is very little interference.

Some setups work better using a headset and microphone and some computers and cell phones work well with the main microphone. In many programs, you can go in through settings and adjust to the sound.

Check for Interferences

I had a student give his speech using his computer and he set his phone on the desk beside his laptop. He kept getting audio notifications beeping throughout his speech. It was very distracting. Turn off notifications or turn off your cell phone entirely. If you are working from home, tell your roommates, siblings, and friends you will need the space to be quiet. Closing the window and closing the door can help keep out some ambient sound.

Put the Video Camera at or Above Eye Level

This may mean you set your laptop on a stack of books, or you readjust your web camera on your desktop. However it is accomplished, make sure the camera is level or a little higher than your eyes. The most common mistake that I see is when someone leans the laptop lid back making it look like the camera is looking up the nose of the speaker.

Look Directly into the Camera

Eye contact is established when you look at the camera directly. If it helps, draw a smiley face and put it on your camera to remind you to look in the “eyes” of your audience.



Think About Where to Put the Note Cards

Tape your note cards to the top of your computer screen or hang them on something behind your computer. Place your cards so you never have to look down to see your notes.

Frame the Shot

Depending on the type of speech, you want to frame your head or do a 3/4 shot. It is best to frame the shot so the audience can see your gestures.

3/4 Shot

Notice how Senator Elizabeth Warren uses the 3/4 shot so you can see her gestures. Notice how she looks directly into the camera.



Head Shot

President Barack Obama gave his speech with a headshot frame. Notice how his great “eye contact” make it look like he is talking to you directly.



Stand Don’t Sit (If possible)

You should read the situation on this one, but if in doubt stand. You will have better air support if you are standing. You will also gesture more freely.

Gesture

You should have open gestures. If you do a tight headshot, you will not see your gestures, so you need to pull the camera back and gesture higher.

Fix the Camera Zoom in One Place

If you are having a friend record you with a handheld device, make sure that the zoom is kept in one place. Sometimes bored camera operators will zoom in and out making for a very unprofessional recording.

Plan the Ending

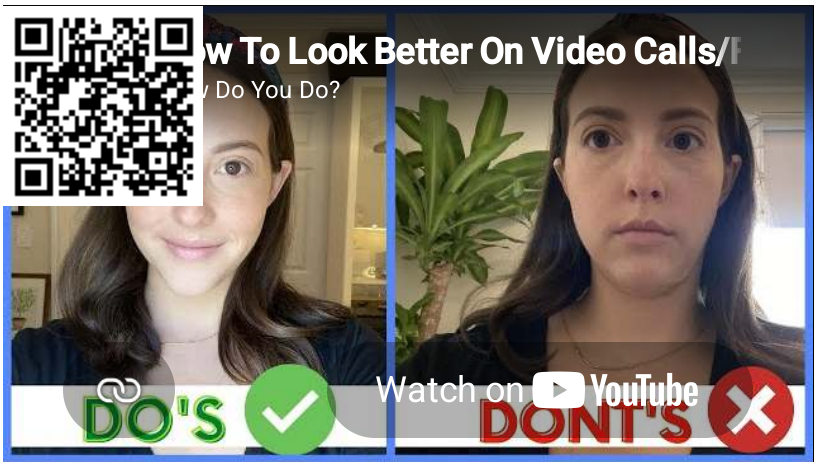
Your ending will leave a lasting impression so do not leave it to chance. Plan out the exact last words and then resist the temptation to tack on any last comments. Speech endings are always challenging, they are even more difficult online.

Edit the Video

If you are recording your video in advance to be played back later. Edit the part where your arm reaches up to turn on and turn off your recording device. If appropriate, use the feature that allows you to put words on the screen if important words or concepts are

relevant.

Here is a video I found helpful (mostly) about lighting setup and camera placement. I particularly like her advice to wear pants.



During the 2020 pandemic when many things went viral, Toastmasters held its speech contests virally. Notice how this creative speaker made the most of the situation to earn him the first-place win.



Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Always check your equipment: Camera, microphone, lighting.
- Make “eye contact” by looking into your camera.
- Adjust your camera so it is eye level or slightly above eye level.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Carlucci, C. (2020). How to look better on video calls/facetime/Zoom. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ppTAA-1tm0 Standard YouTube License.

Carr, M. (2020). 2020 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking: Mike Carr. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA7awoBxBxc Standard YouTube License.

Obama, B. (2020). President Barack Obama's commencement speech to class of 2020 | Full Speech [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTFWC1PiLVE Standard YouTube License.

National Speech and Debate Association. (2019). Senator Elizabeth Warren Celebrates National Speech and Debate Education Day! [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYNO7cAzuYQ Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Talking to computer camera © Beci Harmony is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Writing on notes © Magnet Me is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 2.6: Speaking to a Camera- Making Eye Contact is Key is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.7: Delivery Methods- Which One Should I Use?



There are many ways to deliver your speech. Each one has some specific things to know. In this chapter, we will cover impromptu speaking, extemporaneous speaking, manuscript speaking, memorized presentation, and finally group or team presentations.

Impromptu

- Ray, corporate will be here in five minutes and I want you to walk them through the proposal.
- Jade, would you give a toast to the partners in a few minutes?
- Alex, the speaker is going to be 15 minutes late, would you go out and talk about some related topic until she gets here.
- I have a few people here who need a quick brush up on how to use features of Microsoft Teams, do you have a minute to show them?
- I think I want to buy this computer but I'm not sure if it is right for me, would you demonstrate how to log onto Zoom with it?
- Our political candidate has asked that you go to the Farmer's Market and talk with constituents about his beliefs about the upcoming zoning changes.
- Javantee, at today's business meeting, could you tell us about the progress your team is making on project X?
- Eve, would you give your testimony at Bible study in a few minutes.
- Mr. Davidson, the reporter will be here in two minutes to take your statement about the opening.
- We will be asking you questions at the end of your presentation if that is OK with you.

It is likely that each of you reading this book will be called to give an impromptu speech in your life. It is that sudden and often unexpected call to give a speech. In public speaking classrooms and in speech clubs, a topic is offered, and you have a few minutes to prepare.

Steps to Success in an Impromptu Speech

1. Breathe. Often the call to give a speech will catch you off guard. Take a deep breath, fill your body full of wonderful idea-giving, stress-reducing oxygen.
2. Jot down a few quick ideas.
3. If time, write down three solid points on the topic.
4. Always figure out what your first three words will be. Never let your first words be, "Ok, so um".
5. Plan your last sentence. If you do not have a plan to end and end strong, you will find yourself rambling in search of an ending.

? Impromptu Like a Pro

- To put the "Advanced" into your public speaking, use strong signposts. " I have three points to tell you today," "point one," "point two," "point three," "Now that I have given you three things to consider."
- As with all speaking, you should plan the first three words and the last three words to be strong and impactful.

Extemporaneous Speech

Extemporaneous speaking is speaking with brief notes and careful practice. When doing this type of speech, you have written most of the main ideas of your speech in an outline, but the speech is delivered from brief notes. The main ideas are developed but the

exact wording of the point is decided at the moment.

The advantage of this type of speaking is you can prepare, plan, and practice. Not having every word scripted helps the speech feel fresh, alive, and real. In addition, the fact every single word isn't written allows you wiggle room to add new information that seems relevant during the speech. It also can provide a buffer if you mess up. Since it is not scripted, it is easier to pick up and recover.

Steve Johnson who gave a Ted Talk on *Where Good Ideas Come* gave this commentary on why he decided not to memorize his speech:

> *In all of my TED talks, I very deliberately did not memorize them, precisely because the audience can hear memorized text very clearly, and it takes awas from the spontaneous, engaged nature of speaking to a live audience. The other problem with a memorized speech is that when it fails, it fails catastrophically. If you're just talking, following a rough outline, if you slip up a bit and forget a small piece, it's barely noticeable to anyone but you. But if you're reciting something from memory and draw a blank, you're likely to freeze with nowhere to go. It's like your mental teleprompter has frozen.*

Steps to Success in an Extemporaneous Speech

The process for developing an extemporaneous speech is as follows:

1. Think of a topic.
2. Create a thesis statement/ big idea.
3. Research your topic.
4. Outline your speech with a pattern appropriate to the topic and audience.
5. Prepare clear preview and review statements at the opening and closing of your speech where you state and restate the main purpose of your speech.
6. Add a clear opening and closing statement.
7. Create brief notecards from your outline.
8. Deliver the speech in a conversational manner with good eye contact and body movement that enhances the topic and your credibility.

The key advantage of extemporaneous speaking is it tends to feel more natural.

Salman Khan, of Khan Academy learning programs, made several TED Talks on educational principles and says,

> *I personally tend to list out bullet points of what I want to talk about and try communicating those ideas in my natural language as if I'm talking to friends at a dinner table. The key is to keep your mind focused and let the words fall out. The audience knows when you are thinking about what you are saying versus when you have just memorized a script.*

✔ Extemporaneous –Always Have This Speech Ready to Go

There are a few speeches that you should always have ready to go

- **Elevator Speech**-Imagine you are taking an elevator ride with the person that you want to work for, give you a loan, do research with, partner with and you have only one minute to convince them to talk with you.
- **Corporate Story**-If you are in business, you should have your corporate story ready to go in a one to two minute speech. This speech should tell people who you are and what you believe.

Memorized

In the early days of rhetoric, students would learn the art of speaking by memorizing the speeches of others and delivering them in public places. The Greek rhetors placed a great emphasis on the skill of memorization and it is even considered one of the canons

of rhetoric. The most common times you will see a speech memorized is for toast speeches and acceptance speeches. After all, it ruins the moment if you have a wine glass in one hand toasting the groom and your speech notes in the other. Memorizing your toast helps you to be in the moment. In addition, many sales companies require their salespeople to memorize the company sales script. These tested formulas often pay off in larger sales, so they expect associates to deliver word-per-word scripts in their sales presentations. Some politicians have memorized stump speeches or at least memorized answers to standard questions.

While not as prevalent as it was in ancient Greek and Rome, memorized speeches are making a comeback. The biggest place of resurgence is on the Ted stage. Chris Anderson, Ted Talk curator said, “Many of our best and most popular TED Talks have been memorized word for word.”

TED speaker and voice artist Rives says,

> *I memorize the s#@! out of it. I memorize the talk until the talk is like a tune. I workshop the talk in my mouth. I run it fast and slow, singsong and stentorian, cool and cooler. I rehearse the talk until I’m performing the talk, not remembering it.*

Pamela Meyer, TED speaker says,

> *You haven’t really memorized your talk thoroughly until you can do an entire other activity that requires mental energy while giving your talk. Can you give your talk while measuring out the ingredients to make brownies?*

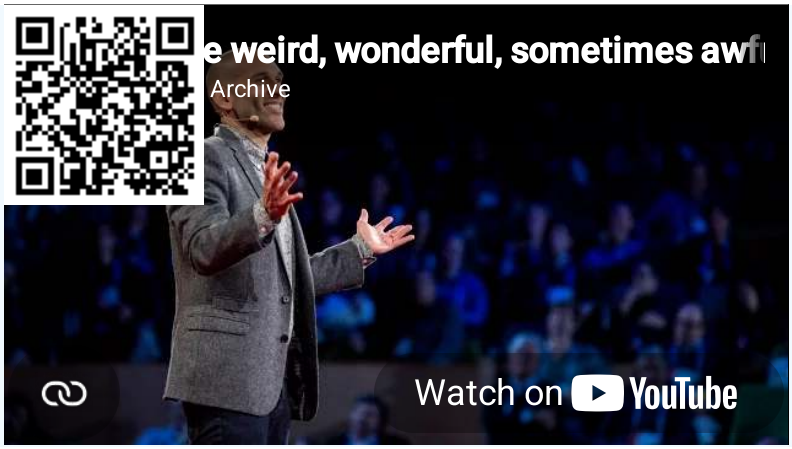
The advantage of memorizing your speech is you can plan every word making the most of your speech time. Not having to look at notes frees you up to make good eye contact. The disadvantage of memorizing your speech is you might not sound fresh and your audience may perceive it more as a performance than a speech. Some speakers take on a machine gun tone with their voice giving away the memorized format. Sometimes eye contact is lost as the speaker reads off the “invisible notecard in the sky.” The biggest disadvantage is that you risk going blank and forgetting what to say.

If you do decide to memorize your speech, be sure you know it well. TED curator, Chris Anderson says, “Most people go through what I call the ‘valley of awkwardness,’ where they haven’t quite memorized the talk. If they give the talk while stuck in that valley, the audience will sense it … Getting past this point is simple, fortunately. It’s just a matter of rehearsing enough times that the flow of words becomes second nature. It is important,” according to Anderson ” that, you are not supposed to recite your talk, you’re supposed to live it. Embody it. It must come across as if you are sharing these ideas for the first time.”

Have a backup plan. If you decide to memorize your talk, keep a notecard in your pocket. If you forget what to say, pause and say, “Let me refer to my notes” and then pull them out or pause for a moment and have a sip of water. No matter how well you know your talk, have a backup plan.

✔ Examples

> *After all the memorization work I’d done, performing this speech felt like swinging a racquet or shooting a basketball, like dancing a routine you know perfectly. The speech had become a literal part of me, encoded in the neural connections of my brain. Memorization, I realized, is a place where the mind learns to cope with the body. Consciously, we want to remember something, but that’s not sufficient to embed information in the networks of the brain. We have to earn the memories we want.*
>
> *Alexis Madrigal. What Memorizing a Ted Talk Did for My Brain*



Memory Techniques

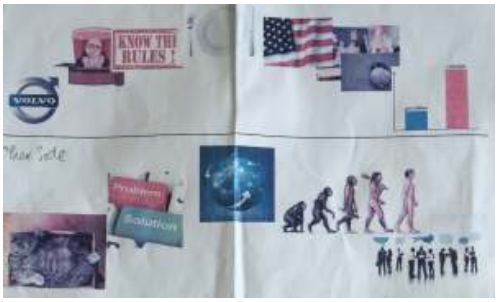
Greek poet Simonides of Ceos is the first recorded use of the method of loci (loci being Latin for places). It is more recently called the memory palace. If you have ever watched BBC's Sherlock, you may have noticed that Sherlock uses the memory palace to remember things. Individuals who compete in memory competitions often use the memory palace or memory journey technique to remember long lists of times–Clemons Mayer memorized 1040 random digits by using a 300-point journey through his house and Gary Shang used the technique to memorize pi to 65,536 digits. Brain scans of these super memorizers show the region of the brain involved with spatial awareness is activated when using this technique.

So how does it work? In short, this technique suggests that you remember things in familiar spatial environments. For example, you might imagine each part of your speech being located in one of your kitchen cabinets. When you open the cabinet door, you can see the speech part. Speaker Irina Elena Antonescu found images and cut and pasted them on big sheets of paper in a kind of journey to help her memorize her talk. Heather Hanson learned from Grandmaster of Memory, Nishant Kasibhatla how to think in pictures and how to find pictures that make sense to her in some way.



> *I'll show you how it works. This picture illustrates my third speaking point on listening. In my mind, the rainbow was cascading down on the audience from the first-floor balcony while I spoke of the beautiful variety of English accents. Then, the colors turned into speech bubbles floating over everyone's heads with all their different sounds as I talked about how accents work.*
>
> *The bubbles popped and turned into music notes as I remembered to elaborate on tone and emphasis until a huge donkey showed up and started eating the music notes. That reminded me to tell everyone not to be an "ass" and not to make "ass"umptions about the way people speak (I didn't use those words, of course, but that's actually what I was thinking). Then, the donkey looked right at me and his eyes popped out of his head! He was wearing accented contact lenses, which reminded me to talk about how we need more contact with different varieties of accented English. Suddenly, it was incredibly easy to remember my talk!*
> *Heather Hansen*

> *Read the whole article at https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/memorization-trick-saved-my-tedx-talk-heather-hansen/*



In the video *How to Memorize and Give a Speech Without Notes*, Jim Kwik gives a step-by-step tutorial to apply this to memorizing a speech.



Manuscript

There will be times when reading from a manuscript is helpful. When giving a eulogy you are likely to experience strong emotions. Having your words written out will be very helpful. Politicians often speak from manuscripts because there will be people weighing the meaning of each word. They often have speech writers who take their ideas and make them sound fancy and they likely have several people help them omit words that might offend.

The advantage to speaking with a manuscript is you have your speech in front of you giving you an opportunity to plan interesting wordplays and advanced language techniques. Another advantage to a manuscript is you can share your speech with others. For example, many people like to have written copies of the toast given to them at a special occasion or family members might want to keep a copy of the eulogy. Politically speaking, a manuscript can be helpful to help keep you on track and make sure you only say things you meant to say.

The disadvantage to a manuscript is if not done properly, your speech may feel like merely an “essay with legs.” Speaking from a manuscript is a skill. I would argue that it is one of the most difficult of all the delivery types because your goal is to read without appearing to read. It can be so tempting to lock your eyes on the page where it is safe and to never look up. Speakers who lack the skill of manuscript reading will have very little eye contact. It is usually sporadic and rarely long enough to lock eyes with anyone in the audience. Finally, it is very difficult for most people to make gestures when reading a manuscript. Many people run their hands down the page to keep their place and worse yet, many speakers clutch both hands over the podium and never let go.

There is an entire chapter written on how to use a manuscript

Group or Team Speech

Several years ago, I was on a charter bus headed to teaching camp. I often use that time to learn more about other teachers and their specialties. This time the person seated next to me was a professor from the Walton School of Business. I asked him, “In your opinion, in what area are students not properly prepared when it comes to communicating in a corporate environment.” He said,

"Group presentations." He went on to explain that the model in most speech classes is four people each prepare a speech on a similar topic and then one at a time, they stand up and give their speech. They may share slides and put them all together, but often there is not a lot of group in a group speech. He said, "That is not a group speech in the real world where each person plays to their strengths. In that setting, team members talk for different amounts of time. In the presentation, they tag team, they interact, and they are involved with the content from the other group members. The whole thing looks like a seamless presentation, not four speeches glued together by a shared slideshow.

Once I was working on a team presentation with another teacher. Originally, we had the typical I talk for five minutes and then she talks for five minutes set up, but then we decided there was no team in that model. We reworked the presentation where she might present a point, and then I might give some supplemental information on a point and one of us would introduce the next point. Since there was a lot of turn-takings, we coded our slides by putting a red dot or a blue dot in the corner of the slide to remind us of whose turn it was to present. One person held the clicker and we had practice signals to know when to advance. We even had it worked out where when one person would talk, the other person would walk around and be ready to give out handouts or to ask an interactive question to the audience. We worked as a unified team moving towards the goal of educating teachers about how to talk about difficult subjects in the college classroom.

Steps to Success in a Group Speech

1. **Everyone Should Know All the Content.** One of the big mistakes I see in college presentations, it that students put everything together last minute and each speaker is not aware of what the others are saying. They may use a shared document to make an outline, but each person adds the content so late the others do not have time to read and respond. Inevitably, two presenters have the same information. The second person who presents finds themselves in the awkward position of saying, "Like Joe already said, repeated fact." For group speeches to work, group members must share content early and they need to, not only share the content in a document, but they also need to practice together.
2. **Nonspeaking Group Members Can Be Distracting.** You need to plan what the nonspeaking group members are doing when they are not speaking. Are they sitting, standing, walking around? Are they in view of the audience? During a group presentation at the university, I had the students unwisely decide to stand in front of the class in a line and then take turns speaking down the line. The third speaker got bored, so he grabbed a marker and started drawing a cartoon on the whiteboard while his group member was talking. I've also seen groups where they didn't manage facial expressions and looked genuinely surprised by a fact the speaker said or looked very angry by the information that clearly was tacked on by one of their team members last minute.
3. **Dead Air Kills.** When I worked as a radio DJ, we had the phrase, "Dead air kills." Which meant if the DJ didn't properly time one song to lead into the next or if there was even a short pause before the commercial, the DJ would lose your audience. A brief pause might even lead to the listeners changing the channel. When working with groups, the time it takes for each speaker to stand, to speak, or to get their notes ready can result in dead air. Work towards a seamless presentation and practice the timing and logistics of how to get from one speaker to the next.
4. **Transitions Keep Things Seamless**. Each speaker should give a transition that clearly connects their speech to the next speaker, "I told you about the culture of Mexico, now Yazan will tell you about the food."
5. **Slides Should Be Consistent.** They should be consistent in the background, headings, photos, and font. For example, one person has high-quality photos for the slides while the other group member has cheesy uncentered clip art. Make sure each person knows and has access to the whole slide show. Oftentimes, one person will be responsible for making the slides for the group. If that is the case, make sure the slide show is done before the deadline so each team member can proof the slides and practice with the slides.
6. **Start and End Strong.** There should be a grabber to get the attention of the topic and there should be a thesis/preview that includes all the subtopics of the speech. At the end of the speech, you should restate the thesis/review and give a strong closing statement.

In summary, there are many considerations when picking a way to deliver a speech. The context of the speech, the need for precision or flexibility, and the personal preference of the speaker will all influence which delivery method works best.

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

There are several ways to deliver speeches each with advantages and disadvantages. It is important to pick your delivery mode based on audience, occasion, and personal style preference.

- Impromptu
- Extemporaneous
- Memorize
- Manuscript
- Group Presentation

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Hansen, H. (2018). The memorization trick that saved my TEDx talk. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/memorization-trick-saved-my-tedx-talk-heather-hansen/

Jameson, S. (2005). Reading for college PowerPoint. Drew University. https://www.nwmissouri.edu/trio/pdf/sss/study/Reading-for-college.pdf

Madrigal, A. (2016). The weird, wonderful, sometimes awful world of bots. TED Talk. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUosXSJf-9E Standard YouTube License.

Maguire, E.A., Valenrine, E.R., Wilding, J.M., & Kapur, N. (2002). Routes to remembering the brains behind superior memory. *Nature Neuroscience. 6 (1): 90–95. doi: 10.1038/nn988. PMID: 12483214.*

Memory Town System for Languages – Memory Techniques Wiki https://artofmemory.com/wiki/Main_Page

Raz, A., Packard, M.G., Alexander, G.M., Bulhe, J.T., Zhu, H, Yu, S. & Peterson, B.S. (2009). A slice of π An exploration neuroimaging study of digit encoding and retrieval in a superior memorist. *Neurocase. 15 (5): 361–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/13554790902776896*

Stout, S. Eulogy to Papa with the Theme of Dancing. Delivered in Lynn Meade's Advanced Public Speaking Class at the University of Arkansas. Used with permission.

van As, T. Tribute to Nelson Mandela. Delivered in Lynn Meade's Advanced Public Speaking Class at the University of Arkansas. Used with permission.

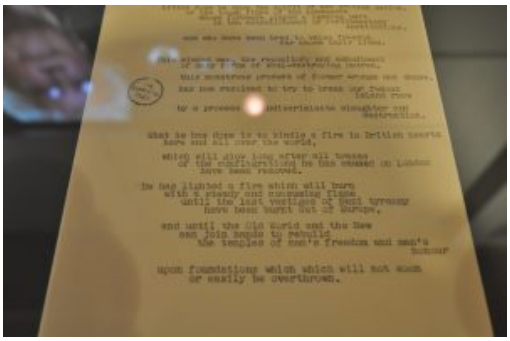
Winfrey, O. Eulogy to Rosa Parks. A slice of π An exploration neuroimaging study of digit encoding and retrieval https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cfhtfNfIPE Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Woman at computer © AllGo - An App For Plus Size People is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Memory 2 © Heather Hansen is licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution NonCommercial NoDerivatives) license
- Memory © Heather Hansen is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 2.7: Delivery Methods- Which One Should I Use? is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.8: Speaking from a Manuscript- How to Read and not Look Like You Are Reading



How to Write and Use Manuscripts

There will be times when reading from a manuscript is helpful. When giving a eulogy and you are likely to experience strong emotions, having your words written out and in front of you will be very helpful. Politicians often speak from manuscripts because there will be people weighing the meaning of each word. They often have speech writers who take their ideas and make them sound professional, and they likely have several people look it over for any offensive words or questionable phrases.

The advantage to speaking with a manuscript is you have your speech in front of you giving you an opportunity to plan interesting wordplays and advanced language techniques. By managing the exact wording, you can better control the emotional tone. Another advantage to a manuscript is you can share your speech with others both for proofing and for reference. For example, many people like to have written copies of the toast given to them at a special occasion or a copy of the eulogy to the loved one. Politically speaking, a manuscript can be helpful to help keep you on track and to help you say only the things that you mean to say.

The disadvantage to a manuscript is if not done properly, your speech may feel like merely an "essay with legs." Speaking from a manuscript is a skill. I would argue that it is one of the most difficult of all types because your goal is to read without appearing to read. It can be so tempting to lock your eyes on the page where it is safe without ever looking up at the audience. Speakers who lack the skill of manuscript reading will have very little eye contact and when they look up it will be in only short bursts–rarely long enough to lock eyes with anyone in the audience. Finally, it is very difficult for most people to gesture when reading a manuscript. Many people run their hands down the page to keep their place while others clutch the podium and never let go.

? Keys to Using a Manuscript

- Always write a manuscript in manuscript format and never in essay format.
- Practice with your manuscript at a podium so you can work on how to change pages.
- Learn the art of eye fixations.
- Practice with a friend so you can master eye contact.
- If you struggle with gestures, make a note on your manuscript to remind you to gesture.
- Practice, practice, practice–you should actually practice more than in a typical speech since it is a harder delivery method.

? Formatting a Manuscript

- Do not start a sentence on one page and then finish it on another.
- Do not fold the manuscript–it won't lay flat on the podium.
- Do not print on both sides of the page.
- Do not staple the manuscript
- Number your page.
- Write it in a large font and then make it one size larger than you need.
- It should look like poetry.
- Have extra spaces between every main idea.
- Bold the first word of every main section.
- Use /// or …. to indicate pauses in your speech.
- Bold or make the font larger when you want to emphasize a word.

- If you have a parallel construction where you repeat the same word bold or underline the repeated word.
- Pick an easy-to-read font.
- Make a note (SLIDE) when you need to change your slide.
- It is more important to write it like you will speak it than to include commas and periods.
- It is OK to omit punctuation.
- Do whatever formatting works best for you.

Sample manuscripts

Notice how this student formats her manuscript by making it spread out and easy to read:

Today // it is an honor for me to stand here before you
at the Freedom Banquet
and pay tribute to a man

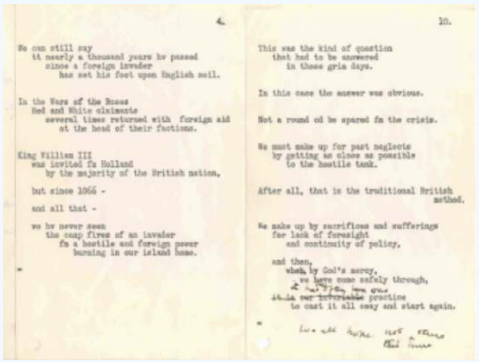
that in his lifetime
has touched
and changed
uncountable lives across the globe

Today /// we are here to honor
a president,
a father,
a husband
and a true savior
in Mr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

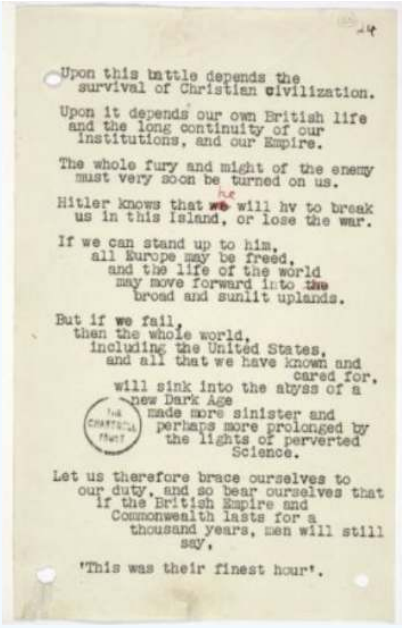
Tribute speech by Tanica van As delivered at the University of Arkansas

---

Manuscripte From History



Winston Churchill's Speech in Response to German's Invasion of Britain



Upon this battle depends the
survival of Christian civilization.

Upon it depends our own British life
and the long continuity of our
institutions, and our Empire.

The whole fury and might of the enemy
must very soon be turned on us.

Hitler knows that he will hv to break
us in this Island, or lose the war.

If we can stand up to him,
all Europe may be freed,
and the life of the world
may move forward into the
broad and sunlit uplands.

But if we fail,
then the whole world,
including the United States,
and all that we have known and
cared for,
will sink into the abyss of a
new Dark Age
made more sinister and
perhaps more prolonged by
the lights of perverted
Science.

Let us therefore brace ourselves to
our duty, and so bear ourselves that
if the British Empire and
Commonwealth lasts for a
thousand years, men will still
say,

'This was their finest hour'.

Winston Churchill's Speech in Response
to German's Invasion of Britain and Finest Hour Speech

Sometimes referred to as the Psalms format or free verse format,
the speech is written like it will be spoken.

How to Present with a Manuscript

To best read a manuscript, we need to borrow some items from speed reading. When you were first learning to read, you learned to read each letter–D–O–G. You would look at the letter "D," then your eyes would look at the letter "O, " and finally, your eyes would move over to look at the letter "G." You would fixate (or rest) your eyes on three different places. Eventually, you got better at reading and better at seeing, so you would now look at DOG in one eye fixation and your brain was able to take in the information–dog. Now, you no longer read one letter at a time, that would be way too slow, now you can take in the whole word at once.

Over time, you have even learned bigger words–like "communication" (13 letters). Now, consider this… the phase "The dog ran fast" contains 13 letters. Since you can see the word "communication" as one eye fixation and understand it then, in theory, your eyes should be able to see "the dog ran fast" as one eye fixation and understand it too. We have been trained to look at each word individually with separate eye fixations …the … dog… ran… fast… is four different eye fixations. With a little practice, you can train your eyes to see the whole phrase with one look. Here are some sentences, practice looking at each of the sentences with one eye fixation.

I ate the red apple

My car is green

My cat is moody

You tried it didn't you? You can only learn if you try them out. With practice, you can look at an entire sentence as one thing (eye fixation). Your brain can understand all those words as one thought. Now, try this. Wherever you are right now, look up at the wall nearest you and then look back down. Write down all the things you can recall about what you saw–I saw a yellow wall with brown trim, two bookcases, a clock, a printer, a bird statue. Your brain is amazing; it can look up to a wall and in one eye fixation, it can take in all that it sees.

You can take in many sentences as well, try to look down at these next two sentences in one eye fixation and then look up and say them out loud.

The boy sang a song

The girl danced along

With a little practice, most people can see chunks of five words across and three lines down. Give it a try. Once again, try to look at the three sentences as one and then look up and say them.

The happy frog leaped

off the lily pad

and into the cool water

It takes practice, but you can do it. The bonus feature of doing the practice and learning this skill is you will learn to read faster. Since a lot of college work and professional preparation relies on reading the information, it would benefit you for the rest of your life to learn this valuable skill. While researching, I came across this excellent slide presentation by Sanda Jameson on Reading for College that goes into more depth about the process. I highly recommend you review it to help you with your manuscript reading and to help you become a better reader in your college classes.

https://www.nwmissouri.edu/trio/pdf/sss/study/Reading-for-college.pdf

By now, you have figured out that using chunking and working on eye fixations is going to help you read your manuscript easier. Arranging your manuscript where you have only five to seven words on a line will make it easier to see as one fixation. Organizing your manuscript where you can see several lines of text at once, can help you put a lot of information in one eye fixation.

Now, let's look at a eulogy written by one of my students, Sydney Stout. She wrote this eulogy to her grandpa who loved dancing and encouraged her to do the same. First, notice the manuscript format where it is written like it will be spoken. It is chunked into lines that are usually 5-7 words long. The list of names is written like a stair step showing the stair step in the voice when the names are spoken. Try reading this except out loud focusing on eye fixations. Try to see one whole line at a time and then read it again trying to see two lines at a time.

Dancing is a delicate art

An activity many people love and enjoy

but someone that loves dancing

more than anyone I know

is my grandfather.

You all know my grandfather

Maybe you know him as James

Jack

Dad

Papa Jack

or in my case……. just Papa.

Papa // you have led me through life

like any **great dance partner** should

And I've memorized the steps you've taught me

And they have allowed me to dance

gracefully

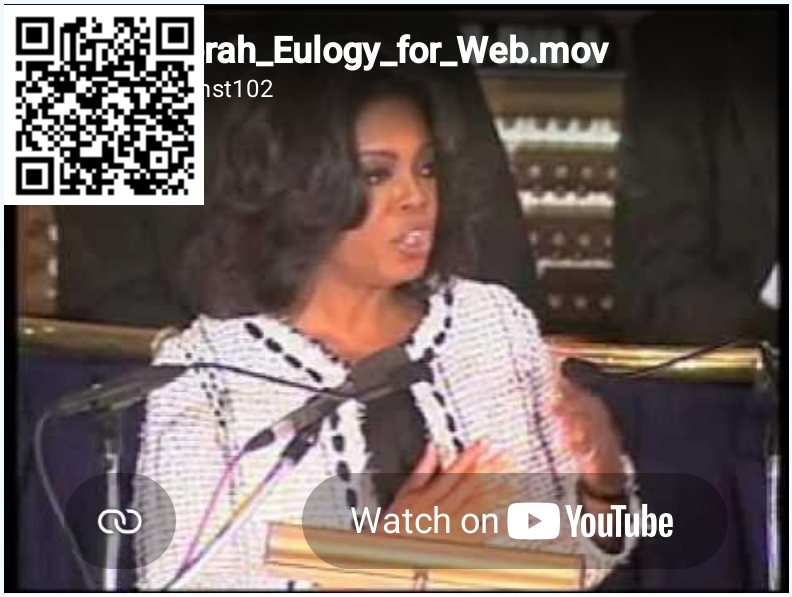
through my own life

Tribute speech by Sydney Stout delivered at the University of Arkansas

✔ Examples

Watch this eulogy speech to Rosa Parks by Oprah Winfrey. Notice how each word is carefully chosen and how if you notice closely, you can tell that she is using a manuscript. Notice how seamlessly she turns the pages and notice how she spends most

of her time looking up at the audience.



Timing Your Manuscript

Be sure to practice using your manuscript at least 5 to 7 times. It is harder to speak with a manuscript than it is to give a speech with brief notes.

Use this chart as a reference for how long your speech will be and then time yourself on several of your run-throughs.

390 words in a 3- minute speech
650 words in a 5- minute speech
1300 words in a 10- minute speech
For More http://www.speechinminutes.com/

A Speech Saved the President's Life



The speech that saved Teddy Roosevelt

Teddy Roosevelt's life was saved when an assassin's bullet was slowed down by his 50 paged speech manuscript. The doctor on sight determined that while the bullet didn't his lungs, he should still go to the hospital immediately. A determined Roosevelt balked and said, "You get me to that speech." He delivered a 50-minute speech before going to the hospital. Doctors decided it was safer to leave the bullet in his chest and that his speech had indeed saved his life.

More on this story from the history channel:

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Klein, C. (2019). When Teddy Roosevelt was shot in 1912, a speech may have saved his life.

Speech in minutes.(n.d.). http://www.speechinminutes.com/

Stout, S. (n.d.). Eulogy to Papa with the theme of dancing. Delivered in Lynn Meade's Advanced Public Speaking Class at the University of Arkansas. Used with permission.

Van As, T. (n.d.) Tribute to Nelson Mandela. Delivered in Lynn Meade's Advanced Public Speaking Class at the University of Arkansas. Used with permission.

Winfrey, O. (2010). Eulogy to Rosa Parks. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cfhtfNfIPE Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Winston Churchill's Manuscript is licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution NonCommercial NoDerivatives) license
- Winston Churchill's Speech in Response to German's Invasion of Britain
- Winston Churchill Finest Hour Speech
- Teddy's speech © Janine Eden, Eden Pictures is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 2.8: Speaking from a Manuscript- How to Read and not Look Like You Are Reading is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Presentation Aids for Speech

3.1: Props- It is More Than Just Setting Stuff on a Table

3.2: Don't Ruin a Great Presentation with Terrible Slides

3.3: Data Visualization- Using Statistics, Numbers, and Charts Without Boring Your Audience

---

This page titled 3: Presentation Aids for Speech is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.1: Props- It is More Than Just Setting Stuff on a Table



“Cooking Demo with Chef Maurice”

There are many types of presentation aids to help your audience understand your message. Learning to speak while working with a prop can be challenging. The speaker must maintain a connection with the audience visually while working with an object. Used well, a prop can help engage your audience and can help them understand.
When thinking about using a prop, the most important thing you should consider is “Does my prop add value to my speech?” In this chapter, I will talk about the types of props, why you should use props, and then give you some best practices for using props. Most of this chapter is dedicated to showing you creative ways to use props.

Why Use Props?

- To engage the audience
- To focus attention
- To make your message more memorable
- To retain the audience’s attention
- To emotionally impact the audience
- To break away from using slides
- To help the audience understand
- To demonstrate how to do things

Best Practices on How to Use Props

Select your props with care.

- Ensure they are large enough to be seen.
- Proofread/check for errors (often better to get a different set of eyes on them as you may gloss over the errors).
- Make sure your prop is not offensive.
- Consider how you will carry your prop to and from the speaking venue.
- Make sure your prop is not offensive.
- Consider set-up and take-down time (if working with food, glue, or other messy items, bring wipes and a trash bag).

Practice with your props.

- Work to seamlessly integrate the prop (it shouldn’t look like someone told you that you had to use a prop).
- Be able to smoothly show and put away your prop.
- Have a plan for how to hide the prop until you need it.
- Make eye contact with your audience while working with your prop.
- Place your prop where you can easily reach it.
- In demonstration speeches, make sure everything is opened (it is hard to open cream cheese while speaking).
- If working with food, glue, or other messy items, bring wipes and a trash bag.
- Put the prop away after using it.

Have a backup plan in case the prop does not work.

- Bring tape in case you have to hang something up.
- Have whiteboard markers in case you need to write on the board.
- Practice with a clicker and your prop so you know how to work them together.

Additional Thoughts on Props

- Include reminders on your notecards for when to use the prop.
- If your prop involves a volunteer, make sure they know what is expected.
- Do not pass items around for the audience to see, it is too distracting.

Types of Props

- Posters
- Charts
- Physical objects
- Videos
- Clothing
- Equipment
- Whiteboard
- Flipchart
- Sound equipment
- Projection Slides (See Chapter on Presentation Slides)

How and Why to Use Props

Props Enhance Your Message

Notice how Jill Bolte Taylor uses an actual human brain to enhance understanding and to engage the audience.

Time to watch: 2:20-4:00



Props Help Demonstrate How Something Works

It can be difficult to envision how things work with only an explanation. In this speech, Michael Pritchard not only tells us, but he also demonstrates for us how the water filter works. He starts by taking dirty water and makes it even dirtier. The dirty water causes

some people to have a physical reaction. This makes it even more memorable when he finally cleans the water and then hands it to someone to drink.

Time to watch: 3:00-5:30

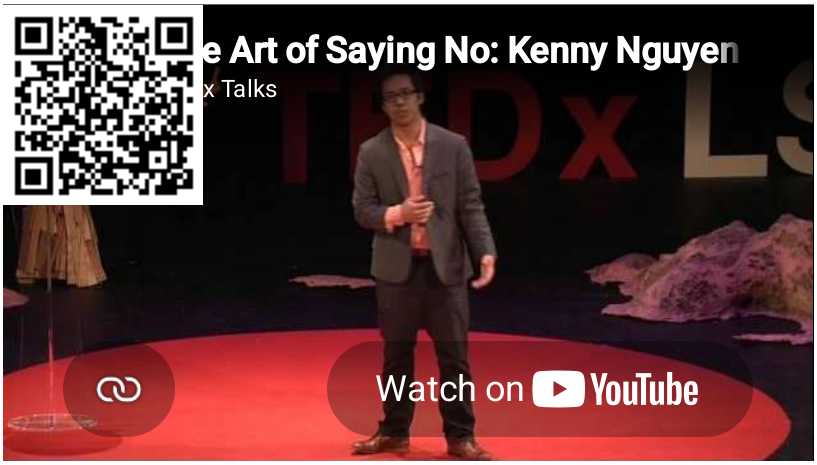


Props Can Be Used to Prove a Point

When writing this chapter on props, I asked public speaking teachers to give me their best examples of how students used props effectively and Mike Fleming shared this story.

> *When I first began teaching, I had to shadow someone who was currently teaching. One Saturday morning, one of the students had a large, 50-pound sack of dry dog food. When called, she went up, and put the bag on the corner of the desk, went around it, and began her speech. She started talking about her wedding. She explained how she was a newlywed. She told of the importance, to her, of fitting into her wedding dress, and of all she had gone through to make that happen. She spoke of having been chubby her entire life, etc. At the very end of her speech, after telling us that she had accomplished her goal, and had fit into her dress, she stepped around the desk, put her arm around the bag of dog food, hoisted it onto her hip, and told us that if she had stepped onto a scale just then, the scale would have showed what she had weighed, at the start of her journey. She put the bag back on the desk and said, "But not anymore! Mike Fleming.*

Speaker Kenny Nguyen uses the prop of a sword and a shield to anchor his message.
Watch from 8.59 to the end. He doesn't use the props right away but I wanted you to see the context so I backed up the video a little. Notice how he has the prop out of the way until he needs it to solidify his point.



Props Can Carry the Theme

In this graduation speech, Valedictorian Carl Aquino uses a Rubik's cube to talk about high school. Watch how he uses it to show the difference between high school and college.



Props Can Be Used to Teach Complex Concepts

Dan Burns teaches other teachers how to demonstrate spacetime warping. Does this help you understand the scientific principles? I know I learned a lot from this. Notice how he talks as he demonstrates. He could improve by having some of these objects a little closer so there isn't an awkward pause as he gets his balls.

Watch from the beginning



You Can Be the Prop

Lizzy Velasquez talks about a syndrome she has. In this speech, she is the prop. She draws attention to her eyes and then highlights the great things about her eyes.

Time to watch: 0-2:00



Props Can Help Tell a Story

Aimee Mullins engages the audience by telling a story of how children reacted to seeing all her prosthetic legs. As we look at the props on the stage, we can better imagine the reactions of the children.

Time to watch: 0-2:14



Props Can Enhance Persuasion

Watch as Mark Scarpitti illustrates the benefits of no-till soil. Notice how he engages his audience by asking them questions as he demonstrates; it really helps engage his audience. He has all of his props set up before he begins and they are set out in a way that they are easy to see. He wisely uses volunteers which further engages the group. By showing instead of just telling, he makes a convincing case for no till-soil.

Time to watch: 0:21- 4:15



Your Product Can Be Your Prop

Many of you will do a product demonstration as part of your job. In this video, Elon Musk, with the help of an assistant, illustrates the Cybertruck's load mode.

Time to watch: 12:00-13:45



Props Can Illustrate Complex Concepts

Frances Chan, Christian Pastor, illustrates the concept of “eternity” to a church audience with, of all things, a rope.

Time to watch: 0-2:00



Props to Help the Audience Relate to Numbers and Think Deeply About a Concept

Jamie Oliver is not only passionate about food, he is passionate about teaching people to eat healthier. Watch as he illustrates how much sugar is in milk. As you watch the video, notice how he has a volunteer bring his prop on the stage at just the right time. As he dumps one cup at a time on the floor, we begin to see the problem. Finally, when he dumps the wheelbarrow of sugar on the floor and then dramatically tosses it in the air, we begin to sense the urgency of the problem.

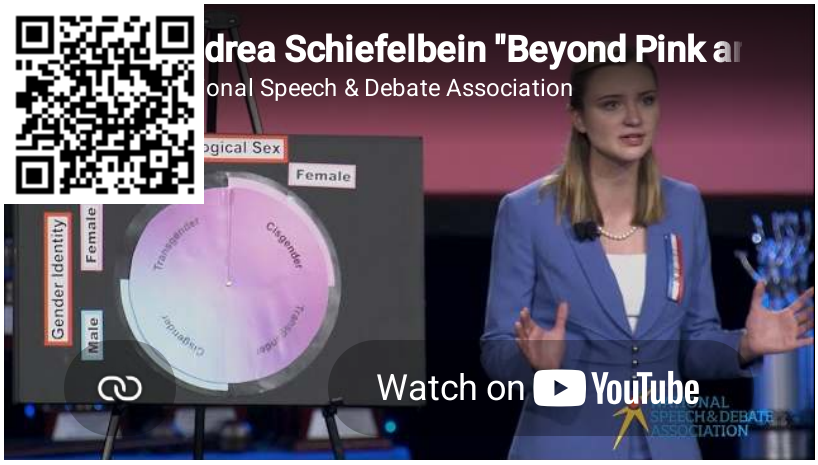
Time to Watch: 12:00-14:00



Props Can Engage the Audience's Attention

Andrea Schiefelbein uses humor and some creative poster usage at a High School National Speech and Debate Championship. Notice how she creatively uses the poster board in layers. Pay attention to how she has just plain black poster board when she doesn't need us to see a picture. Finally, watch as she uses the genderbread man to draw us and she causes us to think as we watch her add pieces to the poster.

Watch from 0-4:00



Posters Can Be Used Instead of Slides to Draw the Audience's Attention

Dave Lieber, a columnist for *The Dallas Morning News*, talks about trying to adapt to Texas culture while teaching the audience how to tell the story. Notice how effective his poster is as opposed to using a slide show. Ask yourself, would it have been as engaging if he would have shown us a slide of the dog?

Time to Watch: 12:50-14:00



Props Can Be Used With Slides to Draw the Audience's Attention

Daniel Kraft demonstrates the Marrow Minor. He uses four props, slides, and a video in four minutes. Watch as he masterfully negotiates all his visuals while maintaining a conversational tone with the audience.



? Check Out This Article on How Politicians Use Props

Business Insider Looked at 10 Wild Props Used by Congressional Members that I thought you would enjoy. (My personal favorite is Reagan riding a velociraptor–I included it here for your viewing pleasure) Watch this short video clip as Republican Senator Mike Lee makes fun of the Green New Deal using Reagan on a dinosaur, Star Wars, and Sharknado.



MIT Professor Patrick Winston gives a lecture on how to use props. He goes into detail about why he thinks props work. Watch for yourself, the answer might surprise you. Watch from 13 to 24 minutes.



Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Props can help the audience pay attention, understand concepts, and remember your information.
- Props should enhance your message.
- The prop should be large enough to see.
- Practice with your props to seamlessly integrate them into your speech.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

Looking for More Information?

I didn't want to overwhelm you with too many examples when you read the chapter, so I included some of the extra video clips, examples, and activities in a separate chapter.

Presentation Aids: Activities and Resources

Editorial note: For copyright considerations, I have given you speech samples in their entirety. Showing only short clips violates the copyright privileges of those who graciously posted the speech videos. I have given you start and stop times to see the prop and how it is used. It will take you about 20 minutes to watch all the clips. Warning: these are interesting videos and it will be hard to watch only the suggested segment.

References

Aquino, C. (2011). The Valedictorian Speech that will change your life. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCN6FjqDcHg Standard YouTube License.

Armour, C. Schneid, S.D., Brandl, K. (2016). Writing on the board as students' preferred teaching modality in a physiology course. Physiology. https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00130.2015

Burns, D. (2012). Gravity visualized. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTY1Kje0yLg Standard YouTube License.

Chan, F. (2010). Frances Chan-Rope illustration.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86dsfBbZfWs Standard YouTube License.

Cnet. (2019). Watch Elon Musk announce the Tesla Cybertruck in 14 minutes. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=464puoD09dM Standard YouTube License.

Dlugan, A. (2013). How to choose and use speech props: A speaker's guide. http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/speech-props/ Standard YouTube License.

Gates, B. (2013). Mosquitos, malaria, and education. Ted. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLkbWUNQbgk Standard YouTube License.

Kraft, S. (2009). A better way to harvest bone marrow. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kraft_a_better_way_to_harvest_bone_marrow?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare Standard YouTube License.

Lieber, D. (2013). The power of storytelling to change the world. Ted. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/6Bo3dpVb5jw Standard YouTube License.

Lineham, D. 9n.d.). How to use props in presentations. https://davelinehan.com/how-to-use-props-in-presentations/

Mullins, A. (2009). My 12 pair of legs. Ted. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/aimee_mullins_my_12_pairs_of_legs?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare Standard YouTube License.

Nguyen, K. (2013). The art of saying no: Kenny Nguyen at TEDxLSU. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtPRrn5nwAo&t=563s Standard YouTube License.

Oliver, J. (2010). Teach every child about food. Ted. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie_oliver_teach_every_child_about_food?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Pritchard, M. (2009). [Video] YouTube. How to make filthy water drinkable. Ted. https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_pritchard_how_to_make_filthy_water_drinkable?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare Standard YouTube License.

Relman, E. (2019). A GOP senator brought a giant picture of Ronald Reagan riding a dinosaur to argue against Democrats' Green New Deal. Here are 10 other wild props members have brought to the floor. Business Insider. [Video] https://www.businessinsider.com/ranked-10-best-props-congress-2017-8?fbclid=IwAR2XRZC0VnjxMu6NqnjCAMBoDuaX2WS5Z7rYNtCEzPGMATsJkWhxh0WyRiE Standard YouTube License.

Scarpitti, Ml (2011). Differences in tilled and no till soil.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1aR5OLgcc0&feature=youtu.be Standard YouTube License.

Schiefelbein, A. (2020). Anderea Schiefelbein "beyond pink and blue"-Informative Speaking. Nationals 2019. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVBUarS1H7U Standard YouTube License.

Taylor, J.B. (2008). My stroke of insight. TedTalk [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_my_stroke_of_insight Standard YouTube License.

Valasquez, L. (2014). How do you define yourself. Ted [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzPbY9ufnQY Standard YouTube License.

Valentin, C. (2015). Craig Valentine Speaks About His Nametag.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_KRqkmPmag&feature=youtu.be Standard YouTube License.

Winston, P. (2019). How to speak by Patrick Winston. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Unzc731iCUY Standard YouTube License.

Zimmerman, J. (2017). How to “prop up” your next presentation. Presentation Guru. https://www.presentation-guru.com/how-to-prop-up-your-next-presentation/#:~:text=In%20a%20presentation%2C%20props%20are,be%20handled%20by%20the%20presenter.

Zimmer, J. (2011). Ten tips for using props in a presentation. Manner of speaking. https://mannerofspeaking.org/2011/09/29/ten-tips-for-using-props-in-a-presentation/

Media Attributions

- Cooking Demo © smilla4 is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 3.1: Props- It is More Than Just Setting Stuff on a Table is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.2: Don't Ruin a Great Presentation with Terrible Slides



The more strikingly visual your presentation is,
the more people will remember it.
And more importantly, they will remember you.
– Paul Arden
Creative Director of Advertising Company Satchi and Satchi

The speaker was a master in his field which is why he was chosen to speak. He was brilliant, he was motivated to share his ideas, and he was great at conversation. The only problem was he was the most boring speaker I have ever heard. He stood at the front of the room and read presentation slides to us for two hours. He rarely looked at the audience. It was the longest two hours of any conference I have ever attended.

Chances are you have had a similar experience. A speaker has ridiculous amounts of text on a slide and then stands there and reads it to you. Unfortunately for all of us, a lot of college classes are that way. In fact, most of us learned about how to use slides by seeing our teachers use them–poorly.

The use of electronic slides–PowerPoint, Presenter, Google Slides, Prezi—is pervasive. Sixty-seven percent of college students reported that instructors used PowerPoint; and of these instructors, 95% used this software all or most of the time. Numerous articles chide that presentation slides might be the death of education.

Many successful speakers have shunned slides altogether. Chris Anderson, head of TED, the highly successful group that leads TED Talks, highlights at least of third of the most viewed TED talks do not use any slides whatsoever.



The Most Important Questions of All

1. Do I need slides?
2. If I need slides, what does the audience need to get from those slides?

I once made a presentation to NASA scientists who were preparing to talk about their research. I said, “If you sit at your computer and you open your presentation software and begin writing your speech on your slides, you are making a slide show, not a speech. A good speaker always considers what the audience needs to hear and then uses slides to offer visual support to help the audience understand. If you start with the slides, you’ve got it backward. ” Two years later, I was traveling out of state and saw a man who was smiling at me as he approached–it was one of the scientists from the NASA talk. He looked at me and said, “I remember you because you changed the way I do things. That piece of advice, about never starting with your slides changed everything for me. I

really struggled as a speaker until you told us we are making a speech, not a slide show. Since I have changed, people seem to like my presentations more and more likely to come up and talk to me about my research."

Slides are Good Because They…

- Can create credibility. (Many people expect you to use slides and meeting that expectation gives you credibility.
- Help focus the audience's attention.
- Help the audience visualize concepts.
- Help people take organized notes of a talk.
- Helps the speaker stay on track.
- Provides aesthetic appeal.
- Show something that may be hard to describe.

Slides are Bad Because They…

- Can distract from what the speaker is saying.
- Can hurt the speaker's credibility when poorly constructed.
- Can cause people to mindlessly take notes without thinking about the content.
- Can be boring…especially when a speaker stands up there and simply reads the slides to an audience.
- Can lead to passive listening when a teacher uses them in the classroom and give the students a copy of the slides.

Rules for Slides



Write Your Speech First

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the most important things you can do when preparing your speech is to get away from your slide software. Under no circumstance should you open your slide software (PowerPoint, Presenter, Google slides, Prezi, Keynote, etc.) until your speech is complete **and** you have made a plan for what visuals the audience needs to see.

Keep Text to A Minimum

No more than six words across and six words down. Chris Anderson of TED specifies,

> *Even when a text slide is simple, it may be indirectly stealing your thunder. Instead of a slide that reads: A black hole is an object so massive that no light can escape from it, you'd do better with one that reads: How black is a black hole? Then you'd give the information from that original slide in spoken form. That way, the slide teases the audience's curiosity and makes your words more interesting, not less.*

Offer One Idea to a Slide

You can keep text to a minimum by limiting ideas to one per slide. Audience members should be able to glance quickly–about 3 seconds–and get all the information. It is better to have a lot of slides where each has only one idea per slide than it is to have one slide with a list of ideas. Nancy Duarte, communication coach, reminds us that if you have too many words, it is no longer a visual aid but a teleprompter. Estimate approximately how long it will take an audience member to read your slide by timing yourself reading the slide backward.

> *Think of your slides as billboards. When people drive, they only briefly take their eyes off their main focus — the road — to process billboard information. Similarly, your audience should focus intently on what you're saying, looking only briefly at your slides when you display them. Nancy Duarte*

Get Rid of the Title (Most of the time)

Most of the time, a title on each slide is not needed. You, the speaker, will say what the content is about; no need to read it–it is just distracting.

Reduce Cognitive Load

It is better to help the audience focus on the main point in the slide. By keeping things simple, it reduces the audience's cognitive resources. There are several ways you can reduce cognitive load.

- Avoid busy backgrounds they can drain mental energy.
- Eliminate unneeded titles.
- Use basic, easy-to-read font.
- Ask yourself if the company logo or school banner is needed on the slide or if it just becomes one more thing.
- Keep background colors consistent
- Format photos and illustrations in the same style.

Use Pictures Instead of Words When Possible

People retain more information when what they see on the screen supports the message they are hearing.

> *We are incredible at remembering pictures.*
> *Hear a piece of information,*
> *and three days later you'll remember 10% of it. A*
> *dd a picture and you'll remember 65%.*
> *John Medina, author of Brain Rules.*

Learning Recall Related to Type of Presentation

Presentation	**Ability to Recall**	
	after 3 hours	**after 3 days**
Spoken lecture	25%	10-20%
Written (reading)	72%	10%
Visual and verbal (illustrated lecture)	80%	65%

Avoid Distracting Slide Transitions

There is rarely a time when you should use the transition feature of the software. Things that twirl, cube, swap, and swoosh rarely help the audience to focus on your idea. Most of the time, they are just cheesy and distracting. Three transitions that can be used with a level of professionalism are cut, fade, and dissolve. The easiest rule is if you do not have a reason for a transition, don't do it.

Use Easy-to-Read, Plain Font

Use 28-point font and larger. Do not use more than three different sizes and make the size variants purposeful. It is best to stick with a plain, sans-serif font such as Helvetica, Arial, or Tahoma. There are two types of font, serif (with fancy tails) and san serif (without fancy tails). The Plain, san serif font is easiest to read when projected.



The letters on the left are plain, san-serif font, and the ones on the right are serif, or fancy font.

Go For High Contrast

Always go for the highest contrast. I recently attended a special event and the speaker projected his side and then looked back at it surprised and said, “Sorry, you can’t see the red letters.” The speaker had attempted to put red letters on a black ground–this is always a no-no because it rarely shows well. It is best to pick a dark blue or back background and put white or yellow letters on it. You can also use a white or yellow background with dark black or blue letters (While JP Philips in the video Death by PowerPoint -below- advises against it, it is still a professional standard).

Use Minimal Bullets

If you do have bullet points, make sure you have more than one point because let’s face it, bullet points are for making lists and one point does not make a list. In addition, you should never have more than six bullet points because then you would have too much stuff on your slide.

> *Bullets belong to the Godfather.*
> *Avoid them at all costs.*
> *Dashes belong at the Olympics,*
> *not at the beginning of the text.*
>
> *Chris Anderson, TED Talks*

While I’m not sure I fully support eliminating all bullets, I do warn you to use them sparingly.

Use Blank Slides

You do not always have to have a slide behind you. Insert black, blank slides between points when you need to talk to the audience without the distraction of a visual.

Have a Backup Plan

Technology is evil and is the enemy of all that is good. It will crash on you. You should always have a backup plan and you should always be prepared to speak even if your slides do not work. You should always have notecards and I highly suggest printing out your slides to reference and then if the projector bulb goes out or the computer crashes, you can still make your presentation.

Test Your Slide Show, Videos, and Clicker/Remote

You should always practice using your slides. It is helpful to test out your presentation on your friends or trusted colleague and ask them to give you feedback. When you get to the place where you will give your presentation, it is a good idea to pull up your slides and make sure they work with the clicker/remote. It is a good idea to carry extra batteries with you too. Test the volume of your videos and make sure they play properly. Finally, make sure you know where the audio-visual person will be in case you have any problems. If you are a student, have a friend who can come up and fix your slides while you keep your speech going.

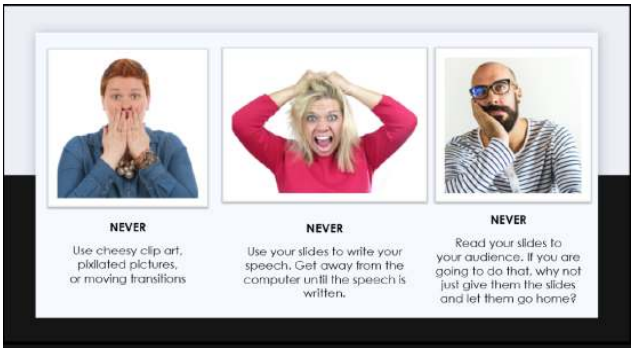
Avoid the Laser Pointer

A laser pointer highlights any shakiness you have in your hands. If you want to highlight something on a slide, use a graphic arrow.

Make Reminders on Your Notes to Change Your Slide

Many of my students will turn on their presentation slides and during the speech forget they are there. After they conclude their speech and we have applauded, they will look back at the projector and say, “Oh, here is my visual aid,” and then will rapidly click through the seven slides they should have shown us during the speech.

To avoid this, practice with your slides and mark on your notecards where to advance your slide. I usually draw an “S” in a circle and then color in the circle with a highlighter.



Point Your Body and Your Eyes Towards the Audience Not Towards the Slides

Your feet indicate where you want to go. If your feet are pointed towards the door, you are indicating you want to go out the door. Similarly, if your feet are pointed towards the back wall where your slides are located, it indicates you want to go towards your slides and not towards the audience. In short, you have turned your back on your audience. Point your feet, your hips, and your head towards the audience.

Keep your eyes on your audience and not your slides. Having brief slides helps. If you only have a few words or a nice photo on your slides, you are less tempted to stand there and read to the audience. In addition, having your notes in front of you as opposed to using your slides as your notes helps you keep pointed forward. Just remember, talk to your audience, not your slides.

Use Movement Minimally

These days, there are many different types of presentation slides. One of those is Prezi. For many (like me), the movement in Prezi creates a nauseous feeling. If you decide to use this tool, keep movement limited.

Here is a TED Talk that effectively uses Prezi.



Videos

Videos can be an amazing addition to your presentation. Rarely, do you want to use more than a one-minute clip. More likely, you will want about 30 seconds. In my experience, videos that work perfectly at your home computer have about a sixty percent chance of working at the venue where you speak. If you have a video file on your computer remember that the video file and the slide file have to go to the venue. The easiest way to do this is to create a file folder for your presentation and put the video file and the slideshow file in the folder. Save the file folder to the cloud or your thumb drive that you take to the venue. On the day of your presentation, go in ahead of time and make sure everything works and the volume on the video is set properly.

The most common mistake I see is someone will link their presentation to a video, and they bring a copy of the presentation with them but leave the video on their home computer. I usually upload videos to my personal YouTube account, and also have them in file format on a USB I always include a link to the video on my slide just in case it doesn't work.

GIFS

Sometimes they work. Sometimes they don't. GIF means graphic interchange format and is usually a short animation. If you decide that the GIF enhances your message and you decide to include it, make sure it works at the speech venue on the day you present. Be aware that a short GIF on a continual loop can be very annoying. A cartoon that waves once is cute, a cartoon that waves 20 times is distracting.

Give Credit for Visuals When Possible

When possible credit to the originator of the photo. Simply write "Photo credit: Name or originator of the photo." Usually, 12-14-point font credit is centered under the photo or in the bottom right-hand corners. Be consistent in the way you do your citations. Citing your graphic may not look as nice as a plain slide, but it shows you have integrity, and that you give credit where it is due. Make sure you have a legal license to use the photo or they are listed as Creative Commons; better yet, do as a friend of mine does, always use your original photos.

Thoughts About Fair Use

The internet makes it easy to get photos, videos, and music that you can use in your presentation. Just because it is easy to get, doesn't mean it is legal.

Chances are you are using this textbook because you are a college student. Because your presentations are of an educational nature, they are protected under Fair Use copyright laws which means you can use copyrighted material once for educational purposes *if* you give credit to the authors.

Once you graduate and work for a company, what was once considered free to use is now under a different system. For example, you may have to get permission to use someone's photos or you may now have to pay to use a music clip.

Baylor University put together a checklist to help determine whether something would be considered fair use.

Fair list checklist.

Use Photos Wisely

When using photos, it is usually best to make them full screen if the picture is the point of the visual. If they are a decoration to the point, format them so they are visually pleasing and balanced with the words. If you do use a smaller photo, use a plain background. Always use pictures with the highest resolution possible and always give photo credit. In the college classroom, students prefer pictures and "visually rich" slides if they were relevant to the content of the lecture. In addition, they preferred minimal text and limited bullet-point lists.

Don’t Do This!



What’s <u>Wrong</u> With This Slide?

- The background is distracting.
- There are too many photos on the slide.
- The heading is not needed–the speaker should say it.
- The photo credit is too large.

Do This Instead!



What's Right With This Slide?

- The picture is clear and takes up most of the slide.
- No unnecessarily distracting words
- The photo credit is balanced and an appropriate size.
- No caption is needed because the speaker will tell about what it is and where it is

Want to Take Your Slide Composition to the Next Level? Check out these Resources

To see a great explanation with examples of why certain slide layouts work.
https://www.presentation-process.com/powerpoint-slides.html

To see samples of good and bad use of photos on slides, check out Presentation Zen.
https://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/visuals/

To take your visual composition to the next level by using the rule of thirds to compose slides, check out the rule of thirds.
http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/rule-of-thirds-powerpoint/

To see the types of slides a professional designer makes.
https://www.nolanhaimscreative.com/presentation-design-portfolio

To see design principles
https://courses.lumenlearning.com/ivytech-comm101-master/chapter/chapter-13-design-principles/

Nancy Duarte: [For visuals], I think people tend to go with the easiest, fastest idea. Like, "I'm going to put a handshake in front of a globe to mean partnership!" Well, how many handshakes in front of a globe do we have to look at before we realize it's a total cliche? Another common one — the arrow in the middle of a bullseye. Really? Everyone else is thinking that way.

The slides themselves are supposed to be a mnemonic device for the audience so they can remember what you had to say. They're not just a teleprompter for the speaker. A bullseye isn't going to make anyone remember anything. Don't go for the first idea. Think about the point you're trying to make and brainstorm individual moments that you're trying to emphasize. Think to the second, the third, the fourth idea — and by the time you get to about the tenth idea, those will be the more clever memorable things for the audience.

Watch Mac Stone as he shows photos that make "You want to save the Everglades."



Be *in* the Image but Not *on* the Image

Stand near your slides but don't stand where you will be a shadow on your slides. Sometimes a presenter will stand far away from their slide causing the audience to have to bounce back and forth with their attention. On the other hand, practice with your slides at the venue and have a friend let you know where you can and cannot stand. If it is easy to stand in front of the slides, I will sometimes put tape on the floor to indicate where to stand and put a tape boundary to remind myself where not to stand.

? These Are Not the Same

Should I Give Out My Slides As a Handout?

One BIG mistake novice speechmakers make is they use their slides as their notes, their visual aid, and their handout. In this model, a speaker opens up the presentation software and writes their speech on the slide. When the day of the presentation comes along, the speaker stands in front of the audience and reads the slides to the audience. Finally, the speaker gives the audience members a copy of the slides to take home.

Delivery Notes are what you look at during your presentation. They should have details about what you will say, they should have reminders for when to advance your slides, and they should have notes reminding you to project your voice or to look up.

Slides are the projection the audience sees. They should be purposeful, brief, and concise, and designed to help listeners understand.

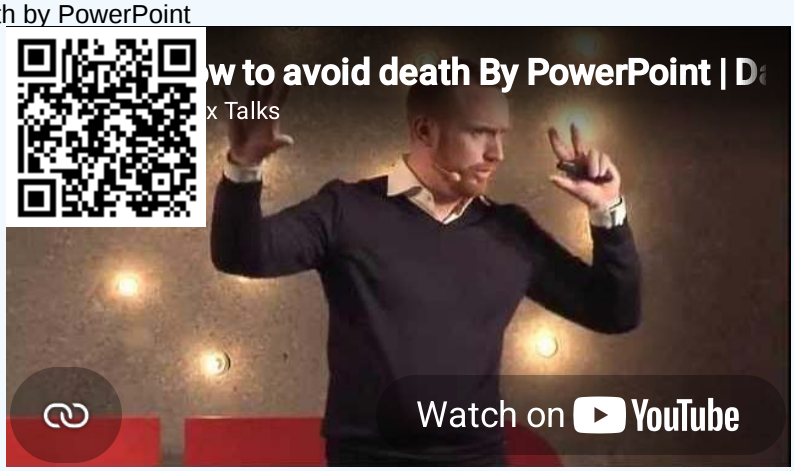
Handouts are the items you give the audience to take home with them. It should provide only the information the audience needs to remember after your presentation is over.

> *Never, ever hand out copies of your slides, and certainly not before your presentation. That is the kiss of death. By definition since slides are "speaker support" material, they are there in support of the speaker…You. As such, they should be completely incapable of standing by themselves and are thus useless to give to your audience, where they will simply be guaranteed to be a distraction. The flip side of this is that if*

> *the slides can stand by themselves, why the heck are you up there in front of them? (David Rose as quoted in Presentation Zen)*

With that said, when students spend their attention copying slides, they do not spend time listening to the lecture. Making the slides available to students to use during an educational lecture may reduce cognitive load and encourage learning. However, if the slides are so detailed the student can get all the information from the slide, then they may not attend class or they may not take any notes of their own which reduces learning. It is a delicate balance of structure but not all the content.

? How To Avoid Death by PowerPoint



Watch the Video How to Avoid Death By PowerPoint

> *Okay, ladies and gentlemen, welcome. There is a question which has puzzled me for quite a while, and that is, why do our PowerPoints look the way they look? Or rather, how on earth, can we accept that they look the way they look? How can you do that?*
>
> *And do you know what's even more intellectually challenging for me to understand, is how can a person sit over here in this meeting room with ten others, observing this dismally bad PowerPoint filled with charts, graphical elements, page numbers, fading away five, seven minutes thinking of other things. You know the feeling, the boredom, the waste of time!? This person, after 40 minutes, he/she will stand up, a bit dazed, trotting off to his own office, coming to his own computer, flipping it up, going like: oh my god, I've got a presentation tomorrow, and I do have a PowerPoint to build. Now what is the chance that this person will build an equally bad PowerPoint as the one that he/she was by herself tortured by in the other conference room? Is that a big chance? Yeah. David JP Phillips, TED Speaker. How to Avoid Death By Power Point*

David JP Phillip Provides This Solution

1. Only put one idea per slide.
2. Make spoken and projected content match. Don't make an audience chose between listening to you or looking at your slide. Sweller and Mayer conclude there is something in our brain called the redundancy effect, and it works like this. If the audience has to pick between reading text on a slide or listening to you talk, they have a hard time focusing and cannot recall most of what was said.
3. Build slides with minimal distractions. We pay attention to moving objects, signaling colors, contrast-rich objects, big objects. Build your slides with this in mind. For example, only have a large title if it is the most important, otherwise, make it smaller.
4. Avoid using full sentences on slides.
5. Contrast controls your focus. If you use a white background, it draws attention away from the speaker.

6. Do not put too many objects on your slide. Go for six or less.

Watch These Creative Uses of Slides

Notice how Tim Urban uses slides to engage the audience. Instead of long lists of words, he uses funny drawings, which results in the audience hanging on his every word.



? Do Slides Help or Hurt Student Learning?



A group of researchers set out to find out if there is a connection between the use of slides by teachers and student learning. They looked at all the studies that had been done on the topic and they made a chart to look at similarities and differences (it is called a meta-analysis). The results were interesting.

They found that students expected teachers to use slides in classes. Students self-reported that they liked when a teacher used slides. Students thought that slides helped them to learn and to pay attention. This was particularly true for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields, where many slides contain projected models and diagrams.

While students perceived it was helpful, research indicates there is little or no effect on either test scores or information retention. I would argue that there is increasingly an expectation that speakers use slides. Because of this, a speaker who chooses not to use slides may violate audience expectations resulting in lower credibility.

Here is a summary of various educational studies regarding slides in classroom learning:

- Students who downloaded class slides before class improved exam scores by 3.48%
- Students performed worse on recall and recognition tasks when slides included pictures that were not relevant.
- Slides that show positive pictures enhanced learning more than negative pictures.
- In an older study (2005), students said they preferred teachers to write on the board and use props rather than show slides.
- Students who preferred it when the teacher wrote on the board said that they liked it better because there was more active engagement, a more appropriate pace, and less extraneous material given.
- Students who preferred slides said they liked being able to have copies of slides in case they were absent or in case the notes they had were complete.

**Notice in this section, I did not mention each specific study and researcher. I did it so you could most easily get the information and think about it as it related to your own academic experiences. The studies referenced are below. When you give your speech, similarly, you should decide when it is best to include references at the bottom of each slide or to put them all at the end. Context should always guide you on how best to manage your sources. There is an entire chapter dedicated to thinking about how to manage research.

Baker, J. P., Goodboy, A.K., Bowman, N.D., Wright, A.A. (2018). Does teaching with PowerPoint increase students' learning? A metanalysis. *Computers and Education Science Direct*, 126. 376-387 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.08.003

Bartsch, R.A. & Cobern, K.M. (2003). Effectiveness of PowerPoint presentations in lectures. Computers and Education 41(1), 77-86. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0360-1315(03)00027-7

Berk, R. A. (2012). Top 10 Evidence-based Best Practices for PowerPoint in the Classroom. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, *5*(3), 1-7.

Chen, J. & Lin, Tsui-Fang (2008). Does downloading PowerPoint slides before the lecture leads to better student achievement. International Review of Economics Education, 7 (2), 9-18, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1477-3880(15)30092-X

Hill, A., Arford, T., Lubitow, A., & Smollin, L. M. (2012).“I'm ambivalent about it”: The dilemmas of PowerPoint. *Teaching Sociology*, *40*, 242–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X12444071

Mantei, E. J. (2000). Using internet class notes and PowerPoint in the physical geology lecture. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 29(5), 301–305. https://www.learntechlib.org/p/91984/.

Marsh, E. J., & Sink, H. E. (2010). Access to handouts of presentation slides during lecture: Consequences for learning. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *24*, 691–706. https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1579.

Moulton ST, Türkay S, Kosslyn SM (2017) Does a presentation's medium affect its message? PowerPoint, Prezi, and oral presentations. PLoS ONE 12(7): e0178774. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0178774

Nelson-Wong, E., Eigsti, H., Hammerich, A., & Ellison, N. (2013). Influence of presentation handout completeness on student learning in a physical therapy curriculum. *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *13*, 33–47. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1017035.pdf

Nouri, H., & Shahid, A. (2005). The effect of PowerPoint presentations on student learning and attitudes. *Global Perspectives on Accounting Education*, *2*,53–73. (no doi).

Ogeyik, M. C. (2017). The effectiveness of PowerPoint presentation ad conventional lecture on pedagogical content knowledge attainment. *Innovations in Education &Teaching International*, *54*, 503–510.https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2016.1250663.

Unique Rules for Academic Presentation Slides

Whether you are presenting in a graduate class or at a conference, there are certain expectations regarding slides that are much different than business or undergraduate class slides. Academic slides should be able to stand alone and provide a clear summary of your work.

1. Your slides should include academic references at the bottom of the slide.
2. Your slide should include details about the point being made. Someone who did not come to your presentation but got a copy of your slides should be able to understand the point.
3. Your slide should include a citation for photos. Academic integrity is important.
4. Your slides should include a reference page as the last page. This will not be shown to your audience at the presentation but is only included because of its handout value. Many conferences and graduate classes require you share your slides. Including your reference page as the last slide gives everyone access to your full list of references.
5. Include your name and contact information on the opening and closing slides. You want people to have your information in case they want to contact you with questions or want to work with you on future projects. In academic conferences, people are going from room to room to find the right place to go. Make it easy for them to know they are at the right location by having a slide with the title and name from the program.
6. You should name your talk something interesting that makes people want to attend. Oftentimes, academic titles are boring so label your talk something that draws in an audience. You can include a copy of your actual research paper in the

uploaded materials, or you can reference the title of your paper in your talk. You are not obligated to name your talk after your journal article title.

7. Some academics are including Twitter handles and hashtags related to the conference so attendees can network.
8. Many conferences ask for the slides in advance and will put them on a website and make them downloadable for all participants. For this reason, your slides should be able to provide stand-alone information–meaning someone who did not attend your presentation could understand your talk.
9. Think about your slides as your business card. Some people may see these slides without ever meeting you. They will judge you based on your slides–make a good first impression, your future may depend on it.



Notice the nice balanced format. The text is easy to read and is at least 28-point, plain font. It includes the reference for the data and a reference for the photo.



Notice the title slide is graphically pleasing. Try to find a photo and a title that causes the audience to start thinking about your topic before your presentation begins. This slide is your business card– it represents you.

How to Put Citations in Slides

When considering the how and when of citations, it is important to consider the context of your speech. Different contexts will require different types of citations. Many speakers have ended their presentation with, “And here’s my reference page.” That has got to be the most boring way to end a speech ever! Don’t do it. There is **never** any reason to project your reference page for your audience to see. Depending on the context, however, you may include your reference on your slide.

A student in a public speaking class	A College Teacher	A Businessperson Making a Formal Presentation:

In class, you should always verbally mention your research and you should turn in a complete reference page. Teachers will vary if they want you to include the full reference on the bottom of the slide. You should always ask the teacher.	Typically, in graduate-level classes, students and teachers are expected to offer full citations. These are likely to be in the form of a reference page given to the audience in paper or electronic form. Each discipline is different. When in doubt, include the full reference at the bottom of a slide.	You will have to read into the context of this one. You should always mention any research to give you credibility but whether you put a citation on the slide will vary from place to place. When in doubt, err on the side or including the citation. Business presentations rarely include citations on photos.

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Slides should always be used purposefully.
- Write your speech before making your slides.
- It is better to have many slides that each make only one point than it is to have few slides with many points.
- No more than six words across and six words down, use at least 28-point, plain (san-serif) font.
- Different contexts have different expectations for slide design.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

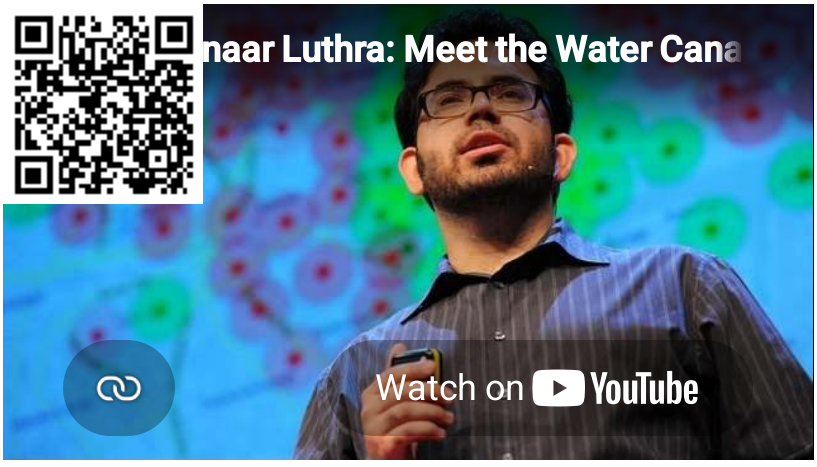
I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

Bonus Feature

Watch a part of Sonaar Luthra's speech for a great example of slide usage. The pictures help us to understand and remember and he avoids unnecessary words.



For those of you interested in Multi-Media Learning Principles, this chart explains how to each principle applies to good slide creation.

Multimedia Learning Moreno and Mayer

Learning the principles behind why and how it works can help you remember how to apply them. This chart shares with you some of the best practices from multimedia research on the principle and the application of visual media.

	What does it mean?	for your slides?
Multiple Representation Principle	For meaningful learning to occur, both channels (verbal and visual) should be used at the same time in a way learners can connect the information from each channel.	• Say it and show it on your slide to help people remember things. • It is helpful to access the visual and auditory parts of the brain to help people connect.
Temporal Contiguity Principle	Don't be talking about one thing and have a picture up of something else. Verbal and visual content should be presented together in contiguous time. Putting words and pictures explaining the same content into working memory at the same time is beneficial. If the information is out of synch, the brain is less able to connect the information from the two inputs.	• Make your words and pictures presented simultaneously. • Don't be talking about one thing and have a picture or graph of something different on your slide.
Split Attention Principles and Modality Principle	People learn best when their attention is not split between spoken and visual words.	• It is better to say things in your speech rather than write sentences on a screen. • Keep text to a minimum. • Better to use pictures instead of words.
Redundancy Principle	While two channels of content that support each other can be more effective, too much can cause cognitive overload.	• It is best to talk and show pictures rather than talk, have words, and show pictures. • When you speak words and you project words and then you add a picture, it causes overload.
Coherence Principle	Background sounds and music can overload auditory channels and distract.	• Make sure everything on the slide is related to the message. • Skip the distractions.
Image Principle	People do not learn better when the speaker's image is on the screen.	• No need to show your headshot.

References

Anderson, C. (2016). TED *talks: The official TED guide to Public Speaking*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Armour, C. Schneid, S.D., & Brandl, K. (2016). Writing on the board as students' preferred teaching modality in a physiology course. *Physiology*. https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00130.2015

Baker, J. P., Goodboy, A.K., Bowman, N.D., & Wright, A.A. (2018). Does teaching with PowerPoint increase students' learning? A metanalysis. *Computers and Education Science Direct*, 126, 376-387. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.08.003

Bartsch, R.A. & Cobern, K.M. (2003). Effectiveness of PowerPoint presentations in lectures. *Computers and Education. 41*(1), 77-86. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0360-1315(03)00027-7

Berk, R. A. (2012). Top 10 Evidence-based Best Practices for PowerPoint in the classroom. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, *5*(3), 1-7.

Brandl, K., Scheid, S., & Armour, C. (2015). Writing on the board vs PowerPoint: What do students prefer and why? *Pharmacology.* 29(1). https://doi.org/10.1096/fasebj.29.1_supplement.lb465

Chen, J. & Lin, Tsui-Fang (2008). Does downloading PowerPoint slides before the lecture leads to better student achievement. *International Review of Economics Education 7* (2), 9-18, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1477-3880(15)30092-X

Copyright and Fair Use: Common Scenarios from California State University. https://csulb.libguides.com/copyrightforfaculty/scenarios

Dale E. (1969). Cone of experience, in Educational Media: Theory into Practice. Wiman RV (ed). Charles Merrill.

Duarte, N. (2008). *Slide:ology: The are and science of creating great presentations.* O'Reilly.

Duarte, N. (2012). Do your slides pass the glance test? https://hbr.org/2012/10/do-your-slides-pass-the-glance-test

Duarte, N. (2010). *Resonate Present visual stories that transform audiences.* John Wiley & Sons.

Endestad, T., Magnussen, S., & Helstrup, T. (2003). Memory for Pictures and Words following Literal and Metaphorical Decisions. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, *23*(2), 209–216. https://doi.org/10.2190/PNXA-4078-M1H9-8BRJ

Garr, G. (2008). *Presentationzen: Simple ideas on presentation design and delivery*. New Riders.

Hill, A., Arford, T., Lubitow, A., & Smollin, L. M. (2012)."I'm ambivalent about it": The dilemmas of PowerPoint. *Teaching Sociology*, *40*, 242–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X12444071

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1981). Transfer of training: the contributions of coaching. *Journal of Education 163(2)*: 163–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/002205748116300208

Kasperek, S. Design Principles. (2011). The Public Speaking Project. http://publicspeakingproject.org/psvirtualtext.html

Kosslyn, S. M. (2007). *Clear and to the point: Eight psychological principles for compelling PowerPoint presentations.* Oxford University Press.

Lacey, S., Stilla, R., & Sathian, K. (2012). Metaphorically Feeling: Comprehending Textural Metaphors Activates Sensory Cortex. Brain and Language. 120, 3. 416–421. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2011.12.016

Malamed, C. (2009). *Visual language for designers: Principles for creating graphics that people understand.* Rockport Publishers

Luthra, S. (2012). Sonaar Luthra: Meet the water canary. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/gv1ApCmctVQ?t=27 Standard YouTube License.

Mantei, E. J. (2000). Using internet class notes and PowerPoint in the physical geology lecture. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 29(5), 301–305. https://www.learntechlib.org/p/91984/.

Marsh, E. J., & Sink, H. E. (2010). Access to handouts of presentation slides during lecture: Consequences for learning. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 24*, 691–706. https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1579.

Mayer, R. E. (2001).Multimedia learning.New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.Mayer, R. E., & Moreno, R. (2002). Animation as an aid to multimedia learning.*Educational Psychology Review, 14*,87–99. https://doi.org/10.40-726X/02/0300-0087/0.

Mayer, R. E., & Moreno, R. (2003). Nine ways to reduce cognitive load in multimedia learning. *Educational Psychologist, 38*,43–52. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3801

Medina, J. (2018). Brain rules. http://www.brainrules.net/vision

Miller, S. T., & James, R. C. (2011). The effect of animations within PowerPoint presentations on learning introductory astronomy. *Astronomy Education Review, 10*,1–13. https://doi.org/10.3847/AER2010041.

Moulton, S.T., Türkay, S. & Kosslyn, S.M. (2017). Does a presentation's medium affect its message? PowerPoint, Prezi, and oral presentations. PLoS ONE 12(7): e0178774. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0178774

Nelson-Wong, E., Eigsti, H., Hammerich, A., & Ellison, N. (2013). Influence of presentation handout completeness on student learning in a physical therapy curriculum. *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *13*, 33–47. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1017035.pdf

Nouri, H., & Shahid, A. (2005). The effect of PowerPoint presentations on student learning and attitudes. *Global Perspectives on Accounting Education*, *2*,53–73. (no doi).

Nowaczyk, R. H., Santos, L. T., & Patton, C. (1998). Student perception of multimedia in the undergraduate classroom. *International Journal of Instructional Media*, *25* (4), 367–382. (no doi).

Ogeyik, M. C. (2017). The effectiveness of PowerPoint presentation ad conventional lecture on pedagogical content knowledge attainment. *Innovations in Education &Teaching International*, *54*, 503–510.https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2016.1250663.

Presentation aids Design Principles. Lumen Learning. https://courses.lumenlearning.com/ivytech-comm101-master/chapter/chapter-13-design-principles/#return-footnote-1129-36

Ramgopal & Arte. (n.d.). Presentation Ppocess. https://www.presentation-process.com/powerpoint-slides.html

Reynolds, G. (2008). *Presentation Zen: Simple ideas on presentation design and delivery.* New Riders.

Schneider, S., Nebel, S, & Rey, G.D. (2015). Decorative pictures and emotional design in multimedia learning. Learning and Instruction 44, 65-73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.03.002

Steinert, Y. & Snell, L.S. (2009). Interactive lecturing: Strategies for increasing participation in large group presentations. *Medical Teacher. 21*:37–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/01421599980011

Stenberg, G (2006). Conceptual and perceptual factors in the picture superiority effect. *Europen Journal of Cognitive Psychology. 18*. 813-847. https://doi.org/10.1080/09541440500412361

Swerdloff, M. (2016). *Online learning, multimedia, and emotions.* In S. Y. Tettegah & M. P. McCreery (Eds.), *Emotions and technology: Communication of feelings for, with, and through digital media. Emotions, technology, and learning* (p. 155–175). Elsevier Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-800649-8.00009-2

Torgovnick May, K. (2012). How to give more persuasive presentations: A Q & A with Nancy Duarte. TED Blog. https://blog.ted.com/how-to-give-more-persuasive-presentations-a-qa-with-nancy-duarte/

Vogel, D. R., Dickson, G. W. & Lehman, J. A. (1986). Persuasion and the role of visual presentation support: The UM/3M Study.

Wecker, C. (2012). Slide presentation as speech suppressors: When and why learners miss oral information. *Computers & Education*, *59*, 260–273. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2012.01.013.

Wilmoth, J., & Wybraniec, J. (1998). Profits and pitfalls: Thoughts on using a laptop computer and presentation software to teach introductory social statistics. *Teaching Sociology*, *26*, 166–178. https://doi.org/10.2307/1318830

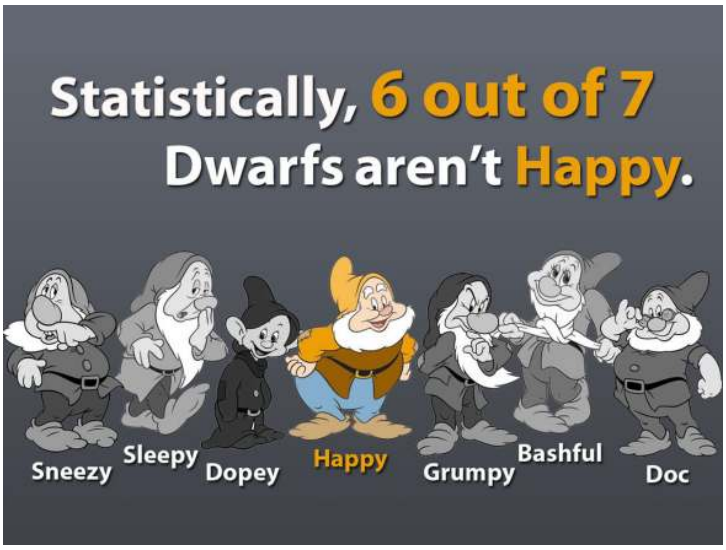
Worthington, D. L., & Levasseur, D. G. (2015). To provide or not to provide course PowerPoint slides? The impact of instructor-provided slides on student attendance and performance. Computer Education, 85,14–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.02.002

Media Attributions

- Don't Make Terrible slides © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Do I really need slides © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Always do this for your slideshow © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- 640px-Latin_alphabet_Ss.svg © Erik1231 is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Never do this for your slideshow © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Slide Sample © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- slide 3 © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- The difference in notes, slides, handouts © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Bored Students
- Slide for academics
- Academic slide cover

This page titled 3.2: Don't Ruin a Great Presentation with Terrible Slides is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.3: Data Visualization- Using Statistics, Numbers, and Charts Without Boring Your Audience



Using Statistics in Your Speech Can

- **Increase your credibility.** Using credible research in interesting ways will increase your credibility.
- **Make your speech memorable.** Effectively used statistics can give the audience something to think about long after the speech is over. Let me share with you a couple of examples from my experience. More than ten years ago, I had a student hand each of us a folded piece of paper. At a set time during his speech, he had us stand if we had an X on our paper. I stood and looked around at four others who were standing. We were then asked to open our paper and read it aloud. Mine said "chlamydia." He went on to tell us for a class the size of ours, statistics suggest at least five of us had a sexually transmitted infection.

> *I also have a very vivid memory of a student who talked about the number of sex offenders who become repeat offenders. Throughout her presentation, she showed the mugshots of men serving a second term for sex offenses. Beside the first mugshot: 24% of rapists who get out will rape again. Beside another mugshot: 16% who molest girls will get out and molest again. Beside another mugshot–35% who molest young boys get out and molest again. I can still see those faces and statistics in my mind's eye.*

- **Emotionally impact your audience.** A properly applied statistic can make us feel something. For example, Telling your audience that according to UNESCO many children do not get to go to school is one thing, sharing with them that in sub-Saharan Africa, one in five children between the ages of six and eleven are not in school. In addition, of those youth ages 15-16, 60% are not in school. To really impact the listeners, a speaker might include a picture of a child. To help students apply the statistic, they might say, "Consider if over half of your high school class was denied access to school.
- **Illuminate a subject.** Statistics can help to shine a light on a problem. Scottish poet, Andrew Lang, said, "Most people use statistics like a drunk man uses a lamppost; more for support than illumination." The good news is you don't have to choose, you can use your statistic to both shine a light and support your argument. A student of mine attended a Passion Conference where Louie Giglio gave a speech that shined a spotlight on the 27 million human slaves who are trapped because of human trafficking. As a result of that speech, over three million dollars was raised and my student came back to Fayetteville, Arkansas, and started a campaign at the University of Arkansas to highlight the issue of modern-day slavery.

Tips for Using Numbers in Speech

Round large numbers off

Instead of saying the US national debt is 27,887,185,810,245, say 28 trillion. Better yet, help the audience understand by saying the US national debt is 28 billion– that represents is $84,000 per citizen and $222,000 per taxpayer. Round statistics to make them easier to remember. Better yet, help the audience apply them. For example, instead of just saying "more than a quarter (25%) of all traffic-related deaths are the direct result of alcohol impairment, you might say, "One in four."

Help your audience visualize numbers by using comparisons

You can say Nik Wallenda walked the 1,400 feet on a wire over the Grand Canyon, but you can help us to understand it by adding a comparison, "He walked 1400 feet– that is the length of four football fields–on a wire."

In 1961, Micky Mantel sent the ball flying 643 feet for the longest home run. To put it in perspective that is 1,257-dollar bills laid end to end.

One speech teacher said her student carried in a 50-pound bag of dog food and sat it on the table and then said, "This used to be me before I lost weight. I no longer carry this bag around with me everywhere I go."

We humans are a smart bunch,
but we really suck when it comes to understanding
and handling excessively large numbers.

George Dvorsky, Writer and bioethicist

Check Out These Examples of Visualizing Large Numbers

- "To put a trillion dollars in context, if you spend a million dollars every day since Jesus was born, you still wouldn't have spent a trillion." Mitch McConnell
- Bill Gates has 56 billion dollars. He has earned over $3000 per minute ($50/second) since Microsoft was created. For perspective, Azad says, For Bill Gates, "spending 5 seconds to pick $100 off the floor is literally not a good use of his time."
- "The Mariana Trench reaches to a maximum depth of 36,000 feet, that's tough to make sense of. It's much easier for our brains to understand that as 6.8 miles (11 km), which is a distance we already have a pretty good intuition for." Spencer Greenberg
- "If you go hang gliding, you have a roughly 1 in 116,000 chance of being killed during that flight. Is that a lot of risk? It's very tough to tell. But here's another way to think about it. If you're a 30-year-old male in the U.S., you have about a 1 in 260,000 chance of dying tomorrow. So that means that tomorrow, by going hang gliding once, you're taking on 3.2 times more risk than you usually do in a given day! So that gives a new way of thinking about hang gliding risk if you're a 30-year-old male in the United States: You're tripling your usual risk of death for each such flight you take." Mathematician Spencer Greenberg.
- "So, let's take a figure like $400,000,000 dollars — which happens to be Powerball's next jackpot amount. How much money is that, really? That's tough to make sense of but if you live for 60 more years, that's 525,600 hours remaining in your life, so if you win that jackpot — not taking into account time/value discounting and inflation considerations — that's like getting paid $761 per hour for each hour in the rest of your life (including when you're asleep)." Mathematician Spencer Greenberg.
- "San Francisco's metro area has about 4.3 million people. How many is that? Well, if you spoke to each person for one minute, and you did that eight hours a day, it would take you 24.5 years to speak to them all." George Dorsky
- What does it mean to think about 400,000 people? One thing I like to do is break it down into something I'm familiar with and that I can kind of visualize: the crowd attending a sporting event. For example, hockey arenas seat about 20,000 people. So, you could envision 400,000 people as 20 hockey arenas worth of people." George Dorsky
- Historian Gwynne Dyer compared the carnage of combined casualties between 72,000 and 73,000 at Borodino to "a fully-loaded 747 crashing, with no survivors, every 5 minutes for eight hours."

Spread numbers throughout your speech

It is tempting to have the "numbers section" of your speech, it is much better to spread them out. If we hear too many numbers all at once, we stop paying attention. Help us to process the number by giving us time to think in between them.

Set up the statistic

Give verbal cues that what we are about to hear is important.

- *I am going to give you a number, that will surprise you.*
- *Let me tell you about this interesting statistic I heard.*
- *This number may shock you as much as it does me.*
- *I was surprised to learn that…*

Say the numbers clearly and with emphasis

- Speak slower when saying numbers
- Repeat the number when necessary
- Pause before saying the number to give the audience time to prepare to listen
- Pause after saying a number to let it sink in

Repeat important numbers

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, one in five use adults has low literacy skills. The survey defines literate as those who have the ability to the ability to "understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

If you are like me, you read the information, but it didn't fully sink in. Now, consider the impact of that statistic when you repeat it:

> *According to the National Center for Education Statistics, one in five use adults has low literacy skills. One in five… let that sink in for a moment. That's one in five adults who struggle to read a newspaper, a job application, a medical form. That's one in five adults who lack the ability to achieve their goals and potential. That's one in five adults who can't read the voting form. That's one in five adults who lack the ability to read things that would allow them to engage in society.*
>
> *Literacy is defined as the ability to "understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" and one in five adults in the US, cannot do that.*

Pair the number with a story

When you pair your number with a powerful graphic or story, it becomes even more moving.

> *When I think of the low literacy rate, I think of a man I know. He was the high school football star who was pushed through school so he could play on the team. He graduated with a letterman's jacket and fame as a hometown hero. He graduated a star, a star who was unable to read. At eighteen years old, he was handed a diploma and sent out into the world unable to read a job application, unable to read a medical form at the doctor's office, and unable to read his son a story before bed. When I think of one in five adults, I think of him and, all of a sudden, it is more than a number.*

Tell them why it is important

Don't just tell a story about your statistic, tell why it matters.

> *The illiterate football star went on to have four children of his own. When his daughter needed help with her reading, dad couldn't help. When the children did learn to read, they would read for dad. They would read his mail, his paperwork, his government documents.*

Statistics shouldn't just hang there, they should be emphasized, make relatable, and applies. Speech coach Nancy Duarte reminds us that a number alone doesn't mean anything– "Data slides aren't really about the data. They're about the meaning of the data. It's up to you to make that meaning clear before you click away. Otherwise, the audience won't process — let alone buy — your argument."

Activate their other senses

Numbers will not cause us to see, hear, feel, or sense movement unless, the speaker helps us.

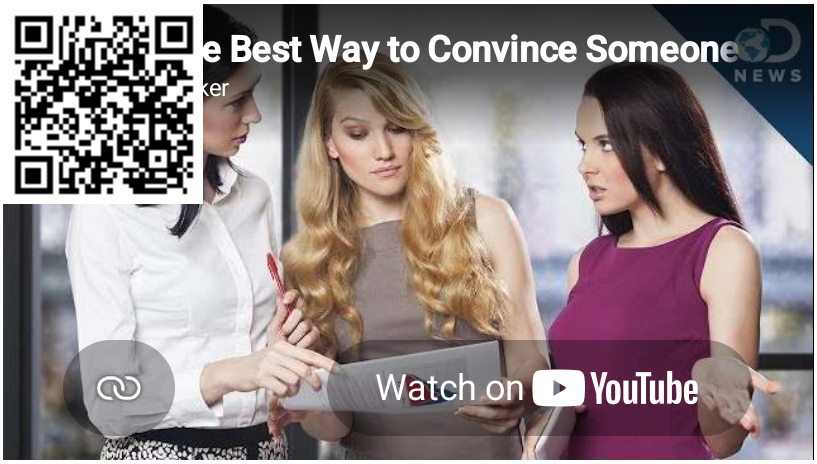
Take for example this classroom activity created by National Geographic as a resource for teachers to help students understand the distances of the planets. They encourage teachers to take students outside and count their steps as they mark the distance of the planets.

- Sun: stands at the edge of the area
- Mercury = 1 step from the sun
- Venus = 2 steps from the sun
- Earth = 2.5 steps from the sun
- Mars = 4 steps from the sun
- Jupiter = 13 steps from the sun
- Neptune = 76 steps from sun

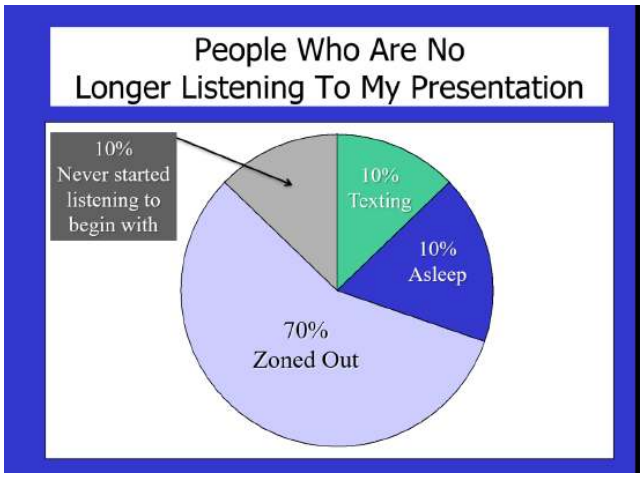
You might not have your audience go outside (this is a speech, after all), but you could take steps along the stage to help them "see" and imagine. You could have a volunteer take the steps, or you could put up a picture of each planet one at a time and ask the audience to imagine walking to that planet. Why the emphasis on walking? Because even the act of imagining walking a distance activates the movement part of the brain. The more parts of the brain you can get involved in, the more memorable the concept.

Use charts to persuade your audience

In this D-News video, they tell you about what research says about the best way to convince someone they are wrong. Watch here:



Use Charts to Highlight the Content



Four Principles for Making a Memorable and Effective Pie Chart

- Make your pie chart as large as possible.
- Go for high contrast colors.
- Put the numbers *on* the chart as opposed to using a key.
- Have a clear title explaining the purpose of the chart (optional).

I learn best by example, so let me show you and not just tell. Watch how these speakers used their charts.

Watch how Tim Urban creatively uses charts at the beginning to make a big point.



Watch the first three minutes of this speech and how Alice Goffman brilliantly uses a graph. This video has to be watched on the TED YouTube channel.



Notice in the first two examples that the charts are simple and easy to read. They emphasize the point that is being made.

Sebastian Wernicke takes a tongue-in-cheek look at statistics regarding the most and least popular TED talks. This is a creative way to show data and statistics as he tells you how to create the “optimum TED Talk.”



He references his Tedpad in the speech, here is the link so you can see more for yourselves go to Tedpad.

I invited a professional colleague of mine to advise you on making data slides. I’ll let him tell you how to make data slides that captivate.

Data and Slides: Confuse Your Audience or Captivate Them?
Your Choice
by Robert “Bob” Kienzle

As a corporate communication consultant, I help bank and insurance employees improve their presentation skills and one of the top requests I get is to help financial analysts present their research, data and slides clearly. The problem I am most often called up on to fix: data-heavy presentations. I typically see three major problems:

1. Data dumps: Presentations that are 90% information, content, data, and research.
2. Speaker or slides: Presentations that rely on slides for delivering ideas, and the slides ultimately make the presenters obsolete.
3. Vexing visuals: Graphs and charts overflowing with numbers, lines, and text, making it hard to read and even harder to follow.

I tell my clients that it is easy to avoid these presentation errors by following three suggestions.

Suggestion #1: Analyze your audience and speak to their experience.

No matter what field you are in, stop showing your audiences how smart you are. Give them the information they will be able to understand and use in their jobs. This might mean making different versions of your core presentation for different audiences. Be sure to leave out technical language and jargon for non-experts. If the audience will need to look up the term or ask someone what it means, use a simpler word, or define the tech lingo right from the start.

Think about a financial researcher who knows all the numbers backward and forwards. When they create a chart for their fellow researchers, there are 10 rows and 10 columns of information with small charts and numbers. Their chart covers 5 years of data. Their fellow researchers have seen similar charts and data before: they can follow one column to the next because the patterns of information make sense. Now consider what happens when that chart is brought into the marketing department. The slides become the focus of the presentation instead of the presenter. The marketers try to read and figure out what all the data means. They don’t know the history of this data. They don’t use complex charts of financial research. They don’t know which sets of data to look at and, more importantly, they don’t care. They think, “What’s the takeaway the marketing team needs?” The financial researcher could easily make a simpler chart with 3 rows and columns. The researcher could show the overall trends of the last 5 years, not the details of each year. If the marketing team needs more detail, they can easily ask for more.

Suggestion #2: Use examples, stories, and easy-to-imagine explanations with your data.

Do you know what humans aren't good at? Making sense of raw data. Remembering standalone facts. Visualizing statistics in their head.

Our brains don't think in large numbers, especially when large numbers are first presented. Most of us have never physically been in a room with 1 billion US dollars. Even seeing the number written out as 1,000,000,000 takes people a moment to count the zeros and think, "ah, 1 billion, not 1 million." Most of us have never had that many zeros in our personal bank accounts (if you have, I have some investment proposals I'd love to share with you)! Heck, my iPhone's calculator only goes up to 100,000,000. So when we present large numbers, whether it's dollars, people, or trees, why do we think these large statistics will make sense to our audience?

Give the audience some familiar examples and comparisons to make sense of large numbers.

- *Example 1: "1,000,000,000 dollars is what it would cost 25,000 Arkansans to get a 4-year degree from the University of Arkansas with in-state tuition and fees."*
- *Example 2: "1,000,000,000 people is the population of Arkansas 333 times over, or 3 times the entire US population. That's like 11,018 Fayettevilles."*
- *Example 3: "The US government wants to plant 1 billion trees. A line of 1 billion trees spaced 10 feet apart would stretch 18,939 miles or 76% of the way around the Earth's equator."*

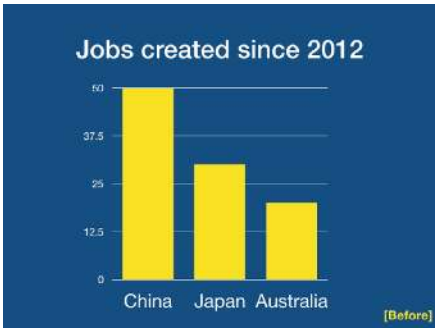
Storytelling is another great way to make sense of your data. In data-heavy presentations, tell a story. Audiences don't visualize or remember numbers very well, but they do visualize and remember stories. Tell us the time period, the characters, the plot, and what happened, and along the way, drop in your statistics to serve as details.

Suggestion #3: Use headlines, highlights, and the most appropriate chart or graph.

There's a fundamental rule about how audiences obtain information: humans rely on their eyes more than other senses. If you give them something to read, they will read it. If you give them something to read while you are talking at the same time, not only are they going to focus on reading and stop paying attention to the words coming out of your mouth, you are going to overload their short-term memory with too much stimuli. This stops long-term memories from being formed, and that's why many business presentations (and one might argue college lectures) are forgotten.

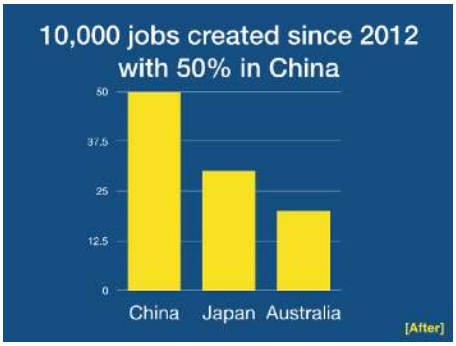
Let me give you three recommendations on creating data slides, charts, graphs, and tables that will impact your audience.

1. Use headlines to start each slide with your key message and help the audience make sense of the data. Take a look at this slide and try to guess the speaker's key message:



You have to analyze the data and numbers for yourself. Isn't it the speaker's job to tell you what's important? Additionally, there may be information missing. Are those 50 jobs created in China or 50% of jobs? Is the speaker focused on the high number of jobs created in China, or are they focused on the fewer jobs created in Australia? I guess I'll have to wait for the speaker to tell me.

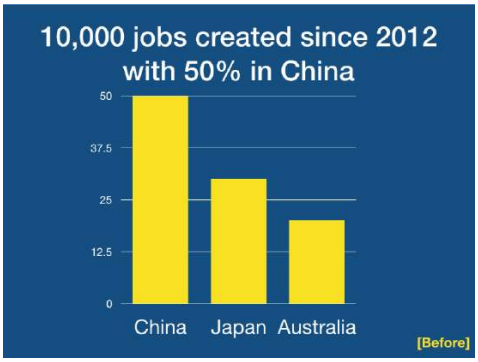
Take a look at the slide with a headline:



Now the audience gets the key message right away even before the speaker has to say anything (or after they have explained their message and they want to back it up with visuals). Once we read the headline, the rest of the data makes sense, and we can spend time

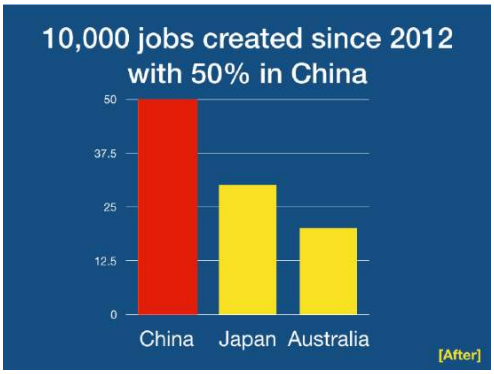
listening to the speaker instead of interpreting the data for ourselves.

2. Use highlights to show what's important and to direct the audience's eyes and attention. Look at this graph again:



Imagine the speaker wants to talk about the jobs in China first: what kind of jobs were created, which cities in China they were in, and how the jobs were performing. The problem is that audiences love to use their eyes, so they may drift over to the Japan section and think, "I wonder if the jobs in Japan are in Tokyo or Osaka."

The speaker can use highlights like making a bar in red like this to control the focus on China:



When the speaker moves from China to Japan, the highlight can change with their transition.

3. Choose the right type of chart or graph for your data. Bar graphs, line graphs, pie charts, spider charts, box and whisker plots…the list of options goes on. While the dozens of choices can be overwhelming, there are resources to help you choose what works best for your data and your purpose.

In closing, if all these suggestions make sense, that's awesome. Your next step is to start using them. Try one suggestion and see how your presentation and visuals improve. Once you're comfortable with the improvement, use another. The ultimate goal isn't simply clarity and understanding in your data presentations; the goal is getting the job offer, getting your boss to approve your new project, or getting your client to sign a contract. Being relatable and understandable especially with data makes you a great communicator, and people love working with great communicators.

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Effectively using, charts, data, and statistics can increase credibility, emotionally impact your audience, and make your speech memorable.
- Help the audience relate to numbers by rounding off large numbers, using comparisons, and pairing the number with a story.
- Spread statistics throughout your speech, set up the statistic, and repeat important numbers.
- Always tell the audience why the statistic is important.
- When using charts, make them large and easy to read.

For more information on this topic to include classroom activities and videos, go to the supplemental materials chapter https://uark.pressbooks.pub/speaking/chapter/charts-data-numbers-examples-and-resources/

References

Azad, K. (n.d.) How to develop a sense of scale. Better explained: Learn right not rote. https://betterexplained.com/articles/how-to-develop-a-sense-of-scale/

CDC. Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Data from the CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/std/statistics/default.htm

Covington, T. (2021). Drunk driving statistics. https://www.thezebra.com/resources/research/drunk-driving-statistics/.

Crime Victims Center, Statistics-Offenders. https://www.parentsformeganslaw.org/statistics-offenders/

DNews: (2014). How to convince someone they are wrong. https://youtu.be/sJ64h49gSwY

Dvorsky, G. (2014). How to understand incomprehensibly large numbers. https://io9.gizmodo.com/how-to-comprehend-incomprehensibly-large-numbers-1531604757

Dyer, G. (1988). *War.* Crown Publishing.

Duarte, N. (2019). *Datestory: Explain date and inspire action through story.* Ideapress Publishing.

Duarte, N. (2013). When presenting your date, get to the point fast. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2013/03/when-presenting-your-data-get.

Duarte, N. (2008). *Slideology: The art and science of creating great presentations.* Oreilly.

End it Movement. https://enditmovement.com/about/

Goffman, A. How we're priming some kids for college—and others for prison. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/alice_goffman_how_we_re_priming_some_kids_for_college_ and_others_for_prison?language=en

Google News. Cases of COVID worldwide. https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US%3Aen

Grasping Large Numbers. (2015). The endowment to human growth. https://www.ehd.org/science_technology_largenumbers.php

Kienzle, B. (2020). Data and slides: Confuse your audience or captivate them? Your choice. Custom essay written for this text.

King, D. (2013). Six tips for using numbers in a speech. Kings Corners. http://donnellking.com/blog/2013/06/six-tips-for-using-numbers-in-a-speech/

The Mick. (n.d.). Mickey Mantle set the record for the longest home run of 643 feet in 1961. http://www.themick.com/anniv06.htm

Mikaberidze, A. (2007). *The battle of Borodino: Napolean against Kutuzov.* Pen and Sword.

National Geographic. (n.d). Planetary size and distance comparison. https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/planetary-size-and-distance-comparison/

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Adult literacy in the United States. https://nces.ed.gov/datapoints/2019179.asp

Reynolds, G. (2008). *Presentationzen.* New Riders.

Romans, C. (2009). Numb and number: Is trillion the new billion? CNN. http://edition.cnn.com/2009/LIVING/02/04/trillion.dollars/

Truth in Accounting. (n.d.). Our Debt Clock https://www.truthinaccounting.org/about/our_national_debt?gclid=CjwKCAiA65iBBhB-EiwAW253W0c-SP83hbLCqB55eSq-jTvbqjhtZobz_SIKrygtTyvO2vUXCAoMfBoCtgEQAvD_BwE

Unesco Institue for Statistics. Education in Africa. http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa

Urban, T. (2016). Inside the mind of a master procrastinator. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arj7oStGLkU

U.S. Debt Clock.org. https://www.usdebtclock.org/#

Wernicke, S. (2010). Lies, damned lies, and statistics (about TEDTalks). [Video] YouTube.https://youtu.be/1Totz8aa2Gg

Media Attributions

- happy © Andrew Tarvin is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Pie chart © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Before and after sample slides.009 © Bob Kienzle is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Before and after sample slides.010[4826] © Bob Kienzle is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Before and after sample slides.011[4829] © Bob Kienzle is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

- Before and after sample slides.012[4828] © Bob Kienzle is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 3.3: Data Visualization- Using Statistics, Numbers, and Charts Without Boring Your Audience is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Speeches

4.1: Persuasive Speechmaking- Pitching Your Idea and Making it Stick
4.2: Career Speech- Tell Them Who You Are and Why You Matter to Them
4.3: Elevator and Career Fair Pitch- Standing Out While Still Fitting In
4.4: Toast Speech
4.5: Award Speech- And the Winner is...
4.6: Graduation Speeches- Speeches You Give in Pointy Hats
4.7: Eulogy-Good Words
4.8: Introducing a Speaker
4.9: Tribute Speech- Celebrate the Occasion, the Person, or the Monument
4.10: Informative Speech

This page titled 4: Speeches is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.1: Persuasive Speechmaking- Pitching Your Idea and Making it Stick



Let me tell you about my persuasive journey.

Not long after I graduated high school, I found myself selling electronics. My favorite thing to sell was car stereos. In the salesperson role, I made pitches to individuals, to families, to corporations, and even pitches on the main stage at the trade show. What I learned firsthand is that people usually were there because they liked stereos, they needed stereos, or they were thinking of buying a stereo. I just needed to help them find the right fit stereo. What that meant for me was I needed to learn to read people.

I sold stereos back in the day when CDs were just becoming popular (I guess I'm old, huh?). In my CD bag, I had the best CD from each genre. I was ready to play MC Hammer's *Can't Touch This*, AC/DC Back in Black, The Cure's Boys Don't Cry. I had the top song and top CD from each genre. When someone came into the store, I would "read" the person to guess their musical preferences. I would put the matching CD in the player and crank it up. I would know instantly when I would get it right because the customer's face would light up and they would nod to the music. Often, people would come to me and to the stereo that was playing and buy that unit. It was a valuable lesson. People were not buying the CD player as much as they were buying the song they liked and buying from a salesperson who got could relate to their interests. Yes, they would look at the features and the company name, but the fact that I knew their music was very persuasive.

Knowing your audience is like knowing the customer. You must get a good "read' so you know the right way to pitch your idea. I cannot overemphasize the importance of audience analysis which leads me to my first main point.

Audience Needs are Key

University professor Clay Warren said, "The mistake of a novice persuader is saying what you want to say rather than what the audience needs to hear." That does not mean pandering, but it does mean taking a lot of time to think about them–the audience. When I am asked to give a persuasive speech, I always gather all the details about the audience and then the event, and then I spend time thinking. Thinking about the audience. I imagine their faces and think about who they are. I think about their motivation for listening. I think about how what I have to say can in some way, make their life better. Only after I have a strong mental picture of my audience, do I then begin to write the speech.

There is an entire chapter to help you think about the audience and needs.

> Consider these examples. A popular topic for persuasion speeches in college classes is persuading my classmates to donate blood. Most speakers will talk about the need for blood donations, the need created by a low blood supply, and the need to contribute to the community. When I ask my college students why they *really* donate blood, I get answers like, "Points for my sorority," "To win the homecoming competition," "To get a free T-shirt," and "Because my friends were doing it." The point here is that there are multiple layers to why people are persuaded.

I am currently pitching an idea to the upper administration. As I am carefully researching, someone close to the key administrator said, "Don't just show him your ideas, show him what will be his return on investment? He is a numbers person, break down your main points in terms of numbers, dollars, and cents, increased enrollment, improves retention." Information like this is key when analyzing the audience for a persuasive message.

My next story takes us to my time as the director of a not-for-profit. I spent my days making public appearances for publicity, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment. We had impressive numbers to share with funders, we had a large client base, a well-trained group of volunteers, and a good reputation. When I first began making presentations, I felt like while the audience was hearing about our organization and thinking it was a good place to volunteer or donate, many would agree but not act. If the organization was to keep serving the community, we needed more volunteers and more money.

I realized part of the problem was the way we had been "pitching" the organization. We overemphasized the hard data–the number of people served and the number of volunteers and the audience couldn't visualize what we were doing. They couldn't "see" the impact of their donation. They couldn't "see" what they would be doing as a volunteer. I began collecting stories. Here is one such story.

> *Miss Sally lives out in a small rural city at the end of a long dirt road. She lives alone and her neighbors are just out of sight. One day when she went out back of her house to check how much propane was in her outdoor propane tank, she slipped and fell. She broke her hip. She laid outside for three days unable to get back to her house to call for help. Luckily, the mail carrier noticed her mail building up and looked around and found her. He called an ambulance and after hip surgery, she is on the road to recovery. Social services connected her to our group and now a volunteer calls her every day. If she doesn't answer, someone goes out and checks on her. Once a week someone stops by at lunchtime and eats with her. They share stories, and laughter. If she needs an errand run, a volunteer picks up items and brings them. Sally is one of the 105 people that with just a little bit of help can remain independent.*

As you can imagine, the responses to speeches that included stories were so much different. People were much more likely to give money or to volunteer once they were told a story because they could see, Ms. Sally. Some people even asked about her. They could imagine the pleasure they would get from calling someone to check on them. Donors thought of someone they know and how they want their loved ones cared for. "Seeing" a person instead of an organization made all the difference. This leads me to my second point; the audience needs to "see" to be persuaded.

The Audience Needs to "See" to be Persuaded

If you are persuading an audience to buy a product, they need to visualize how it works and how it fits into their life. If you are persuading an audience to make a social change, they need to visualize how the world will be better because of this change. If you are persuading an audience to donate to an organization, you need to help the audience visualize the impact of their donation.

Visualization can be achieved by literally showing visuals, by demonstrating the product, or by telling a story.

There is an entire chapter to help you work on incorporating a story into your speech.

Oftentimes a story will help awaken emotions in an audience. This is known as pathos. Pathos is the passion of the speaker and the types of things that the speaker talks about. Warren reminds us "facts go through your brain like water through a sieve. But a story creates an emotional connection. If you get the emotion, you will remember. It is harder to attach an emotion to a number."

The Audience Needs to Be Given the Facts in a Way that They Can Understand, Relate, and Remember

Yes, you want to identify with an audience and help them feel something, but you also need facts in your speech. You need to do the research and you need to present the arguments. Keep in mind — facts alone are rarely persuasive. It is the *way you present those facts* that makes them persuasive. When giving your numbers, pair them with a story. When giving statistics, helped the audience to visualize them.

There is an entire chapter to help you work on representing stats, numbers, and charts.

Make sure you chose to talk about facts that match the audience. For some, the review of a social media influencer is more convincing than the reviews from a publication. For an academic audience, the names of the researchers and the names of the

journals they publish in will garner attention, but for other audiences, the title of the person as “cardiologist at a top research institute” would be more persuasive.

One more story. I spent time as a manufacturer’s representative. I traveled to five states setting up distributorships for a “generic” brand of diesel engine parts. The parts we sold were made at the same factory as the name brand, they were just stamped with a different name and then put in different boxes. In that role, I made individual presentations and a lot of board room presentations. The hardest part seemed to be convincing people that our parts were as good as the name-brand ones. Our parts were more than 50% less in price which seems like a good thing. Unfortunately for us, ingrained in many people’s heads is the idea that *expensive means good* and *name brand parts are of better quality.* It took six months to get our first big account, but once we had one major account, sales became much easier. The perceived credibility of the product and the credibility of our sales team came, not from how good the product was or our credentials, but our credibility came from the status of a big-name company that was using our product.

This leads me to my last big point; the audience needs to trust you.

The Audience Needs to Trust You

Credibility is key to the success or failure of a presenter. The whole speech rests on credibility, if they don’t trust you, they won’t listen. You build your credibility by how you are dressed, how you are introduced, how you tell the audience why you are competent in this area helps the audience listen. In my story, our credibility came from the name of the big company that used our parts.

Your credibility helps create trust and trust is essential to persuasion.

Ethos: Credibility

Ethos (credibility) is all about your character, your intentions, your good judgment, as well as your respect for yourself, your speech, and your audience. Aristotle said there are three components of ethos and all three should be employed.

- **Phronesis** (froh-nee-sis) practical wisdom. Prudence. It implies good judgment and excellence of character and habits. ” To do the right thing in the right place, at the right time, in the right way.” -Carr
- **Arete** (ah-reh-‘tay) is the moral virtue of your argument. It refers to excellence of any kind but when applied to speech it means to persuade in a morally virtuous way.
- **Eunoia** (you-noh-iea) is the goodwill you establish. It is what happens when a speaker considers the audience and cultivates a relationship of trust with them.

Watch this short TED-Ed video that connects what we have just discussed on credibility and audience needs.



Now that I shared with you some of the foundational principles of persuasion, let me share a few more thoughts about persuasion that will help you as your build your speech.

Make it Do-Able

Persuasion needs to be doable. Be specific with what you want the audience to do. Are you wanting them to consider an opposing viewpoint? Are you wanting them to donate blood? Are you wanting them to give to a charity? Are you wanting them to see the value of a liberal arts education? Are you wanting them to buy your product? Tell them specifically what you want.

The other way to make it doable is to give them realistic goals. I recently took part in a health and fitness program at the university. The program was aimed at helping people engage in healthy practices. If the program told everyone to go and run five miles a day, it would have looked impossible to most of the participants. Instead, the program focused on things you could do at your desk like chair yoga. Instead of telling everyone to change their diet, they asked participants to add one more serving of fruit or vegetable to their diets this week. Having things that were doable increased participants' motivation. The increased motivation increased success. Setting realistic goals was also key when I did sales. Instead of immediately asking groups to take on whole parts lines, we would encourage them to stock two of the most popular items and test out customer satisfaction with those items. When I worked with donors, we would ask some for a one-time donation of five thousand dollars while we would ask others for ten dollars a month based on what we knew about the audience's financial means.

Finally, you should make the persuasion doable by telling them how to accomplish what you've asked. I had a student tell us to go to Mount Ida to dig crystals. I had no idea where that was. His speech was successful because he showed us on the map where it was located. He showed up pictures of what we would see when we got there, and he told us specific things we should pack. He made it easy to comply. Coincidently, I dug two duffle bags worth of crystals and they are sitting in my garden today. If you are making a sales pitch, you may be telling them how to use the order form or how to access the website. The more you show things, the more they visualize themselves doing it, the more likely it is that they will follow through.

Overcome Objections

Anyone who has been through advanced sales training knows a key part of any sales pitch is the part where you are overcoming objections. In a one-on-one sales pitch, a salesperson might say, "Are there any things standing in your way?" In a persuasive presentation, you do the same thing, just not as overtly. Let me tell you a little about a flu shot and how it relates here.

When you get a flu shot you are given a little dose of the flu so that your body can build immunity from future attackers. Basically, you get a little of the flu so you can become immune. Similarly, giving someone a little dose of an argument can help prepare them for future persuasive attacks. McGuire called this **inoculation theory**. In short, you can help prepare people to deal with objections. This can happen in several ways.

This can happen by **forewarning.** You warn someone they may hear things that disagree. "My opponent will say that…., but that simply isn't true." The simple suggestion that there are different points on the other side helps the individual think about how they might argue for their side. Maybe, I'm trying to persuade you why chiropractic treatment can be helpful for headaches. I might say, "You may hear that chiropractors are just bone crackers that get you addicted to treatment to get money out of you. I certainly heard that before I tried treatment, but my own experience has been…" You warned them of what they might hear (a little dose of the flu) and you helped them to gain immunity.

The other way this can happen is by counterarguments–called **refutational preemption.** You imagine what counterarguments your audience might have and then you address them in your speech. When I sold aftermarket diesel engine parts, I imagined they might object because our product wasn't name-brand so they might think it was inferior. Because of this, I would say, "Let me tell you why the quality of our product is equal to the competition" and then I would show them a chart showing the metallurgical data and quality statistics. When persuading people to donate to the not for profit, I imagined they might object to giving money because they are already giving somewhere else so I would say, "There are many worthy causes to give your money and time to so let me tell you why this is a worthwhile cause…."

When making a good inoculation, make sure you don't try to make the other side's argument too strong, or they might end up agreeing with the other side. In addition, don't distort what the other side represents. That would make it a strawman fallacy (and in my opinion, unethical). Worst of all, making distorted arguments hurts your credibility and you would risk losing the audience's trust.

> Try This
>
> When working on a persuasive presentation ask several people, "Why might someone object to this?" or "Why might someone not want to try this?" When they answer. Resist the temptation to justify. Don't be defensive, just listen and write down the things they say. Go back to your speech and see how you might preemptively deal with those objections in your presentation.

Look for Agreement

When someone says, “No.” Their whole body begins to disagree. They may lock their jaw, squint their eyes, or cross their arms. Keeping your speech positive and seeking agreement can draw an audience into your topic. Dale Carnegie in his famous book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* suggested getting the audience to say, “Yes” multiple times. Even better if they nod yes as well. “Can we agree tuition is too high–yes. Can we agree it is hard to eat healthy as a college student–yes. Can we all agree… fill in the blank…yes?”

Begin with the End in Mind

When thinking about your persuasion speech, ask yourself how you will measure success? Success in speech class should always be more than the grade you earned. Earnestly try to persuade your classmates of something that will make their lives better.

Begin with the end in mind and ask yourself, what does success look like? I once had a group of students give a speech asking the city to add a traffic signal out front of the college–the city took it into consideration and added the light. Lives were saved because they gave a speech. That is measurable success. I had a student persuade us why we should go to Kansas City for a weekend trip, several students went and thanked the student for the recommendation. That is measurable success. I spoke before the Kiwanis asking them for a donation and they became a financial partner, because of their donation hundreds of homebound seniors received companions, yet again a measurable success.

What about those speeches that ask people to change attitudes? How will you know if your persuasion worked? If you pitched your product and no one bought it, did you succeed? Sometimes getting the word out is a success. Success will not always be tangible. Sometimes you won’t persuade the audience members listening, but they will talk to their associates who will be persuaded. Write down what you want to happen as a result of your speech.

Always begin with the end in mind.

At this point, I want to share with you some excellent persuasive speeches and draw your attention to a few key elements. This video has to be watched on the TED YouTube channel.

Persuasion to Change your Behavior

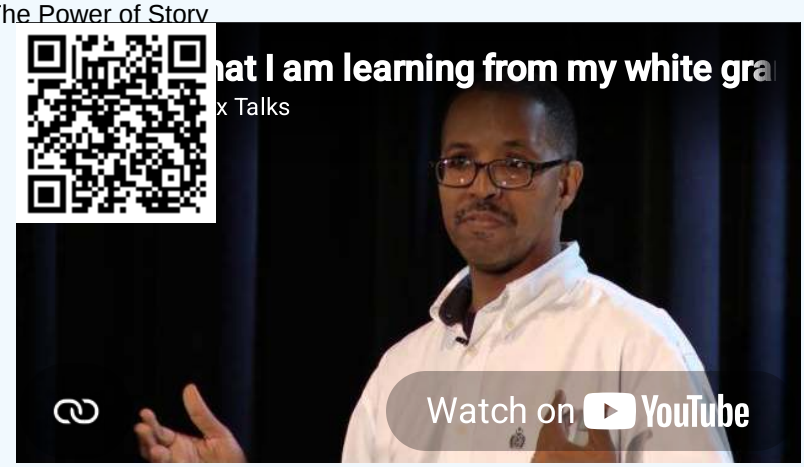


I’m not saying that we all need to live in 420 sq. ft. But consider the benefits of an edited life. Go from 3,000 to 2,000, from 1,500 to 1,000. Most of us, maybe all of us, are here pretty happily for a bunch of days with a couple of bags, maybe a small space, a hotel room. So when you go home and you walk through your front door, take a second and ask yourselves, “Could I do with a little life editing? Would that give me a little more freedom? Maybe a little more time?”

NOTICE

He tells you what he wants you to do, and he makes it do-able. Notice how he slows down and changes his voice and the ending as he delivers his last words–“Good stuff.”

Persuasion of Fact: The Power of Story



Most of society has been acting like race exists but it doesn't matter.
Did you know that race doesn't really exist in scientific terms? 'We' have known this for a while but for some reason we still act like skin color means something. In fact, race doesn't exist, but in our society it does matter.

Notice

He uses stories to draw us in about the topic of race. In doing so, he helps us to avoid being defensive or guarded about the topic and we are more willing to listen.

? Culture Makes a Difference

There are a lot of demographic differences that can influence how a person is persuaded, and an important one of those is culture. I want to focus on the biggest three cultural differences that can influence how you approach a persuasive speech.

Individualism vs Collectivism

- Individualistic cultures stress the value of "I." People in individualist cultures typically value independence and uniqueness and are socialized to see themselves as separate and distant.
- Collectivistic cultures stress the value of "we." People in collectivistic cultures value group membership. They tend to work towards the good of the group and are more compliant with authority.
- A speech that tells the audience how to be independent or how to stand out above the crowd would appeal more to an individualistic audience where a speech that tells the audience how they can fit in and be part of the group would appeal more to a collectivistic culture.
- One study showed the difference in detergent ads. "Cleans with a softness that you will love" was preferred by individualistic societies vs "Cleans with a softness your family will love" was preferred by collectivistic societies.

High vs Low Context

- Low context cultures tend to be direct and linear. There is an emphasis on facts as the most important.
- High context cultures tend to be indirect. Because of the indirectness, it may be harder to "read" the situation unless you have taken time to get to know the individual.
- Doctor recommended would appeal more to high context individuals where a focus on the features and advantages of the product would be more persuasive to low context individuals.
- A speech that is very specific and direct would appeal to a low context culture where a speech that implies or "hints" would appeal more to a high context culture.

Persuasive Speech Patterns

There are many patterns you can use as you create your speech. Here is a brief list of the most common ones.

Problem-Solution

State the problem
Tell us why it is a problem
Offer up a solution to the problem
Persuade us to do something based on the solution you offered

Problem-Cause-Solution

State the problem
Tell us why it is a problem
Tell us what caused the problem
Offer us a solution to the problem
Persuade us to do something in reaction to the solution offered

Comparative Advantages

Duh! Compare the advantages of one product or idea to another.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

This model, designed by Alan Monroe, was originally designed for policy speeches but has been expanded to other types. Sales presenters take note, this one may be for you. Participants in one study appreciated this format because of how organized it made presentations.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence	
Attention: Get the audience's attention (This step usually includes a grabbing statement, a preview, and a credibility statement)	
Need: You make the audience feel a need for a change. This is usually where you should evidence of a need.	
Satisfaction: You satisfy the need. What is the solution or plan to take care of the need you demonstrated?	
Visualization: Help your audience visualize the benefits How will they profit from enacting your plan.	
Action: Tell the audience exactly what you want them to do or to feel. (This step usually includes a review, a call to action, and a closing statement)	

In conclusion, words are powerful. When you are given the privilege of standing before a group of people, they have given you the gift of time. You owe it to them to give them something worthwhile. I have given you some powerful persuasive tools, use them wisely, apply them ethically.

I compiled a few of my favorite persuasive theories and put them in a chapter to help you fine-tune your persuasion. The Science of Persuasion

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Audience needs are key.
- The audience needs to "see" to be persuaded.
- Credibility is essential.
- Persuasion needs to be doable.
- Look for agreement.
- Overcoming objections.
- Consider how you will measure success.

- Consider cultural differences.
- Use the pattern that best fits your speech.

Bonus Feature

Watch these young voices make persuasion speeches at March for Our Lives



Guardian News. (2018). March for our lives: Five of the most powerful speeches. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf5am4wQsc0 Standard YouTube License.

References

Allen, M. (2017). *The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods* (Vols. 1-4). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc doi: 10.4135/9781483381411

Aristotle. (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics* trans. Terence Irwin. Hackett.

Banas, J. A., & Rains, S. A. (2010). A meta-analysis of research on inoculation theory. *Communication Monographs*, *77*(3), 281–311. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751003758193

Boundless (n.d). Types of Persuasive Speeches. *Boundless Communications.* https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-communications/chapter/types-of-persuasive-speeches/

Carnegie, D. (2009). *How to win friends and influence people.* Simon and Schuster.

Clapp, C. (2019). How to persuade others. Learn about your listeners, tailor your speech to their needs, and brush up on your Aristotle. Toastmaster's International. https://www.toastmasters.org/magazine/magazine-issues/2019/apr/how-to-persuade-others

Compton, J., Jackson, B., & Dimmock, J. A. (2016). Persuading others to avoid persuasion: Inoculation theory and resistant health attitudes. *Frontiers in psychology*, *7*, 122. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00122

Guardian News. (2018). March for our lives: Five of the most powerful speeches. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf5am4wQsc0 Standard YouTube License.

Hill, G. (2011). Less stuff, more happiness. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/graham_hill_less_stuff_more_happiness/up-next?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Koo, M. & Shavitt, S. (2010). Cross-cultural psychology of consumer behavior. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444316568.wiem03041

Martin, S. (2010). Being persuasive across cultural divides. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2010/12/being-persuasive-across-cultur

Micciche, T., Pryor, B., & Butler, J. (2000). A test of Monroe's Motivated Sequence for its effects on ratings of message organization and attitude change. *Psychological Reports. 86*(3 Pt 2), 1135–1138. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.2000.86.3c.1135

McGuire W. J. (1961). The effectiveness of supportive and refutational defenses in immunizing and restoring beliefs against persuasion. *Sociometry 24*, 184–197. https://doi.org/10.2307/2786067

McGuire, W. J. (1961). Resistance to persuasion conferred by active and passive prior refutation of the same and alternative counterarguments. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 63*(2), 326–332. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0048344

Peterson, A. (2014). What I am learning from my white grandchildren–truths about race. Anthony Peterson. TEDxAntioch. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5GCetbP7Fg Standard YouTube License.

Standup Speak Out. (2011). Types of persuasive speeches. https://open.lib.umn.edu/publicspeaking/chapter/17-2-types-of-persuasive-speeches/ Created commons attribution-NonCommercial SharewAlike license

Wilfred, C. (2005). What is the philosophy of education? *The Routledge Falmer Reader in the Philosophy of Education.* Routledge.

Wright, G. & Ferenczi, N. (2018). Cross-cultural dimensions impacting persuasion and influence in security contexts. Center for Research and Evidence on Security Threats. https://crestresearch.ac.uk/comment/cross-cultural-dimensions-impacting-persuasion-and-influence-in-security-contexts/

Media Attributions

- melyna-valle-pvl9zYmy1kM-unsplash © Melyna Valle is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 4.1: Persuasive Speechmaking- Pitching Your Idea and Making it Stick is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.2: Career Speech- Tell Them Who You Are and Why You Matter to Them



A very excited college senior came to me and said, “Dr. Meade, I have the opportunity of a lifetime, will you please help me?” She went on to tell me she was a finalist for a very prestigious internship with a major magazine in New York. They were flying her out at the end of the month where she and three other finalists would each make a 3-5 minute presentation. The prompt was, “Tell us about yourself.” Her dream internship hung on the outcome of her three-minute speech. That was a lot of pressure. There wasn’t a lot of information out there on how to succeed at such as speech, so I pulled resources from career centers, from persuasion theory, and from models of good speech practice and created a template for her. It worked– she got the internship! Since that time, more students have come with similar speech tasks, and each time we have applied this template with great success.

There are many ways employers determine which person is the right candidate for a particular position. You are likely familiar with the cover letters, resumes, and interviews, however, the concept of giving a speech as part of an interview may be new to you.

Let me share a few examples of what this speech “looks like.”

✔ Example from a Student

E-MAIL FROM A STUDENT:

I learned a ton last semester and I have my first chance to put your teachings to work in a real-world situation. I recently interviewed with a company (XXX Oil Services) and what do you know I got called back for another interview! They are flying me out to Houston, and they will hold interviews over two days. Part of the requirements for the interview process is that I give a 5-7 minute speech. Here is a little sample of the e-mail they have sent me, and I have attached a short PowerPoint© guideline they have sent as well:

> ***Student Presentations***
> *As part of the interview process, you are required to do a 5 – 7 minute presentation about your life accomplishments. Please review the attached PowerPoint for details and bring your presentation on a flash drive to your interview.*
>
> *Please prepare a presentation (5-7 minutes) in which you*
>
> - *Summarize the accomplishments of your life so far,*
> - *Explain what your goals are and*
> - *Demonstrate that you are the ideal candidate for XXX Services*

? Example from a Human Resource Manager Regarding an Oral Resume

We give candidates 30 minutes to prepare for the exercise, but we have already informed the candidates that they should put together an oral resume presentation ahead of time. That is to say, a few weeks prior to the assessment center I meet with the candidates and tell them that they will have this exercise. They should put together a presentation of about 8 minutes in length that presents their qualifications for the job. I typically emphasize that a simple listing of every course they’ve ever taken or every certification they hold is not very effective. Instead, they should focus on how both their educational and experiential backgrounds have contributed to who they are, how they perform in their current position, and how they will perform in their

promoted position. During the 30 minute preparation period, candidates are given the instructions that tell them they will have 8 minutes for their initial presentation on their resume (this time varies depending on the overall length of the exercise and maybe as long as 15 minutes), and the remaining 12 minutes (or longer depending on the overall length of the exercise) will be devoted to answering the interview questions which are presented to them on the next page. Typically, for a 12-minute answer period, we would provide them 4 interview questions. We inform them both during the candidate orientations and the instructions that the assessors will be asking follow-up questions. I believe this is an essential aspect of a good oral resume and a good assessment center. I encourage follow-up questions from the assessors. So often it is not the initial response that is revealing but rather the candidate's rationale behind the decision that is so important in evaluating the candidate.

✔ Example from a Career Services Specialist

I interviewed Renee Clay Director for Career Services and Students Programs, Walton Career Services and she said companies are asking students to give speeches at follow-up interviews. She said she has even encountered situations where they ask applicants to give a ten-minute speech on a topic of their choice.

? What does this look like in the "Real World"?

- Companies are using career speech by asking applicants to give a speech with the prompt: *Why are you a good fit for this company?*
- Religious groups (Mostly, Christian Churches) are using career speeches by asking the applicants to give a speech with the prompt: *What is your ministry philosophy?*
- Educational groups are asking future teaches to give a career speech with the prompt: *Show us a lesson plan and talk us through the pedagogy.*
- Not for Profits are using this career speech by asking applicants to give a speech with a prompt: *Tell us how your ideals align with our mission statement.*
- Internships are using career speeches by asking applicants to give a career speech with prompts such as the following: *What do you hope to get out of this internship?*

This Speech Is Important

This may be one of the most important speeches you have to give. Most of you will spend four to six years in college and this is the speech that can make all that studying finally pay off. Resist the temptation to under prepare for this speech. Don't put it off and don't let the fear of failure or fear of success stop you from giving the best speech possible. You should put more work into this speech than the papers and tests you did in college. "Procrastination is the fear of success," according to motivational speaker Denis Waitley. "People procrastinate because they are afraid of the success that they know will result if they move ahead now. Because success is heavy, carries a responsibility with it, it is much easier to procrastinate and live on the 'someday I'll' philosophy."

Let's get started on building the speech.

Step One: Learn Everything You Can About the Company.

All good speeches begin with knowing your audience. Start with the job posting and write down the specific things they are looking for. What are the specific skills, what values are represented, what can you learn about the company from what they say about themselves in the job posting? Go to the company's mission and values statement and add it to your research. If it is a larger company, look at the individual division and research its mission and purpose. If you are a college student, check with your career services office and see what information they know about the company. Many career service groups keep databases on major companies and what they look for in candidates, who they know are alums, and many even have lists of the most frequently asked items in their interviews.

If possible, find out who will be listening to your speech. Lauren Rivera, Associate Professor of Management and Organization conducted 120 interviews of hiring professionals and found interviewers are looking for people who are similar to themselves. She suggests there are three reasons for this: (1) interviewers believe the person will be the best fit, (2) interviewers look for people who define merit the same way that they do because it validates their own self-image, and (3) interviewers get excited about

candidates that share their same passions. The more you know about those doing the interview, the more you can make connections.

You have three goals at this point:

1. Research the company so you can make direct references to it in your speech.
2. Familiarize yourself with the core competencies they are looking for so that you can match them to your skillset.
3. Learn enough about the company and interviewees so you can find similarities.



Research the company so you know what they are looking for in an employee.

Step Two: Brainstorm What You Have to Offer

They liked your resume, they interviewed you, and now they are inviting you back to see if you are a good fit for the company. At this point, it does not benefit you to stand and reread your resume to them. You are qualified or they would not ask you back for another interview. They want to know you will pull your weight in the company, but they also want to know if you are someone they would want to spend time with at the office and after work. Now, they are trying to decide if they LIKE. You should pass the Airport, Holiday Party, and Convention Tests.

1. Would the interviewer want to be stranded in an airport in a snowstorm with you?
2. Would the interviewer want to introduce their family to you at the holiday party?
3. Would they want to have dinner with you at the three-day business convention?

Your goal is to be MEMORABLE, LIKABLE, and to DEMONSTRATE you have characteristics they NEED. In order to do that, you need to take a good, hard look at what you have to offer and I'm not talking about your previous jobs or even your GPA.

1. Take Personality, Leadership, and Career Assessment Tests

I suggest taking a version of the Myers-Briggs, Jung Typology. http://www.humanmetrics.com/personality. * Use the results to highlight some strengths you might not have thought of in your brainstorming. Once you get your results, cut and paste them into a document and highlight everything that applies to you that might be of value to the employer. For example, when I look up my type it says that I am creative and I like to come up with original solutions. Yes, that fits.

Let's work with that for now. If I am trying to think of attributes that stand out about me, my creativity and ingenuity might be something that I want to highlight. I would check that attribute against what the company looks for and if it were something that the position would require, then I might decide to develop that. I will write that on my list of possible things to focus on– CREATIVITY and INGENUITY.

Take a variety of tests that you have access to. Consider taking a leadership test and a personality test. If you are a college student, your career center likely has paid for those tests so you can take them. If you have access to *Strengths Quest©, Enneagram©, or the Myers-Briggs© Test, take them.* . Use whatever test you can access to complete a worksheet of your strengths.

2. Ask Your Friends, Family, and Coworkers.

Find those who know you and ask them a series of questions. Resist the temptation to disagree or defend when they share, just listen, and write the responses.

What could I bring to ___ company?
Why would someone hire someone like me?
What would set me apart from other candidates?
What do you think is my strongest attribute?

3. Figure Out What Gets You Up in the Morning

A career advisor for the Walton College of Business asks students, “What gets you up in the morning?” and “What is your why?” Think about what really drives you and make it part of the story you tell.

Step Three: Match Your Strengths to What the Company Needs

Now comes the deep thinking. Look at some of the words that came out from your personality tests and from the words that your friends used to describe you. Look at what special qualities you have to offer. How can you match those with what the company is looking for? How do they relate to the core competencies that the company needs? Try to find three strengths about you that will be valuable to the company.

Most speech prompts (and interview questions) can be answered with “these are my three strengths.”

Question: Tell me about yourself.

> *Answer: These are the strengths that set me apart.*

Question: Why should I give you the job over someone else?

> *Answer: These are the strengths that set me apart.*

Question: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

> *Answer: These are the strengths that set me apart and where they will take me.*

Question: Why do you think you are a good fit for the company?

> *Answer: These are the strengths that make me a good fit.*

Question: What is your leadership style?

> *Answer: These are the strengths that make me this type of leader.*

Most of the time, you can develop your career speech by highlighting your three main strengths. It is worth mentioning that when colleges poll employers and ask them what they are looking for, they list problem-solving skills and the ability to work as a team at the top of the list. If these would be considered valuable where you are interviewing, you should talk about those.

Figure 1: Attributes Employers Seek on a Candidate’s Resume

ATTRIBUTE	% OF RESPONDENTS
Problem-solving skills	91.2%
Ability to work in a team	86.3%
Strong work ethic	80.4%
Analytical/quantitative skills	79.4%
Communication skills (written)	77.5%
Leadership	72.5%
Communication skills (verbal)	69.6%
Initiative	69.6%
Detail-oriented	67.6%
Technical skills	65.7%
Flexibility/adaptability	62.7%
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)	62.7%
Computer skills	54.9%

Organizational ability	47.1%
Strategic planning skills	45.1%
Friendly/outgoing personality	29.4%
Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker	24.5%
Tactfulness	24.5%
Creativity	23.5%
Fluency in a foreign language	2.9%

Source: *Job Outlook 2020*, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Step Four: Develop Your Strengths into a Narrative

Let's face it. Most of the time, the answers people give whether in an interview or speech are boring, they lack substance, and they sound like a form letter. "I am a people person who demonstrates good customer service. I believe in hard work and ….bla, bla, bla." Meaningless words bounce off the ears. Nothing memorable.

If you want to be remembered, tell a story. First, start with your attribute. I had a student who said he was hard-working. He was worried because he didn't have any "real" work experience they might not think of him as hard-working. Once we brainstormed, he realized that he spent every summer on his grandpa's cattle farm. He was out mending fences before the sun rose and many days he would work until dark. He said, "Cows don't care what day of the week it is." He told a story about how his grandfather taught him to work hard and how it was a family legacy to take pride in the work that was done–hard work was a badge of honor. By the time he was done with his story, I would have hired him for just about anything. By storytelling, he convinced me that he would give it his all. He didn't tell me he was a hard worker, he *proved* he was a hard worker. His story was detailed enough that we could see him in our mind's eye. He told a story we could remember. The added benefit of storytelling is that stories make us *feel* something. When your story is done, the audience doesn't just *know* something about you, they *feel* something about you.

Anytime you apply for a position, think about the people tasked with listening to interviews all day long. Get into their heads. The fact they need to hire someone means work is not getting done. Maybe, they are having to do extra work until you are hired. Maybe this is a new position, and they are hoping to make changes in the company once they get someone hired. The fact they are hiring often means they have a lot going on and they are eager to get it going, but they also may be feeling cautious because they need to find the right person. In addition, to meeting with you, they have to do their own job, answer their own emails, deal with customers or coworkers, and figure out what to make for dinner. They may even have to coach the soccer team or volunteer at the food bank. You get it– they are busy. They are busy, they may be stressed so do them a favor and make it easy for them to listen. Be interesting. Do not waste their time.

Imagine when you are writing this speech, that in addition to listening to you, they must listen to at least three other speeches. Imagine after hearing all these speeches that they are going to do their job, go home and do their home time, listen to the news on the way to work, and then come back 24 hours later to make their decision. After time and all those distractions, will they remember you and your strengths? If you only said, "I'm hardworking," then probably not. If you told a story proving you are hardworking, they will remember your story; they will remember you, and they might even tell someone about this incredible presentation they heard.

When building this story, it can be one big story that hits on the three strengths that you want them to remember, or it can be three stories–one for each strength. I once had a student who took the three main ideas from the company's mission statement and told one story of how she exemplified each of those. It was very direct and very audience-centered, and she used that speech to start a new career with her dream company right out of college.

If you are successful, any person listening should be able to repeat your main strengths and repeat your story. Most importantly, they should feel you are competent and motivated.

Step Five: Start Writing and Write it Bird by Bird

It is hard to write about yourself and you are going to have to summons the courage to do it well. Writer Anne Lamont writes about this struggle.

> *Every writer you know writes really terrible first drafts, but they keep their butt in the chair. That's the secret of life. That's probably the main difference between you and them. They just do it. They do it by prearrangement with themselves. They do it as a debt of honor. They tell stories that come through them one day at a time, little by little. When my older brother was in fourth grade, he had a term paper on birds due the next day, and he hadn't started. So my dad sat down with him with an Audubon book, paper, pencils, and brads — for those of you who have gotten a little less young and remember brads — and he said to my brother, "Just take it bird by bird, buddy. Just read about pelicans and then write about pelicans in your own voice. And then find out about chickadees, and tell us about them in your own voice. And then geese." So, the two most important things about writing are bird by bird and really god-awful first drafts. If you don't know where to start, remember that every single thing that happened to you is yours, and you get to tell it.*

You too should write your really terrible first draft and you should tell a story in your own voice. With all your research in front of you, you should start writing bird by bird, story by story.



Memorize your opening sentence.

Step Six: Begin Strong

The very first sentence of your speech should be powerful. You should pluck that sentence out and you should test it on a trusted mentor. Each word in that sentence should be intentional. Soon after that strong first sentence should be your name. You want them to link the strength of those words with your name. You should memorize your opening so you can deliver it with strength.

> ***I didn't choose teaching, teaching chose me.*** *When I came home from kindergarten, I set up school in the back yard and taught the neighborhood kids their ABC's. I guess you could say, I've always been a teacher. Good morning, my name is Frankie Lane, and I want to tell you why I am a good fit for the teaching position. As a teacher, I am enthusiastic, innovative, and encouraging and I would like to demonstrate those attributes to you today.*
>
> ***The regional manager flew into Northwest Arkansas to meet with me.*** *He flew in so he could ask me face to face how my sales strategy resulted in 12% increase in computer sales. He brought with him a team that was ready to listen. My name is Bob Smith, and I would like to share with you what three things I shared with them that day.*
>
> ***If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, and become more, you are a leader.*** *John Quincy Adams. I believe this quote summarize my leadership philosophy that I want to share with you today. Good morning my name is Frankie Lane, and I would like*

> *to tell you how this quote defines my leadership style and why I am a good fit for Amazing Example Company.*

Not only should that first sentence be written to have an impact, but it should also be delivered well. Memorize your opening. Know it so well that you could recite it easily. Practice it in the car, practice it in the shower, practice it while talking to your pet. Resist the temptation to start with "ok so" or "um." You have been working up to this speech all your adult life, you spent hours studying for tests, writing papers, and completing assignments so you could get to this moment. You owe it to yourself to put in the work and to make this speech work for you.

Step Seven: Refer to the Company Throughout

Remember, this is not really a speech about you, it is a speech about them and what they need. Because of this, it is important to talk about the company throughout your speech. "As I was researching your company, I came across a headline that said you were developing one of the largest interactive art displays in the area. As a consumer of outdoor art, I…" or "Your organization's commitment to the environment is inspiring. I became active in environmental issues as part of a collegewide initiative…" A career services specialist suggests, "Don't tell me who you are, tell me why you matter to me."

A common mistake is when speakers act as if they are informing the audience instead of talking to an audience that is familiar. Let me explain. I had a student say, Walmart's mission statement is "to save people money so they can live better." This sounds like the speaker is informing the audience of something they should already know. Instead, they should say "as you already know…" or "we can agree on a key component of the mission statement."

Step Eight: Practice Your Speech

You have researched the company and decided on how to present yourself. Make yourself brief notecards outlining your presentation and begin practicing. You need to practice your speech enough that you could say most of it without notes. Memorize the opening and the closing because those can be the most difficult parts and tend to be the places where the audience is most likely to build impressions of you. If you are required to use presentation slides, be sure to practice with your slides, and perfect the timing. (For more help on slides refer to the chapter: Making Presentation Slides)

In addition to practicing by yourself, you should practice your speech in front of a trusted professional and ask them for honest and detailed feedback. You should also record your speech and watch it as if you were the hiring team. Oftentimes when I practice, I will draw a smiley face on a piece of paper and put a name under it President of the company, and then another with a smiley face and a name, future co-worker. It reminds me that I'm not delivering to a wall but to people. When you practice, tape your smiley audience around the room and speak to them directly, "The director of development will be happy to know that I have successfully…"

For more: Refer to the Chapter on Delivery Advice: Do Not Imagine the Audience Naked! Managing Eye Contact, Movement, and Gestures

Step Nine: End Strong

The very last sentence is where you "seal the deal." Most of the time, this sentence will not come easily. I once read a book where the writer talked about sitting on the floor rocking back and forth wondering why she even bothered and why nothing good was coming to mind. Maybe writing the closing, is not quite that hard for you, but it will be for the rest of us. We will feel self-doubt and inadequacy and will even question why we are bothering in the first place. If that happens to you, walk away and do something you love, and remember your "Why." Why are you pushing yourself? Remember how hard you worked to get here. Remember what gets you up in the morning. After you walked off the self-doubt, come back and write that perfect ending. Look at the last three words and make sure they are words with power.

✔ Example from a Career Speech

SPEECH OPENING

A job isn't just a job. It's who you are. I'm Kelsey Gomez, and today, I'm not going to tell you why I think I'm best suited for this job—I *know* I am. Instead, I'm here to prove to you that this isn't just a job to me, it's a position that I feel best brings out what I was born to do in life. Company's Name is working to make America a better place to be a child and raise a family. To

do this, a person needs to have passion, strong communication skills, enthusiasm to learn and gain experience, and the flexibility to thrive in a dynamic, fast-paced environment—and here's how I possess all of these qualities.

BODY

She told 3 stories to prove her attributes

SPEECH CLOSING

My whole life, I never dreamed of success—I worked for it. I did this by helping others, educating myself, and handling everything that came my way with poise and determination. A job isn't just a job, it's who you are. And, who I am is a passionate, flexible, and driven person who yearns to make a difference in people's lives. The best way to predict the future is to create it. And I believe, if you hire me, Company's Name and I can create something worthwhile.



Step Ten: Present the Total Package

Your speech begins the moment they see you. Your "speech" begins whether you are speaking or not. I once worked for a firm that would have candidates wait in a waiting room before the interview. The administrative assistant would offer them water while they waited. Little did the job candidates know that the assistant was taking notes on their behavior in the waiting room. Were they polite when offered a drink? Were they poised while in the waiting room? Were they prepared? Another strategy I have witnessed firsthand is a business that had applicants write something, if they had to borrow a pen, they clearly weren't prepared. I've even heard of interviewers who watched the applicant pull up to see if the person's car is clean. It does little good to say you pay attention to details and drive up in a dirty car.

Potential employers begin sizing you up immediately. Are you dressed properly? Are your shoes clean? Are you sitting attentively? Are you preoccupied with your phone in the waiting room? Are you walking with confidence? Are you picking your nails? Are you listening respectfully? Everything they see you do or say is part of the interview.

In nonverbal communication terms, trappings are those artifacts that enact stereotypes–a stethoscope around the neck means the person is a doctor or nurse, a briefcase means the person is a business professional. It will benefit you to consider trappings and what yours say about you. Think about the difference between a sports watch and a fancy watch and the message it sends. Depending on the job, one may be preferred. For example, I had a student who researched the group she was interviewing with and realized that high fashion handbags seemed to be important. She borrowed a friends' name-brand bag and then was delighted when someone in the group commented about it in the interview meeting. She wrote me a message afterward that said, "They hired me over other candidates who had higher GPA's and more experience and I think it is because I researched them so well that I knew what they were looking for. I really think my bag helped close the deal."

> *It is worth noting that many career specialists suggest not carrying a bag–in this situation it was an intentional decision based on her research.*

Dress the part. Research the standard dress for the organization. Be cautious, however, because they may wear athleisure wear to work each day, but they expect job candidates to wear a suit for interviews. As a college student, you have a big advantage because you likely have a career center that keeps records of the clothing suggestions for interviewing and many will even have places that will loan you professional clothing items for interviews. Pay close attention to your shoes–they are very important. If at all

possible, buy new shoes. Yes, it may be an expensive item, but so was your education. Time and time again human resources directors and career specialists tell me that the way that people know whether you pay attention to important details is to look at their shoes.

? Handshake Matters



In American business, you should shake hands with the interviewer and key members of the group. Several things go into a good handshake. First is the condition of your hand. You should have neatly manicured nails and clean hands. If you are prone to have sweaty hands, it is a good idea to keep a napkin in your pocket to wipe the sweat off your hand before you shake.

Next, have a firm but not overly aggressive grip. When you reach for someone's hand, you should open your hand wide enough that the web of skin between your pointer finger and thumb is aiming for the web of their hand. Hands should be so neither person's hand is on top. Pump your hand two to three times. When you shake hands, look them in the eye and try to say the person's name and something nice. "Mr. Jackson, I am so glad to have the opportunity to talk with you today. "

When you shake hands with someone that it gives them a positive feeling (if it is an appropriate handshake). When you attach that handshake with their name, you activate even more positive feelings. Research even suggests that other people in the room who see you give a nice handshake will get positive feelings about you. Before an interview, it is a good idea to practice your handshake with friends.

Finally, handshakes vary by culture, so if you are interviewing in a different culture, you should research greeting traditions.

Career speeches are always about you being the best version of yourself. I never have more self-doubt than when I'm doing a job search. I usually have to remind myself that I am smart enough and good enough to apply for this job.

I want you to know, you are good enough. You have worked hard to get here, you are ready. I give you permission to be powerful and confident–it's time to shine.

Bonus Feature: Presenting Academic Research at Conferences or at Job Talks

MIT Professor, Patrick Winston talks about the basics of public speaking and then gives his students advice on how to give a research talk or job talk. If you are headed to a conference or if you are showing your research at a conference, watch this talk for some great advice.



Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- A career speech is not the place you recite your resume, but rather it is where you prove your strengths.
- Telling a story helps your audience remember you.

References

åström, J. (1994). Introductory greeting behavior: A laboratory investigation of approaching and closing salutation phases. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *79*(2), 863–897. https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1994.79.2.863

Barrick, M. R., Swider, B. W., & Stewart, G. L. (2010). Initial evaluations in the interview: Relationships with subsequent interviewer evaluations and employment offers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *95*, 1163–1172. doi:10.1037/a0019918

Chaplin, W. F., Phillips, J. B., Brown, J. D., Clanton, N. R., & Stein, J. L. (2000). Handshaking, gender, personality, and first impressions. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *79*(1), 110–117. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.79.1.110 Available online:https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp791110.pdf

Clay, R. Director for Career Services and Students Programs, Walton Career Services. (2020). Personal Interview.

Ellis, D. A., & Jenkins, R. (2015). Watch-wearing as a marker of conscientiousness. *PeerJ*, *3*, e1210. https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.1210

Renee Clay Director for Career Services and Students Programs, Walton Career Services. Personal Interview. November 22, 2020.

Dougherty, T. W., Turban, D. B., & Callender, J. C. (1994). Confirming first impressions in the employment interview: A field study of interviewer behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *79*, 659–665. DOI: 10.1037//0021-9010.79.5.659

Interviewing Skills. Walton College of Business Website. https://walton.uark.edu/career/students/interviewing.php

Lamont, Anne, Twelve truths I learned from life and writing. TED Talk Feb 12, 2019. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.dailygood.org/story/2187/12-truths-i-learned-from-life-and-writing-anne-lamott/

National Association of College and Employers. (2020). The top attributes employers want to see on resumes. https://www.naceweb.org/about-us/press/2020/the-top-attributes-employers-want-to-see-on-resumes/

Rivera, L. (2013). Hirable like me. https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/hirable_like_me

Winston, P. (2019). How to speak by Patrick Winston. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Unzc731iCUY

** (I could write an entire chapter on how a test can never tell you who you are, and I could debate the validity of most of these tests, but that won't be necessary, because the way that I have you use it, it will be valuable. I don't want the tests to tell you who you are or who you can be. I want you to look at the results of these tests and look at what you think fits.)*

Media Attributions

- Man carrying a briefcase © Marten Bjork is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- tom-rogerson–PYkAUIVi_M-unsplash © Tom Rogerson

- Professional in front of a whiteboard © ThisisEngineering RAEng is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Two women professionally dressed © Christina is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

---

This page titled 4.2: Career Speech- Tell Them Who You Are and Why You Matter to Them is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.3: Elevator and Career Fair Pitch- Standing Out While Still Fitting In



Someday the elevator might be your path to success.

You've got dreams of landing a perfect job if you could only catch a break. One day that break happens as you step on the elevator and there is the one person you need to talk to. This is the person who can launch your career, do you know what to say?

An elevator pitch is a short 30 second to one-minute persuasive speech that you always have ready. You can use your elevator pitch at a job fair, on your LinkedIn summary, at networking events, at conferences, and when you meet someone in the elevator. Most of this information is straightforward and doesn't require a lot of writing from me, but it does require a lot of thought, careful preparation, and practice on your end.

Body Language Matters

Whether it is a chance meeting on an elevator or a deliberate meeting like a job fair, remember that your body language speaks volumes before you ever say a word.

- Have a confident posture.
- Practice so you always have a good handshake ready at a moment's notice.
- Don't rush. Speaking too fast makes you sound nervous.
- Keep an open body posture. Crossing your arms or legs looks like you are protecting yourself or hiding something.
- Make good eye contact.
- Breathe. I mean it, don't forget to breathe!
- If this is a deliberate encounter, dress the part. Wear professional clothing and bring a notebook, pen, and copies of your resume.

Making Your Pitch

Introduce Yourself with a Smile

- Hi, I'm Frankie Lane and I'm pleased to meet you."
- "Good morning, I'm Titus Smith and I'm glad to meet you."
- "Hello, I'm Pedro Gonzales. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Remember GNAP

Indeed.com suggests remembering GNAP: Greeting name, affiliation purpose.

Hello (greeting) I'm Mary Moore (name) I'm a senior business major from the Walton College of Business (affiliation) and I'm interested in your marketing position (purpose).

Focus On What You Have to Offer or What You Are Looking For

- Hello, I'm Gabrielle Fowler. I'm a recent graduate with a degree in marketing and a minor in journalism. I create illustrations for websites and brands. My passion is coming up with creative ways to express a message, and drawing illustrations that people share on social media.

1. Hi, my name is Javonte Newsom. I recently graduated from college with a degree in communications. I worked on the college newspaper as a reporter, and eventually, as the editor of the arts section. I'm looking for a job that will put my skills as a journalist to work.

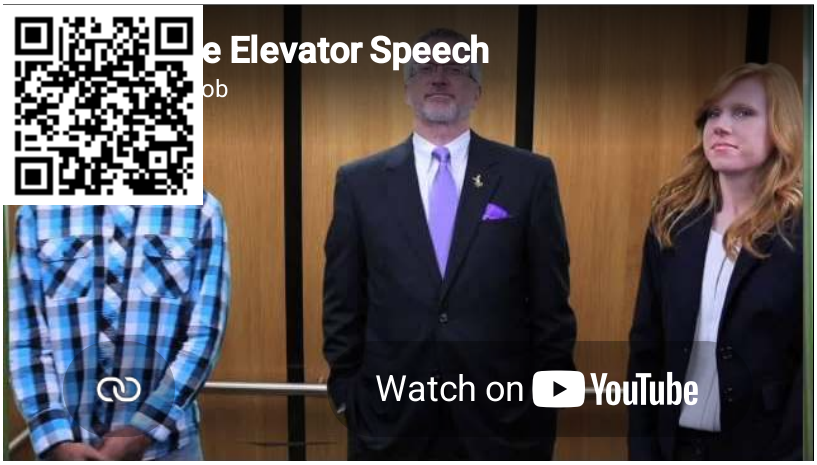
Examples from UpKey

- Here is a sample from a student with no experience
    - My name is Sandra Engles and I am a freshman at the University of Illinois majoring in Apparel Merchandising and minoring in Marketing. I have always had an interest in fashion and enjoy reading fashion magazines and blogs. After completing a four-week-long school project where I created a styling tips guide, I sharpened my creativity skills while also learning how to use photoshop. I am looking for a summer internship in the fashion industry where I can help a marketing team by using my creativity and photoshop skills.
- Here is a sample from a student with experience
    - Hi, my name is Sarina Jones and I am a recent graduate from the business school at the University of Wisconsin. I double-majored in Finance and Economics. After working at JLL Real Estate, I discovered I have a passion for corporate real estate. From being a Financial Analyst, I learned how to apply my finance knowledge when analyzing potential real estate investments to determine if the investment would yield positive returns and meet budget requirements. I am hoping to find a full-time job in the real estate industry that allows me to use financial and economic skills to guide strategic decision-making.

Career Fair

- Have copies of your resume ready to pass out.
- Research companies ahead of time and come ready with questions.
- Bring a notebook and a pen.
- Don't bring along your excess baggage: No backpack, bulky purse, shopping bag.
- Practice your handshake before you go.
- Dress professionally.
- Approach booths alone. This is not time to hang out with friends.
- Stay off your phone. Be attentive to your surroundings even if you are in line waiting to talk to a recruiter.
- Take notes: It helps you remember, and it helps you look attentive.
- Always send a follow-up email.





Advice From a Sports Management Professional about the Elevator Pitch

I invited Craig Schmitt, a teaching assistant professor in the Recreation and Sport Management Program at the University of Arkansas to talk more about the elevator pitch. He has worked both on the university level and in the non-profit level teaching athletes, trainers, and sports professionals the art of the elevator pitch. Here is what he shared:

Elevator pitches are an introduction, a way to engage with someone with shared interests or experiences. An elevator pitch is not the conversation, but rather a tool to demonstrate relevance and *spark* a conversation. For job seekers, elevator pitches can also effectively be used as a response to the most common opening question in an interview, and the one question few interviewees seem to prepare for, "Tell me about yourself."

Relevance and *brevity* should remain top of mind. Our lives are full of clutter that distracts an audience or listener from being present in the moment, and attention spans are only diminishing. Thus, we should strive to concisely deliver relevant content. It is helpful to approach an elevator pitch with a marketing orientation, or a recognition that it is much easier to "satisfy the consumer's needs or wants" than it is to "sell them your product." Thus, while the person delivering the elevator pitch inevitably will share information *they* believe is interesting, unless that information is relevant to the audience (or "satisfies the consumer's needs or wants"), it is unlikely to be heard and retained.

Schmitt suggests using the following three (3) part structure for developing an elevator pitch is designed to spark a conversation.

> **THE HOOK –** Effective presentations begin with a hook, or a way to create initial interest (and hopefully, but temporarily, removing clutter from the audience's mind). For an elevator pitch, the hook is your *passion*. This should be a relatively brief, but specific statement. Focus on the impact you want to make on an industry or a group of people (not on a job title and/or organization). This impact should align with the impact your audience also strives to make. If there is an alignment, you will likely see an emotional response from the audience (a nod and a smile as they reflect on this shared passion).
>
> **THE EVIDENCE –** Then, share *evidence* that you are pursuing that passion. This could come in the form of work experience, education, volunteer activities, or other efforts. But this should be a specific story, concisely told (the STAR method could help structure the story – Situation, Task, Action, Result).
>
> **YOUR NEXT STEP –** Lastly, be sure to share your *next step*. In other words, what do you see as the next position or step in your career path? This helps demonstrate your understanding of your career trajectory, and your desire to continue to gain experience and learn skills (i.e., coachability) as you pursue your passion and strive to make impact.

? Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Always have an elevator speech ready.
- Be prepared and be concise.
- GNAP: Greeting name, affiliation purpose.
- Focus on what you have to offer and what you want.

Bonus Feature

How to Pitch Your Company

Elevator Pitch Formula

1. My name is_____ I am with _____ (insert name of company you work for)
2. We work with _____ (Insert X)
3. Who _____ (insert Y)
4. We help them _____ (insert Z)
5. So that _____ (insert W)

Example of the formula applied:

1. My name is Peter Khoury, I am the founder of Magnetic Speaking – A public speaking training company in San Francisco
2. We work with corporate professionals:
3. Who want to improve their public speaking skills.
4. We help them through one-on-one coaching and group training to communicate with confidence, clarity, and charisma!
5. So that they can excel at their jobs and take their careers to the next level.

How to Elevate Your Elevator Pitch: For Corporate Professionals

References

Doyle, A. (2021). How to create an elevator pitch with examples. https://www.thebalancecareers.com/elevator-speech-examples-and-writing-tips-2061976

Edwards, V. (2014). The best elevator pitch. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/yi41U9ahyoE Standard YouTube License

Indeed.com (2021) How to introduce yourself at a job fair (with examples). https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-introduce-yourself-at-a-job-fair

Tennesse Tech. (2013). The elevator speech. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDpe9StfGTA Standard YouTube License.

Upkey. Elevator pitch help for students with no experience. https://blog.upkey.com/elevator-pitch-help-for-students-with-no-experience/

Upkey. Elevator pitch examples that include relevant experience. https://blog.upkey.com/elevator-pitch-examples-that-include-relevant-experience/

Media Attributions

- russ-ward–inmwDB0800-unsplash © Photo by Russ Ward on Unsplash is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 4.3: Elevator and Career Fair Pitch- Standing Out While Still Fitting In is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

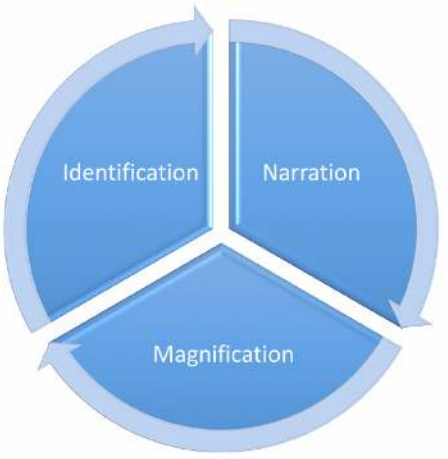
4.4: Toast Speech



Here's to those that love us!
And for those that do not love us,
may God turn their hearts.
And if he cannot turn their hearts,
may he turn their ankles;
so that we may know them,
by their limping.
Irish Blessing/Curse

Cheers, *slainte*, *skal*, *prost*, and *salud*! A toast speech is a type of tribute speech meant to honor someone. Your goal as a speaker should be to make that person feel special and to allow others in the room to be included in the celebration.

Ceremonial Speaking Wheel



All ceremonial speeches should include the trio –narration, magnification, and identification.

Identification

You are not talking *to* an audience; you are sharing *with* an audience. You are celebrating with them and collectively celebrating shared values and shared appreciation for a person/persons and their accomplishments. Saying "we" are here to honor the recipient and reminding the audience of shared values helps the audience to be a part of the process. Say things that invite the audience in several times throughout the speech. This speech is for everyone present.

> ***Wedding Toast***
> ***Instead of saying:*** *Amy and I played Barbie as children and always made sure that Barbie found her perfect soulmate.*
> ***Say****: As many of you know, Amy and I played Barbie for hours as children. What you may not know is we always made sure that Barbie found her perfect soulmate.*

> ***Graduation Toast***
> ***Instead of saying:*** *I wish you the best in your journey ahead as you graduate and start your new career.*
> ***Say:*** *We here, your family and friends, all wish you the best in your journey ahead as you graduate and start your new career*

> ***Retirement Toast***
> ***Instead of saying:*** *Dad, I was so happy you let me come and play in your office even if I ran your stapler out of staples by shooting them at the invisible villains that were hiding under your desk.*
> ***Say:*** *As many of you here now, dad would sometimes let me come to work with him. And while most of you thought that I was the perfect little bosses' kids, you may not have known that I was really a super hero executing the invisible villain that I found in dads desk. I killed it with all the staples from dad's stapler.*

Narration

The use of story helps the audience to be drawn in and want to listen. In short toasts, you can tell a series of one-sentence stories. In larger toasts, you can tell one long story or numerous little stories.

Magnification

Take a trait of the individual and magnify it. I'm not talking about superfluous embellishment; I'm talking about honest elaboration. For example, you might talk about

- Triumph over obstacles
- Unusual accomplishment
- Superior performance
- Unselfish motive
- Benefit to society
- The greatness of a simple thing

Now you know of the key elements that should be in your speech, let's talk about the process of building a toast, writing a toast, and delivering a toast.

Gather the Details

What type of toast is it?

Always adapt your toast to the occasion: Wedding, graduation, retirement, business celebration, award celebration, birthday.

Who will attend?

You will give a different speech to your old college roommate on his birthday if it is just you and the gang versus if his conservative parents are in the room. It will be an even different speech if his new employer is present. Remember, a toast is not

just about the person being celebrated but it is about others in the room. As you write your toast, keep imagining the key people present at the event.

Are there expectations about how long the toast will be? It is always good to ask. It can be awkward if there are several people toasting and each gives a five-minute toast and you have prepared only a two-minute toast. Typically wedding-type toasts, retirement toasts, and graduation toasts are longer speeches and people speak from notes. On the other, shorter toasts are usually memorized

Brainstorm

Sit down and just start jotting ideas. Start brainstorming ideas and memories one day and then give it a day or two to think about more memories. The next day after brainstorming, your brain will keep cranking out ideas …write them down immediately, put them on a notepad on your phone, or even call yourself and leave yourself a voicemail of the new ideas. Don't lose them or let them get away.

Let's think of your brain as a water faucet. You are not going to get any water until you turn the thing on. Many people complain they can't think of ideas, but they never actually turn on the idea faucet. Think of brainstorming as turning those ideas on and getting your creative juices flowing.

When I turn off my faucet at home, there are usually a few drips that happen as the rest of the water gets out of the line. Think of your brain that way. Give it time to drip out the last ideas and be there to catch them. They just might be the best ideas of all. Some people find if they brainstorm before bed that they wake up with the best ideas. Always assume that you will forget your ideas, so write them down as soon as you think of them.

Sit Down and Write

At this point, just get your ideas down. Put down more ideas than you will use. Allow yourself to even write down some cheesy things—maybe you will use this somehow but probably not. Most importantly, the creative ideas are hiding in your brain behind the cheesy ones and if you don't get the cheesy ideas out of the way, you will never get to the next level.

Now. Let's think about that faucet again. Imagine there is something clogging it. You have to put some pressure on it so you can get it working. I like to think of cheesy ideas as that clog in the line. I have to get the cheesy clog out of the way by giving my mind permission to go there and once that line is clear. I need to be ready for all the great ideas that will come out in force after the clog comes out.

Taking It to The Professional Level

If you want to give your toast the professional edge, try using a theme and then adding in some parallel construction.

Use a Theme

Pick a theme for your toast and carry it throughout the whole toast. I like to think of the theme as the container that holds the speech together and the vehicle that helps ideas move from place to place.

For example, Drew gave a best man speech and used the theme of a road trip. He told stories of him and his best friend and their adventures (at least the adventures you the ones that you can tell when mom is in the room). He talked about fighting over the music, having to take bathroom breaks, and his friend always getting lost. These were fun stories that we could all imagine. In his speech, he told us that whoever was in the passenger seat was called the "roundtrip captain." He gave the new bride advice on how to navigate the relationship since he knew so much about his friend from all these road trips. The speech wrapped up with Drew telling the bride that she was the map reader now and he passed to her the title of "road trip captain."

Erin gave a graduation toast to her family members who supported her through college. She used the theme of climbing hills. It was the perfect theme since the University of Arkansas campus seems to be arranged so everything is uphill–both ways. She talked about walking the hills both physically and symbolically. In her speech, she talked about how beautiful the view is from the top. She wrapped up her speech by saying now that she is graduated how she has new hills to climb.

Keep in mind the theme is just the container. If you have only a container, it will seem cliché and sound like a cheap greeting card. The theme is not the speech, it is the container that holds your many stories. Make sure to fully develop those stories.

Use Parallel Construction

Parallel construction is where you take one sentence and you repeat it. It lets you tell a lot of little stories in a short period. Always have at least 3 sentences, keep them together, and try to give them rhythm.

Consider this format and how it might be used for the different toast types.

At a Wedding Toast

> *I remember when ___*
> *I remember when ___*
> *I remember when ___*
>
> *I knew you were the "one" because…*
> *I knew you were the "one" because…*
> *I knew you were the "one" because…*

At a Retirement Toast

> *Many of you know dad for selling insurance, but I know dad for selling me on the idea to go to college*
> *Many of you know dad for working long hours at the office, but I know dad for working long hours on school projects that I only mentioned to him the night before they were due.*
> *Many of you know dad as a business profession, but I know dad as my super hero.*
>
> *Many of you know dad for …., but I know dad for ….*
> *Many of you know dad for …., but I know dad for ….*
> *Many of you know dad for …., but I know dad for ….*

TOAST PATTERNS



When picking a speech pattern for the toast, consider the audience and occasion. Many toasts are just one to two minutes while others can be five to seven minutes.

Short Toasts Pattern

1. Let us raise our glass to… Today, I would like to recognize…
2. Make a list of attributes/accomplishments of the person. With each statement there is a building sensation –each statement you make is better than the next.
3. Build to a climax. Create a building sensation using parallel construction.
4. Raise your glass near the end.
5. End with a poem, quote, or wish them well. (I really think a well-chosen quote makes these speeches special…it is worth the time to look for one to make it really special)

Note: Typically short toasts are memorized and longer toasts are written as a manuscript.

Wedding Toasts Possible Patterns

Give Their New Spouse the Manual of How to Get Along with Them

1. Tell a story or two about your friendship with your friend
2. Tell a story about when your friend met the person they are marrying. What did they say about this person? What were your first impressions? Tell anything about the two of them together? What are they like as a couple? How do you know they are right for each other? Tell something you observe about them when they are together?
3. Give the person advice on how to navigate life with your friend since you know them so well. Think of this as passing on the manual.

Three Stories

Tell three stories about the couple.

- Maybe, how they met, the engagement, and a story they tell on themselves.
- Maybe, three ways you know they are in love
- Maybe, three things you noticed about how they care for each other.

I Knew It Was Love…

- Tell five ways that you knew it was love. Tell a story attached to each of the ways
- Tell what your friend was like before and how they are better now than they are with the one they love.

Note: Never mention old girlfriend/boyfriends, never give away secrets to clueless family members (they are living together, that you and your friend snuck out in high school), and keep it positive. You likely have inside information about the person you are toasting–their wedding is not the time to reveal it.

Retirement Toast Possible Patterns

If you are a work colleague:

- These are the three things that set this person apart.
- These are the three things that I learned from this person.

If you are the child or the spouse:

- Talk about what their career looked like from your position. How were they dedicated?
- How did it help you benefit from their job and friends? What did you learn from watching them work?

Note: It can be fun to use their job as the theme. For example, if the person is a coach make the whole speech in the theme of a game. If the person is in sales, use marketing terms to hold it together. If they collected something interesting that was displayed in the office, it lends itself to the theme.

Graduation Toast

Looking back, looking ahead

- Tell a few stories about them before graduation and tell what you expect to see in the future.

We've come through a lot together, Here's some advice for your next step.

- Tell stories of your relationship, how that relationship talks about character attributes that led them to graduate.
- Give advice on how to navigate the next step.

Top Ten List

- Ten things you need to know about (surviving college, having your first real job, etc.).
- This can be especially fun coming from the sibling that is in college to the one headed to college.
- Top ten things you learned in school that you can use in life.
- Top ten things about you that will make you successful.

Let Us Not Forget

- A series of memories that you and most of the group present share. Great for a group of friends
- Find some great meaning to it all. What did it all mean? what did you learn?

Note: It can be fun to use their major, their future job, or their hobbies as the theme.

Anniversary Toast

Three Stories

- Tell three stories about the couple.
- Maybe how they met, the engagement, and a story they tell on themselves.
- Maybe, three ways you know they are in love.

I Knew It Was Love…

- Tell five ways that you knew it was love and tell a story attached to each of the ways.
  Interview five of their friends and tell the five stories from their friends about love.

How They Taught You What Love Is

- What have you learned by watching them love each other well?

A Biography of Love

- Tell a story about their love when they met when they overcame when they did things together.
- Tell a timeline of love events and stories about every major milestone.

Ending a Toast Speech

Typically, a toast speech ends with a thoughtful saying, witty quote, or poem. There are many toast websites with great one-liners or short poems you can use to end a toast. If it is a longer toast, consider using a theme and connecting the ending with the theme.

> *"May misfortunes chase you all of your life and never catch up."*
>
> *"As you slide down the banister of life may the splinters never point the wrong way."*

Short, Short Toasts

There may be times you are called to give a quick, one to three-sentence toast. It is a good idea to have a few memorized quotes ready that can be woven into a short, short toast.

> *Here is to those who've seen us at our best and seen us at our worst and can't tell the difference.*
>
> *May you live for as long as you want, and never want for as long as you live!*
>
> *May we get what we want, but never what we deserve.*
>
> *May the best of your past be the worse of your future.*
>
> *May you always lie, cheat, and steal. Lie beside the one you love, cheat the devil, and steal away from bad company.*
>
> *Here's to friends and family who know us well but love us just the same.*
>
> *Let us drink to bread, for without bread, there would be no toast.*

"Here's to that long straight piece in Tetris."

Toast Etiquette



How Do You Hold the Glass?

Both wine and champagne glasses should be held by the stem, not by the bowl. “You should always hold the glass by the stem, no matter what the shape or size of the glass or the type of wine,” says Michael Greenlee, the sommelier and wine director of Gotham Bar and Grill, in New York City. “The most common mistake I see in restaurants and at dinner parties is people holding a wineglass by the bowl.”

Three reasons to hold the glass by the stem:

1. The glass is pretty; you don’t want your fingerprints to mess it up.
2. Putting your hand on the glass would block seeing the color of the wine or block your ability to watch the bubbles dance in the champagne.
3. White wine and champagne are chilled, and red wine is served a room temperature. The temperature influences the taste and your hands on the glass will warm up the beverage and change it from its optimal temperature.

What Do You Do When Listening to a Toast?

Those who are listening to someone being toasted should hold their glass when the toast is being made. At the end of the toast, listeners should raise their glasses, tilt the glass towards the person being toasted, and then take a sip.

What Do You Do If You Are the One Being Toasted?

When you are being toasted, you should sit and listen. Smile and nod to let the person toasting know you are listening. You should not hold or lift your glass. Once the toast is over and everyone has had a sip, then you may nod and/or say, “Thank You.” One of the more common questions I get is, “Do I drink to myself?” and the answer is no, you do not drink to yourself.

Should We Clink our Glasses?

Check five different etiquette specialists and you will get five different answers. Some groups clink and some groups don’t clink. It is best to take your lead from those with the highest power of those in the center of the event. For example, if you have dinner with your co-workers and your boss is present, see what the boss does. If you are at a wedding, see what the head table does and copy.

The larger the group, the less likely there will be glass touching because it is difficult to touch everyone’s glasses. If you are in a clinking group, when you touch the bowl of the glasses together, you should always look them in the eye and smile.

> *“As with many of our food traditions, the clinking of glasses traces its root to the health and safety of the drinker. In this case, it goes back to the tendency of nobles to kill each other off by poisoning their food! Wine was very commonly drunk during medieval days because it was one of the only safe liquids available. Water was often polluted, and milk was both useful for other things and thought to be for children only. As the wine was often full of sediment, a poison was easily introduced into it.*
>
> *To prove that his wine was safe, the host would pour a bit of his guest’s wine into his own glass and drink it first, to prove it was safe. If the guest trusted his host, however, he*

> *would merely clink his flagon against that of his host's when his host offered his cup for the sample. The 'clink' (or perhaps 'clunk' back then, since wood or metal was more common for drinking vessels) was a sign of trust and honesty."*
> *Text from Wineintro. Clinking of Wine Glasses and Toasts. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from http://www.wineintro.com/champagne/clinkglass.html*

? Toasting Rules



Hold up your glass while giving a toast.

Never toast with an empty glass, it is considered bad luck.

Always hold the glass by the stem.

Avoid getting the beautiful glasses smudged. That means, not touching the bowl. It also means sipping from the same place on the glass.

Always drink to the person being toasted. If you don't take a sip then it means that you disagree with the nice things that were said about the person. If you are full of liquid or prefer not to sip the alcohol, just put your lips to the glass.

If you oversee the filling of the glasses, hold the wine bottle near the bottom and only fill glasses halfway up to give the wine room to breathe. Always offer wine to others before pouring your own wine.

In some regions, people will gently use a knife to tap the glass to bring the group to attention.

At some weddings, the quests may tap their glasses to mean the bride and groom should kiss.

Brainstorming About Your Person

Read through these questions and try to answer them about your person. Not all the questions will relate, and that is OK. That question may trigger an unrelated memory that you can use.

Story

> *What is the story of the two of you as children?*
> *What is the first memory you have of this person?*
> *How did you meet?*
> *What is the story of the two of you as teens?*
> *What is the story of the two of you as adults?*

> *What is an adventure you had together?*
> *When did you do something involving this person that didn't work out as planned?*
> *What is a story that is often told about this person?*
> *What is a struggle this person has overcome of you overcame together?*
> *What story will history remember about this person?*
> *What story will you tell your kids one day?*
> *Why is this person special to you in a way that no one else knows?*
> *When did you and this person make a difficult situation fun?*
> *How have you seen them grow?*

Stuff

> *What do they collect?*
> *What are their hobbies?*
> *What types of things are important to them? (Pets, cars, shoes)*
> *What are they known for having? (Name brand clothes, a great boat)*
> *What does their house/car/backpack say about them?*
> *What do you have of theirs that means a lot to you?*
> *How is their favorite movie, favorite superhero, favorite song a reflection of them?*

The Person

> *What are the physical characteristics that become part of their persona (Tall, big feet, curly hair)?*
> *What are they known for emotionally (being kind, being passionate, being stubborn)?*
> *What are the phrases they say often?*
> *What are they famous for? (Cooking, getting lost)*

Relationship

> *How did you meet?*
> *What has kept your relationship with this person going?*
> *What has been the highlight of the relationship?*
> *What do their friends say about them?*

Wedding Toast

> *When and how did they meet?*
> *What were your first impressions of them as a couple?*
> *What did your friend say about the first time they met?*
> *If you were given three wishes for them as a couple, what would they be?*

Toast Speech Samples from College Students Toasting Other College Students

> *To Blake who has taught us the importance of enjoying life to the fullest, whether fly fishing or spending time with loved ones.*
> *You're a man of great humor.*
> *You're a man who has brought us all to tears with your Tommy Boy impression.*
> *You're a man who embodies the word "chill"*
> *Every time I would look over in class, you would be just sitting back and smiling.*
> *You were always a great person to make a speech to, because even if the speech was bad, we could look over and you'd still be smiling.*

> *Today, I would like to raise my glass (raise your glass) to by the far the most gifted athlete in our class. She showed us what it takes to be a student athlete at the University of Arkansas. She opened up her heart and shared the stories about her mother with us. I know we were all touched.*
> *She taught us how to improve our puts and she taught us that golf can be fun.*
> *We learned that even the best athletes get nervous sometimes.*
> *In the words of Roy, tin cup, McEvoy, "I hit it again because that shot was a defining moment, and when a defining moment comes along, you define the moment… or the moment defines you."*
> *To Ana, may you always define the moment and not let it define you!*

I ask students to toast their classmates and to give reference to things that student has said or done in class, consider the following speech ending that references three of the student's former speeches.

> *Sean here this is to you for all you have given us.*
>
> *May your bike never fail you (reference to speech on changing a tire),*
>
> *May your sense of nature keep you wandering (reference to speech on camping)*
>
> *and may your lessons live on, in this lifetime and the next (reference to speech on missionary work).*

> *To someone who*
> *Has opened her heart and mind to this class*
> *With hopes that they too will join in her efforts to serve God and humanity*
>
> *To someone who*
> *Has made us all feel as if her papaw was our own*
> *Pitching and swinging the bat*
>
> *To someone who*
> *Has made each person in this class believe*
> *As if we can make a difference in the world*
> *One Krispy Kreme doughnut at a time*
>
> *Anne Frank said,*
> *"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment*
> *Before starting to improve the world. "*

> *To Haley, we toast to you (raise glass)*
> *For you have already begun improving the world.*

Best Man Toasts the Couple by Joe Burlingame

Thank you all for gathering here tonight on the beautiful occasion to celebrate the love of Korey and Paola.
My name is Joe Burlingame and I know many of you have traveled from long distances to be here and we are so grateful that y'all came.
Since the lovely maid of honor spoke so highly of Paola I am going to try and make Korey seem like he is worthy.

When Korey told me that things were getting serious and that he was going to propose,

My initial reaction was woah Korey

I am flattered but I am perfectly content with being fraternity brothers, but everybody knew he was talking about Paola.
Korey and I's relationship started about 5 years ago
And to this day I remember my first impression–it was like any first impression when we first meet an accounting major/// Aw—wk–kward.

Our friendship though took off like a rocket ship, and before we knew it we were roommates up to the time he betrayed me and found a permanent roommate.
I won't say any names but she is in this room.

In the 4 years, I lived with Korey, I have found 3 things that make him the perfect roommate.

First, Korey loves spontaneous trips.
Korey and I went to 6-7 concerts one semester. We only bought tickets in advance for one and that was because it was the one band I wanted to go see. The others were concerts that Korey had caught wind of last-minute and persuaded me to go. One concert, in particular, was the night of Korey and Paola's first date. They had gone and got coffee and macaroons I think it was maybe an hour-long date. When he got back Korey talked about it as if they had spent a year with each other. Paola I knew then that you had to be special if you had him talking about you for that long.

Second, Korey is a humble servant.
Korey if there is a characteristic that describes you it is being a humble servant. I would complain about how hot it was mowing our yard, but you would not only mow ours but our elderly neighbor's yard as well. You thought you were invisible– I saw it all. Whether it be cleaning dishes, cooking, or constantly going to our neighbors to see if they needed anything done, you were a servant and I was thankful for you.
Paola I am jealous, I am now going to have to clean and cook for myself now. Nik Birchfield said it best "Korey doesn't just talk the talk but walks the walk"

Lastly, Korey is someone who is thoughtful.
I remember when we first moved in Korey brought in this huge water jug of change and a little wooden chest, I asked what the heck is that for. He responded with "Man I plan on getting married and in order to get married you need a ring." I was blown away–I never would have thought of that.

Paola I regret that we never really got to hang out. When I saw Korey take that jug of bills and came back with a ring and he started describing why he picked this specific ring out because it matched your characteristics I knew we would be friends.

Korey and I were roommates the night before he was going to pop the question.
He practiced a lot with what he was going to say. I know because he practiced on me.
I don't know how many times we practiced the scenario
but I could tell you that the words he was going to say to you were heartfelt and genuine

Paola I was able to have the perfect roommate for a few years, but now you will have the perfect roommate for life.

To Paola and Korey!

Hilarious Father of the Bride Toast

This toast is a good example of how to tell a funny story in a speech. This father's story is brilliant, and his long pauses are perfect for this speech. He goes from having you crying from laughter to tearing up with sentiment.



References

Atlasobscura. Raise a glass to our readers' favorite drinking toasts. https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/best-drinking-toasts-and-cheers

Chidi-Ogbonna, K. (2018). Nine wine etiquette habits to know. https://thefinestitallianwine.com

Real Simple (n.d.). From how to hold a wine glass **http://www.realsimple.com/realsimple/content/0,21770,712709,00.html**

Revelations Video. The most hilarious father of the bride toast.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOKduRf7o4k Standard YouTube License.

Wineintro. (2008). Clinking of wine glasses and toasts. http://www.wineintro.com/champagne/clinkglass.html

Media Attributions

- Toasting © Zan is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Toat wheel
- Toast
- holding wine glass is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license

This page titled 4.4: Toast Speech is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.5: Award Speech- And the Winner is...



People in leadership have the privilege of recognizing the achievement of others by giving them awards. This is an important moment, and you want to help make it special. In this chapter, I will teach you the five-step process on how to give an award, I will share with you practical things to think about in terms of setup and execution, and finally, I will share with you ways to elevate this speech to a professional level.

Ceremonial Speaking Wheel



All ceremonial speeches should include the trio –narration, magnification, and identification.

Identification

You are not talking *to* an audience; you are sharing *with* an audience. You are celebrating with them and collectively celebrating shared values and shared appreciation for their accomplishments. Saying “we” are here to honor the recipient and reminding the audience of shared values helps the audience to be a part of the process.

Narration

The use of story helps the audience to be drawn in and want to listen. The narration can be about the organization, how the award was formed, or about the person receiving the award. It is better to tell a story of a complex problem they solved instead of saying “they are a good problem solver.”

Magnification

Take a trait of the individual and magnify it. I’m not talking about superfluous embellishment; I’m talking about honest elaboration. If they discovered an accounting mistake, talk about the difficulty of noticing such a mistake, and talk about the financial impact on the group because the correction was made. In short, find heroism in events where others might not notice. Magnification means finding the extraordinary which is often hidden: loyalty, work ethic, going the extra mile, and standing up under adversity. Let us truly see the person’s accomplishments with a bright spotlight, not just a little candlelight.

Now you know of the key elements that should be in your speech, let's talk about the specific five-step structure of an award speech.



Five-Step Award Process

Greet the Audience

Welcome the audience to the event. Thank them for attending and address any special guests or sponsors.

Describe the Award

Open your speech with a greeting and then describe the award. Tell about the organization that is giving the award and why this award was created. Who founded this award? What's the story behind the award? What makes this award unique? Describe the criteria for selecting a winner. Who decides? What are the criteria?

Tell Why They Deserved the Award

Describe the attributes of the person who will be receiving the award. If possible, tell a story about the person. The more details, the better. People who come to awards ceremonies like to be inspired and they like to feel included. The more you can make everyone feel like they are part of something special, the better your speech will be. This is the most important part of the award. Make the recipient feel special by telling stories of their achievements and calling out specific highlights of their achievements.

If there are multiple recipients for the same award, for example, awards for everyone who completed upper-level training, you can highlight the task they had to do to receive the recognition. You can tell a story about one part of the training that will be familiar to those who completed it.

Present the Award

Announce the person's name who will be receiving the award. Consider writing yourself a note on how to pronounce the name. Find out in advance their preferred name and if you should use an honorific. As they approach to claim the award, be sure that they know where they are supposed to stand. If you didn't tell them before the presentation, you should indicate in some way where they should go and what they should do. Do they stand beside you or somewhere else? Will there be a handshake? Do they hold the award? Do they grab the award and go or do they stay while you talk about them? This is their moment, and you don't want to make them feel awkward because they don't know what they are supposed to do.

Present the award to them with a handshake and a smile. Be sure to pause so the photographers can take a picture.

Wish Them Well

While they are still upfront, give a statement that wishes them well. This is done most effectively when it is connected to the theme of the award. If it is a sales award, make reference to sales, if it is a teaching award, make reference to teaching, if it is an academic award, make reference to how they will use their academics.

Practical Mechanics

You have your speech written and you are setting up the room where you will give the award. It is time to think of some very practical things like the location of the award, the location of the handshake, and the location of the photographer.

Location of the Award

Where are you going to set the award? If there are multiple awards, you will likely need to set up a table and have someone help pass out the awards. Before the event, you should have someone pretend to get an award to help you figure out any potential issues.

Location of the Handshake

Where are you going to do the handshake? When they come up and receive the award, are you going to shake their hand and give them the award or will another distinguished leader give the award and the handshake? If you are standing behind the podium, it is hard to shake hands and get a good photo, so it will be important that you step in front of the podium or off to the side for the handshake.

Location of the Photographer

Where are you going to have the photographer stand? In high-profile awards, there may be a professional photographer who requires a special setup. Always be mindful of where they will be located and make sure they don't block the view from the other guests. In addition, most people will have family, friends, colleagues in the audience who will want a picture. Make sure you have an aisle clear, so photo takers have a clear view. Write yourself a note to pause and let the pictures be taken.

Handshake Matters

- Shake with the right hand.
- Hand the award with the left hand.
- The award or certificate goes on top.
- Pause, smile, and face the camera.

Handshake tips. When people get nervous, their hands may get sweaty. Keep a tissue in your pocket to wipe your hand on just in case. When you go in to shake someone's hand open your hand wide and go in for the web of skin between the thumb and pointer finger. A typical handshake is two to three pumps, but an award handshake is typically two pumps and a long pause while pictures are being taken.

Taking it to the Next Level

To elevate the quality of your speech, add advanced language devices sometimes called colorful language. Let's talk about the three main types that can make you sound like a speech professional–Theme, alliteration, and parallel construction.

More on using colorful language in a speech.

Alliteration: Repeat the same sound three times

- Jake is polished, practical, and professional
- LaShay's got grit and goes after things that impact

Parallel Construction: Repeat the same phrase at least three times.

- Passionate about students…
- Passionate about learning…
- Passionate about teaching…

Theme: Pick a theme that fits the person and the award

- Accounting is his life.
- He can multiply his impact.
- The bottom line is…
- When you look at his character, it all adds up.

Remember, your award speech is not about you– it is about the recipient and people who care about them. It is about creating a celebratory atmosphere where the audience and the recipient can feel good. Doing the work it takes to write the speech well will make a big difference. The joy you will feel from making someone else feel special will be its own reward.

Key Takeaways

Remember this!

- The more details about why the person deserves this award the better.
- Include identification, narration, and magnification.
- Practice your handshake and how to hand the award to the recipient.
- Tell them what the award is, tell them why they deserve the award, give them the award, wish them well.

Media Attributions

- Award trophy © Giorgio Trovato is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Colorful language wheel © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license
- Award Chart © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) license

---

This page titled 4.5: Award Speech- And the Winner is... is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.6: Graduation Speeches- Speeches You Give in Pointy Hats



Graduation is a big day for graduates, their families, and teachers. If you are called to give a graduation speech, you want to make it special. I want to share with you what makes a good graduation speech and give you tips on how to write one that will make an impact.

As we begin, you need to wrap your mind around two main things:

1. Most people do not remember the graduation speeches they hear, but they do remember the feeling they got in the moment–inspired, bored, challenged.
2. The more you tap into shared memories, the more meaningful the speech will be for those listening.

There are two main types of graduation speakers, the student speaker, and the headline speaker. At one college at our university, there is a speech contest to be the graduation speaker and at another college, it is someone who has been nominated by a faculty member. How you get there varies from place to place At the local high school, the valedictorian is often the speaker. I recently went to high school graduation and they had seven valedictorians so they had seven speakers–yes, it was as long as you can imagine.

When thinking about giving a graduation speech, you have to ask, “What does the audience need from me?” They need you to reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and focus on the future. This chapter will walk you through the essentials of giving a graduation speech and then give you several example speeches as samples of key elements.

Gather the Details

- How long will you speak?
- Who will be in attendance?
- Who will introduce you?
- Are you the only speaker?
- Will there be a microphone?
- Can you use speech notes?

Brainstorm with Friends

This is the fun part. Sit down with friends and make a list of all the things that come to mind about the college experience. When brainstorming, write down everything you think of and don’t try to judge whether it should be included, just go with it. There is an entire chapter on how to brainstorm here.

- Food, dining halls, local restaurants
- Hangouts on campus
- Social events
- Notable classes
- Significant memories
- Landmarks
- Current events

- Shared college experiences (on our campus it might be buying scantrons, hearing the bells of Old Main, and using Blackboard.

Organizational Format

Most all student graduation speeches include the past, present, and future format.

- Present: Opening statement and the thank you.
- Past: The shared memory.
- Future: The challenge and a closing statement.

Manuscript Format

Most student graduation speeches are in manuscript format. That helps you from getting overwhelmed at the moment and that also gives the school a chance to censor– I mean to approve of–your content. There is an entire chapter on writing a manuscript that you can refer to here.

Pick a Theme

Many graduation speeches use a theme. Here are some of the most common graduation themes.

• Tell a unique story • Overcoming obstacles • Perseverance • Use the school song as a theme for the content • Friends and friendship • Looking back to the early years • Shared memories • Making a difference • Mistakes learned the hard way • Current events and how they shaped the class • Cast a challenge	• Path • Journey • Instaworthy moments • Use the school buildings as a theme • Use the school mascot as a theme • Taking responsibility • Integrity • Setting high expectations

It can be helpful to pick a theme and connect a metaphor to your theme. There is an entire chapter on how to do that here.

"There is no such thing as failure.
Failure is just life trying to push you in another direction."
Oprah Winfrey, Harvard University Commencement Speech

Start Your Speech with an Introduction

Most introductions acknowledge the occasion, offer thanks, and lead into the main idea. Shutterfly suggests these as openings.

- "Thank you [person who introduced you]. And thank you to the students, teachers, parents, and staff who made these four years everything that they were."
- "It's my honor today to deliver the commencement address for this incredible student body."
- "It is my pleasure to welcome students, families, and faculty to graduation day at [school's name]. Every one of you has made an impact on the graduates who sit here today."
- "I stand here before you, looking back on four years of legacy we've all made together."

Use the Principles of Good Ceremonial Speaking

I have written a chapter on each component of ceremonial speaking and you can reference those you need:

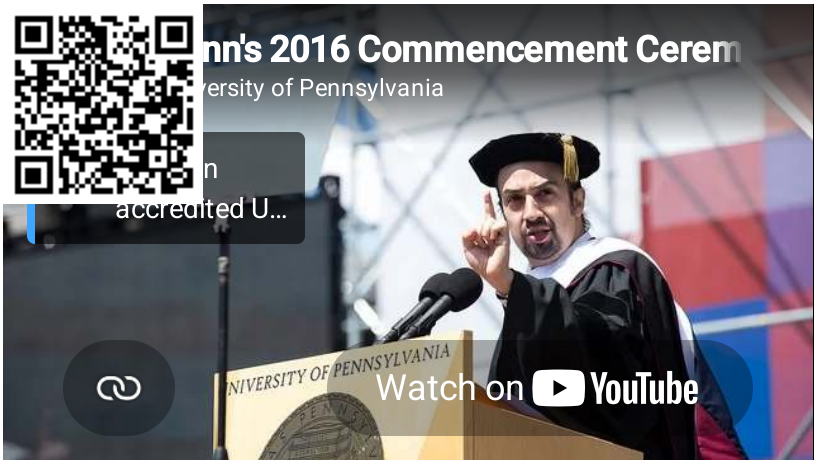
1. Tell a story
2. Use identification, narration, and magnification
3. Use colorful language
4. Use metaphor, simile, and theme
5. Put your speech in manuscript format

Look for Stories that Celebrate Common Experiences

Notice how Jaclyn Marston reflects on specific classes and memories. (Watch starting at 54 seconds).

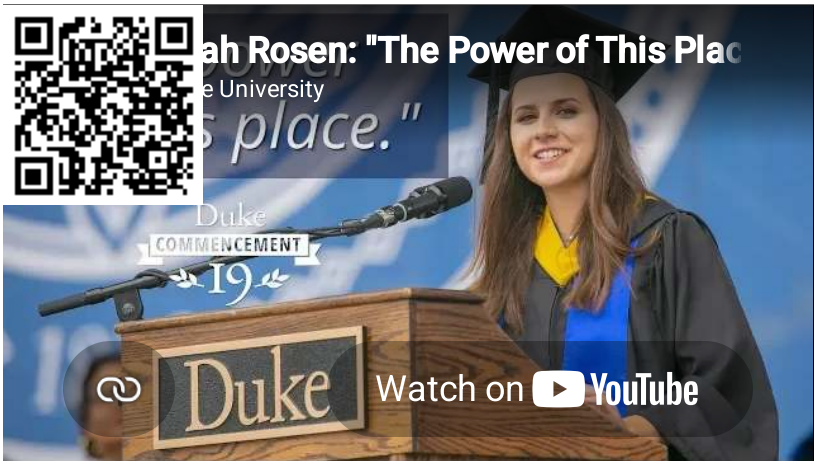


Watch how Lin Manuel Miranda references the familiar and the obscure in his address to the University of Pennsylvania (start watching at 1:12).



Use a Theme

Notice how she uses the theme–"What do you want to be" when you grow up and alters it to "What do you want to do?" She opens with this and wraps back around to this same idea at the end.



Be Vulnerable

Notice how this speaker admits his shortcomings. We feel like he is honest and vulnerable so we hang on his everyword.



Headline Speaker Sample Speeches

Headline speakers are usually someone famous or notable. Speeches by those individuals almost always include stories and challenges. I have included several here. Pick two of them to analyze.



Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories. Steve Jobs

---



These highlights of Lou Holtz's graduation speech is full of great challenges and life lessons.



Tim Minchin

"One: Be micro-ambitious. Put your head down and work with pride on whatever is in front of you. You never know where you might end up.

Two: Don't seek happiness. Keep busy and aim to make someone else happy and you might find you get some as a side effect.

Three: Understanding that you can't truly take credit for your successes nor truly blame others for their failures will humble you and make you more compassionate.

Four: Exercise. Take care of your body: you're going to need it.

Five: Be hard on your opinions. Be intellectually rigorous. Identify your biases, your prejudices, your privileges.

Six: Even if you're not a teacher, be a teacher. Share your ideas. Don't take for granted your education.

Seven: Define yourself by what you love. Be demonstrative and generous in your praise of those you admire. Send thank you cards and give standing ovations. Be pro stuff not just anti stuff.

Eight: Respect people with less power than you.

Nine: Finally, don't rush. You don't need to know what you're going to do with the rest of your life."

As you can see, graduation speeches can be serious or lighthearted; they can be personal, motivational, and informative. The key thing is that the speech should be authentic. It should be as unique as the speaker.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Graduation speeches should reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and inspire towards the future.
- Consider the needs of the audience and find commonalities.
- Tell a story.
- Use a manuscript.

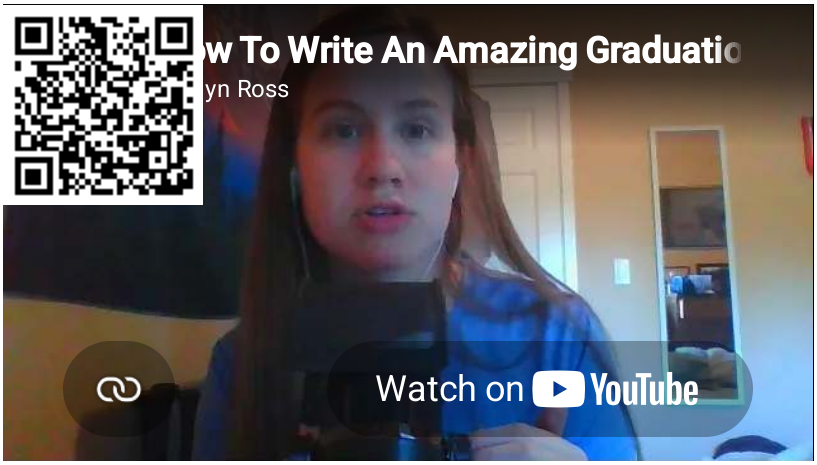
Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Graduation speeches should reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and inspire towards the future.
- Consider the needs of the audience and find commonalities.
- Tell a story.
- Use a manuscript.

Bonus Features

Jaclyn Marson describes the process of how she wrote her Graduation Speech.



References

Dunham, A. (2019). Valedictorian comes out as autistic during speech. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/GtPGrLoU5Uk Standard YouTube License

Holtz, L. (2017). Lou Holtz's inspirational speech. Commencement speech.[Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3LOo_Ccyws Standard YouTube License

Jobs, S. (2008). Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF8uR6Z6KLc Standard YouTube License.

Jostens, (n.d.). Celebrate high school memories. Inspire your grad community. https://www.jostens.com/resources/students-and-parents/graduation-guides/how-to-write-a-grad-speech

Marson, J. (2020). How to write an amazing graduation speech–Jaclyn Marson podcast Ep 1. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5CUSzp9SrM Standard YouTube License.

Marston, J. (2016). Beautiful and moving graduation speech 2016. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_F3K3Z_5CEE Standard YouTube License.

Minchin, T. (2013). 9 life lessons-Time Minchin UWA Address. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoEezZD71sc Standard YouTube License.

Rosen, L. (2019). Leah Rosen: "The power of this place," Duke University 2019 commencement student speaker. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4N Standard YouTube License.

Shutterfly. (n.d) How to start a graduation speech. https://www.shutterfly.com/ideas/graduation-speech/

Stewart, M. (2020). Student speaker. Commencement 2020. University of Utah. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZFJnZvuQIo Standard YouTube License.

University of Pennsylvania. (2016). Penn's 2016 commencement ceremony- Commencement speaker Lin-Manuel Miranda. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewHcsFlolz4&t=0s Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Graduation Photo © Lynn Meade is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 4.6: Graduation Speeches- Speeches You Give in Pointy Hats is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.7: Eulogy-Good Words



Perhaps they are not stars
but rather openings in heaven
where the love of our lost ones
shines down to let us know they are happy.
– Eskimo legend

Most people will have to give at least one eulogy in their lifetime. Around 85% of those studied, performed individual rituals and at least 50% engaged in collective rituals following the death of a loved one. Whether it is a funeral, a remembrance ceremony, or a wake, most ceremonies include a speech. Because of that, it is helpful to have an understanding of how to build a meaningful eulogy. The word eulogy means, "good words" and it is designed to celebrate the life of someone who has passed.

According to Pastor John Meade, "Eulogies are not about death, they are about the things that live on. They give people a chance to remember, celebrate, and connect. Eulogies give mourners a way to reflect on someone they cared for in a way that helps them and others process the loss." Block and Davies suggest that funeral rituals help the living adapt to the death. Some eulogies speak words against death and others celebrate life. Davies believes the best words are those that confront death with hope. "relinquish their custody of the deceased." Eulogies are for the living.

Most people write their own eulogies. Your job as a speaker is to discover the things about them they left behind. What is their legacy? How did their life write the eulogy you will speak? It can be helpful to talk with others about the person. Sometimes talking about the person to a friend can not only be healing but can help you generate ideas. Talking to others who knew the person well, can also help you see sides of the person you hadn't thought of.

Brainstorm

Reflect on the Person

Spend time reflecting, going through photos or old messages, talk to others as you prepare for the eulogy. Write down random things that come to mind as you think about the person. Here are some questions to help get you started.

- What are their outstanding physical features?
- What are one or two special memories you have of them?
- What three words best describe them?
- What is the funniest thing you remember?
- What is their song? their show? their thing?
- What is this person known for?
- What are some sayings—one-liners—they are known for?
- What is unique about their lifestyle or behavior?
- What did they do to let you know that they cared about you? about others?
- How did they meet challenges?
- What's a story about their childhood?

- What smells remind you of this person?
- How did people “get them wrong” and think they were one thing when they were really another?
- What obstacles did they overcome?
- What helpful advice did they give you?
- What’s the first memory you remember of this person?
- What are some unique mannerisms or characteristics?
- How did their dress, shoes, jewelry, hair reflect who they were?
- Every time you see a _____, you’ll think of ____ because ———
- What is one story you will tell your kids (others, co-workers) about this person?
- What legacy did will they leave?
- What was their impact on others?
- What did they do–hobby, craft, job?
- Did they have a favorite scripture, poem, or quote?
- What did they do for fun?
- What did the two of you do together?
- What did you learn from how they lived their life?

Talk to Others



Part of the healing process is sharing stories with others. Castle and Philips found that sharing stories about the deceased was more helpful than professional counseling in helping individuals mourn the loss. Take time to listen to others tell their stories of the person. Ask questions. Look at photos. The more information you gather, the more personal your eulogy will be.

Research

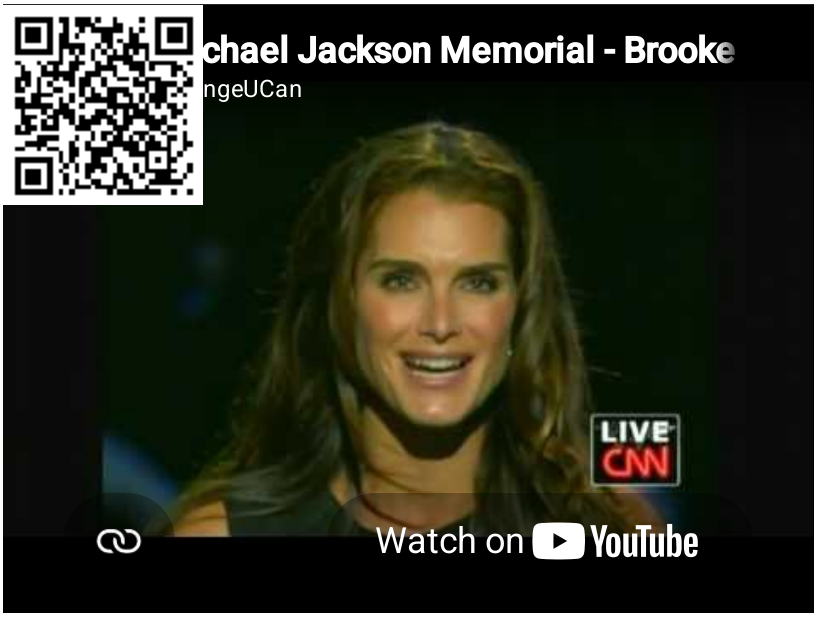
If they were a gardener, look up gardening quotes. If they were a golfer, look up their golf hero and find quotes. If they were a religious person, find quotes from a sacred text. Look to see if they had any favorite quotes taped to their computer or hanging on the wall. Did they have a favorite song? Look up the lyrics to it and see if they might work into the eulogy. Research for a eulogy is much different than any other type of speech. The more information you have when you sit down to write, the more likely it is you will be able to say things that are affirming and healing.

Meghan McCain references a book at the opening of a eulogy to her father, John McCain.

> *“The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for, and I hate very much to leave it.” When Ernest Hemingway’s Robert Jordan, at the close For Whom the Bell Tolls lies wounded, waiting for his last fight, these are among his final thoughts. My father had every reason to think the world was an awful place. my father had every reason to think the world was not worth fighting for. My father had every reason to think the world was worth leaving. He did not think any of those things. Like the hero of his favorite book,*

> *John McCain took the opposite view: You had to have a lot of luck to have had such a good life.*

Watch as Brook Shields ends her eulogy with one of Michael Jackson's favorite songs.



Understanding the Context

As you are collecting memories, also gather information on the funeral and the logistics of how, when, and where your speech will occur.

- Is it at a church, someone's home, a funeral home, or graveside?
- How many others are speaking?
- Will there be a podium where you can place my notes?
- Are there restrictions on how long or how short you should speak? Most eulogies are 3-7 minutes.
- Is there a microphone?
- Will I be speaking to family only or to a larger group?

Decide on the Emotion

There are so many emotions going through you with the passing of someone. You will need to sort through and decide which one you want to focus on. You get to decide the tone of your speech. Do you want it to be sweet? Humorous? Deeply reflective? Light-hearted? Work with an emotional tone that fits you, the person you are eulogizing, and those who will listen. Sometimes I will have someone ask me, "Do eulogies always have to be sad or warm and fuzzy because that doesn't fit my family?" The right emotion is the one that fits your situation. Watch this short eulogy where she tells a humorous story of her mother and the answering machine.



Write Your Eulogy Out Word Per Word

Write your eulogy out word per word. It will be helpful to remind you of what to say. In emotional situations, people are likely to forget what to say so having the words in front of you may be helpful.

As you read through this chapter, I have included partial manuscripts from some of my student's speeches. You will notice they look like poetry. For reference, I kept them in this manuscript format so you could read them in the rhythm they were written. It also helps you see how to format your eulogy.

Read this chapter on how to write a manuscript for helpful tips on formatting

Structure Your Eulogy

There are many ways to structure a eulogy. You might stand up at your chair and just tell one story, or you might go up front behind a podium and give a more formal eulogy. The structure will be determined by what you want to accomplish. Most eulogies include an introduction and at least one story.

An introduction is where you tell who you are and your relationship with the person. Oftentimes, you will invite the listeners in to remember with you in some way.

> *Grandma was my best friend. Many of you know her as Mamie, those of you who are close, know her as Babe. Whatever name you called her, you know, she would answer that call with a smile and a cookie.*

There are four major structures common in eulogies.

1. **Attributes:** Tell who you are to the person and what attributes you remember about them.
2. **Theme:** Pick a theme and apply that to many parts of their life.
3. **Story:** Tell a story and how that story impacted you.
4. **Biography:** Tell a series of small stories within the timeline. Don't just tell the facts, tell small stories from different parts of their life.

📌 1. Attributes

I. Opening
A. Opening phrase
B. Who you are.
C. Who the person was to you.

II. First attribute of the person

A. A story that highlights the attribute of that person
B. Details

III. Second attribute of the person

A. A story that highlights the attribute of that person
B. Details

IV. Third attribute of the person

A. A story that highlights the attribute of that person
B. Details

V. What the person would want to be remembered for
or what you would want to say to the person if they were here

VI. Closing thoughts

2. Theme

Think of a theme that defines the person:

Grandma was always cooking, and she was the homemade bread that she baked. There were many ingredients in her life…. Tell families stories in terms of the things grandma cooked for them or tell of each person as an "ingredient" in her life.

Grandpa's life was one big fishing trip: He hooked grandma (tell the story of their meeting), I "caught" more than fish I caught lessons on…

Hannah's life was wrapped up in her horses. Tell several stories of her with horses and how that showed the important people and events in her life.

Tribute to Grandpa by Logan Dodd used the theme of flying for the eulogy to his grandpa who was a pilot.

While most people dream of being able to soar through the sky,
it was a reality to my grandfather, *Leonard Wilhelm*.
From the time that my mother was a little girl,
my grandpa was building and **flying,** his own **aircraft.**
As you all can imagine,
when I was a little boy
I was in heaven every time I went to his house and was able to watch him work on his **airplanes.**

But it wasn't until after he was gone that I realized that my pilot's lesson didn't just start at the age of fourteen.
In fact, he was giving me **pilot's lessons** when he would drive down the street in his airplane.
He was giving me **pilot's lessons** when he would let me hang out with him and his flying buddies.
He was giving me **pilot's lessons** when I would go to his house every day after school.

> My grandpa was determined that I would become a **pilot of an airplane,** yes.
> But he was also determined that I would become the **pilot of my own life.**

There is a chapter on Metaphor, Similie and Theme

More Examples of Theme

Let me show you an example of how others have used themes in their eulogies. In each case, I pulled only excerpts from the speech, and I left them in a manuscript format so you can see how they wrote the speech in manuscript form (/// means pause).

Read an excerpt of this eulogy about her father using the theme of navigation.

Sample Theme 1: Navigation Theme

Navigating the Way
Hanna Arambel, University of Arkansas Student

Dad and I were two of a kind.
My family drove to California every year
and when I was younger,
I would pretend to read the **map** while he drove,
but soon enough, ///
I was his **co-pilot** over the 4000 mile trip.
Eventually, I was old enough to **drive** on the trip,
but he never needed the **map.**
Dad could always navigate the way.
…
But every now and then…
Dad got a little over-ambitious when he was teaching me…
my mom always laughs at the time
we were out to eat at our favorite restaurant one evening
and my mother returned to the table
to see my father and I quibbling furiously.
“What now?” was all she could manage to say.
Before I had a chance to speak,
my father informed her,
“Betty, I just want to teach her this little thing
because it’s very important.
Everyone needs to know how to do long division.”
Needless to say, I was only 7 years old and had just started subtraction
Oh, to be the daughter of an engineer.
But still, **he was always navigating the way.**
…
In elementary plays, I was the kid who stuck out
with the most elaborate costume …….and over-done acting…
because dad and I practiced …….. for endless……. hours.
While it embarrassed me then,
I realized later how many special memories it made
and how much it made me even more like him.
Dad could always navigate the way.
…
One of my favorite memories
from Dad and me
is when we were looking
at the stars one night on the back porch.

He pointed out the brightest star in the sky

and said that he always thought of me

as his brightest star.

And even though my dad is away from us now,

I can always look up and find the brightest star.

And that's always where he'll be.

Navigating the way

Sample Theme 2: Boating

Tribute to Papa D
Grant McQueen, University of Arkansas Student

It was in that old green boat the first time I ever caught a fish.

You were right there // behind me

With your hand on my head

It was in that old green boat I was playing with the fishing net //

I dropped it over the edge

And it sank // into the green depths below

It was in that old green boat we sat in the dark with flashlights

Waiting for a fish to bite the lines we had tied to milk jugs

The cold metal of that boat // will always and forever be the warmest place on earth to me.

Waking up at 4 am with you and my dad to put the rods in the truck

Mama D making us bologna sandwiches to eat on the water

You // buying me a biscuit at the bait shop

Me // falling asleep on your lap

The dull roar of the boat motor carrying us to your magic fishing spot

The cold water// the mist in the air

like nature's reflection of you with your cold beer and cigarette smoke.

You never liked to talk much on those trips

You were afraid // our voices might wake the fish

Or so you told me

But the smile you gave //

when I would scream that I had a **fish** on //

spoke to me // more than words could have.

You see // you may have taught me to catch **fish**

But you also taught me to **catch** the special moments in life // and unlike **fish**, to not ever release them.

You were a legend in my eyes and you always will be.

(this is the first 1/3 of the speech.)

---

3. Story

Notice how Larissa Heatley tells a story about how her grandpa played a game that she made up. In our mind's eye, we can see her playing with her grand-daddy.



More on how to build a story in a speech.

Include the Audience

Write the eulogy for the whole audience. Yes, you are sharing your memories and yes, you had a special relationship with the person, but the audience should feel included. Using words like "we" and "us" and phrases like "we all remember" invite the audience into your speech.

Use Colorful Language in a Eulogy

You can elevate your eulogy emotionally and structurally by using colorful language. What I mean by colorful (or figurative) language, is using a theme, metaphor, simile, alliteration, parallel construction, and antithesis. I have a couple of chapters on these for you to look over and I will review the general ideas here as well.

More resources on using metaphor and theme

More resources on using colorful language

Using Colorful Language

Theme	Repeating one idea throughout the speech, usually tied to the metaphor.
Metaphor	Comparing things
Simile	Comparing things using like or as
Alliteration	Repeating the same letter or sound
Parallel Construction	Repeating the same sentence
Antithesis	The pairing of opposite in parallel structure

Parallel Construction

The great thing about parallel construction is it allows the speaker to tell a lot of little stories in a short amount of time. Watch as Oren Katz tells a series of memorable events with his friend.



Watch the video (It is cued to the moment he begins his parallel)
Sometimes its the smallest things
that take up the most room in our hearts.
I'm gonna miss the way Adam shouted at me when we were the only two people in the room.
I'm gonna miss his classic pose he struck in every last picture.
I'm gonna miss him making fun of me for liking things like poetry and exercise.
I'm gonna miss us taking walks to the Sydney Opera house together
and sometimes falling asleep when we couldn't keep up, we kept hanging out when we couldn't keep our eyes open any longer
I'm gonna miss us talking about nothing for hours.
I'm gonna miss us being able to say a single word to each other and bursting out laughing knowing what the other was thinking,
it was never appropriate.
I'm gonna miss meals together.
I'm gonna miss his voice.
I'm gonna miss his laugh.
I'm gonna miss him always being there for me,
no matter what.
Most of all, **I'm just gonna miss**
one of my best friends.

Navigating the Way

As soon as I could walk…

I took up Dad's competitive nature.

Mom would find us arguing over rules.

Mom would find us fighting about a card game.

Mom would find us making bets about the oddest things.

We were always competing.

Hanna Arambel, University of Arkansas Student

Tribute to Papa D

Because it was in that old green boat that I learned how to catch fish with you

And I learned how the simplest of things

Can hold on to you like a barbed hook

Because it was in that old green boat where I learned that sometimes

The coldest places

Can form the warmest memories

Because it was in that old green boat where I learned what love is

And what kind of person

I want to be.

Grant McQueen, University of Arkansas Student

Eulogy to Grandpa

The independence that made him who he was has caused me to be who I am.

He taught me that I don't always have to be the same as the crowd.

He taught me that no matter what my passion is, I should follow it.

He taught me that you can't wait for opportunities to fall into your lap,

you have to go get them.

Logan Dodd, University of Arkansas Student

Antithesis

The independence that made him who he was has caused me to be who I am.
Eulogy to Grandpa, Logan Dodd, University of Arkansas Student

A woman whose spirit was always soaring
Even when her feet were firmly planted on the ground
Eulogy for Grandmother who was a pilot, Kayla Cross, University of Arkansas Student

I realize that it was never about your flower garden
It was always about tending to things of the heart
Tribute to Grandma, Tasha Smith, University of Arkansas Student

But let us not wallow in our pity, because that is the last thing Bill Baker would want us to do. Let us instead celebrate the life of a great man finally achieving that eternal bliss that he spent his life working towards.
Eulogy to Grandpa who gave me this necktie, Dan Howry, University of Arkansas Student

Sometimes it is the smallest things
that take up the most room in our hearts.
Eulogy, Adam Levine

Alliteration

And his time showed me how life should be lived
Fearlessly.
Frequently.
Freely.

Simile

My grandpa Jack is like the wind. We can't see him, but we can feel him.
He is always with us.
Eulogy to Grandpa Jack, Lily, University of Arkansas Student

I would tell him that I miss him like the windmill missed the wind.
He was a man of defiance
A man….of truth
And he came

And he went
Like the wind
Eulogy to Grandpa, Logan Dodd, University of Arkansas Student

Metaphor

Watch as Billy Crystal uses the metaphor of a star to eulogize Robin Williams



For almost 40 years he was the brightest star in a comedy galaxy. But while some of the brightest of our celestial bodies are actually extinct now, their energy long since cooled.

But miraculously, since because they float in the heavens so far away from us now, their beautiful light will continue to shine on us forever. And the glow will be so bright, it'll warm your heart, it'll make your eyes glisten and you'll think to yourselves, 'Robin Williams— what a concept.' Billy Crystal's Eulogy to Robin Williams

What If I Cry?



It is OK to cry when you are giving a eulogy. In fact, people expect it. If tears come to your eyes, don't apologize, just pause, breathe, and continue.

Research on funerals shows that people respect those who speak with authenticity and they admire those who are willing to share their knowledge of the deceased even when that person falters.

> *It was hard in that funeral. I think that there was a huge sense of it being too soon for the deceased to part from us and a real sadness that here was someone who was so lovely and it was hard and painful, especially when his son spoke. I think that was when most of us felt really upset, it was mostly because he was so utterly brave and strong in saying what he was saying. We could all sense that he was in tremendous pain. I was full of admiration of his strength of character in being able to say what he did. I can't remember the poem that he read or the verses. It was beautiful though. The elder brother got up to support his younger brother and that was also lovely to see.*

If, however, you are not ready emotionally to speak about the loved one, it is best not to offer to speak at a real funeral or in an in-class eulogy speech.

> *The most admirable thing that I have seen at funerals is people who are brave enough to stand in front of their friends and family and speak. Speaking in public is something that most of us do not have much experience of and it can be very intimidating. Add to that the grief that you are feeling at a funeral, which makes it even harder to stand up and speak. I can offer nothing but praise to the people that are prepared to do this small but beautiful last act of kindness to the memory of a deceased friend or relative.*

What do you, the audience member do if the speaker cries. Tears can make us feel empathy, they can make us feel sad, they can make us feel awkward. If someone is giving a eulogy and they cry, don't look away. Show your support with a reassuring glance and a light smile if it feels right. Think of eye contact as a warm hug that helps them get through the moment.

(Quote from a research study on funerals)

In a research study about eulogies and funerals, researchers Bailey and Walter noted that the things mourners reported were the most important was accuracy, authenticity, and performance.

1. **Accuracy:** It is not your goal to tell everyone's view of the deceased, but rather to tell your view in a way that honors the memory of that person for everyone.
2. **Authenticity:** An authentic eulogy is preferred to a professional one.
3. **Performance:** People admire you for being brave enough to stand up in a time of grief and speak out and do not expect a perfect performance.

Your eulogy will be as unique as the person you are celebrating. What an awesome opportunity you have to speak about someone you care about. Eulogies can be hard, but they are important to help everyone celebrate the life of someone that mattered to them.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Spend a lot of time brainstorming, reflecting, researching, and talking to others before you begin to write.
- Write in a manuscript format.
- Use inclusive language
- Tells stories when possible.
- Try incorporating colorful language: Simile, metaphor, antithesis, alliteration, parallel construction.
- Consider using a theme that fits the person or the situation.

Bonus Feature

Real Answers to Tough Questions

- What if they died in a tragic way? What if it was a suicide? What if it was after a long illness?

  It is important to remember a eulogy is about the life they lived not the way they died. Most people who are at the funeral know how they died so why mention it? Instead, spend your time sharing memories.

  You may choose to talk about how they fought hard at the end or how they kept a positive attitude at the end. Just don't let the end of their life be the only focus of their life.

- What if they had an unremarkable life?

  I once helped write a eulogy of someone who never held a job, had no close family ties, had no hobbies except to sit and watch TV ten hours a day. After talking to four family members, the best thing they say about him was that he took out the trash without being asked. Most people write their own eulogies, and some people don't write very much. Don't apologize for their life or for your brevity, just tell the stories you have to tell. Tell about the dent in the sofa cushion and the funny sound he made when something funny came on TV.

References

Arabel, H. Navigating the way. University of Arkansas Advanced Public Speaking.

Bailey, T. & Walter, T. (2016) Funerals against death, Mortality, 21(2), 149-166, DOI: 10.1080/13576275.2015.1071344

Romanoff, B.D. (1998). Rituals and the grieving process. *Death Studies*, *22*(8), 697-711, DOI: 10.1080/074811898201227

Castle, J., & Phillips, W. L. (2003). Grief rituals: Aspects that facilitate adjustment to bereavement. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, *8*(1), 41–71. doi:10.1080/15325020305876

Cross, K. Eulogy for Grandmother who was a pilot. University of Arkansas Advanced Public Speaking.

Crystal, B. (2014). Billy Crystal's Emmy Awards 2014 Tribute to Robin Williams. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUHV703ZRys Standard YouTube License.

Davies, D. J. (2017). Cremation. The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying.

Dodd, L. Eulogy to Grandpa. University of Arkansas Advanced Public Speaking.

Fripp, P.(2012). Accepting an award with class," Toastmasters International. http://www.toastmasters.org/Members/SpotlightArticles/AcceptAwardClass.aspx.

Giblin, P. & Hug, A. (2006). The psychology of funeral rituals, *Liturgy*, *21*(1), 11-19, DOI: 10.1080/04580630500285956

Heathley, L. (2013). Dallas Willard's memorial service-Granddaughter's tribute. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_tUflixuds Standard YouTube License.

Howry, D. Eulogy to Grandpa who gave me this necktie. University of Arkansas Advanced Public Speaking.

Huibertha B. Mitima-Verloop, Trudy T. M. Mooren & Paul A. Boelen (2019) Facilitating grief: An exploration of the function of funerals and rituals in relation to grief reactions, Death Studies, DOI: 10.1080/07481187.2019.1686090

Hubbard, L. (2018). Read the full transcript of Meghan McCain's eulogy to her father John McCain. *Town and Country.* https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/politics/a22892378/meghan-mccain-eulogy-for-john-mccain-full-transcript/

Katz, O. (2016). Adam Levine close friend eulogy. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRCdTWtuwAk Standard YouTube License

Lustig, T., (2012). The most difficult speech: The Eulogy. Toastmasters International. http://www.toastmasters.org/ToastmastersMagazine/ToastmasterArchive/2009/December/Articles/The-Eulogy.aspx.

McQueen, G. Tribute to Papa D. University of Arkansas Advanced Public Speaking.

Shields, B. (2009). Michael Jackson Memorial-Brooke Shields Tribute. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pxjujsW0v0 Standard YouTube License

Smith, T. Tribute to Grandma. University of Arkansas Advanced Public Speaking.

Toastmasters International (2012). Introducing a speaker: What should you say? http://www.toastmasters.org/MainMenuCategories/FreeResources/NeedHelpGivingaSpeech/BusinessPresentations/IntroducingaSpeaker.aspx.

Warren, J. T. & Fassett, D.L. (2011). *Communication: A Critical/Cultural Introduction*, 39.

WestsideToastmasters.com (2012). Presenting an award for maximum impact. http://westsidetoastmasters.com/article_reference/presenting_awards_for_maximum_impact_2005-01.html.

1. "This I Believe—Essay Writing Guidelines," accessed March 17, 2012, http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines. ↵

Media Attributions

- Park Bench © Photo by Noah Silliman on Unsplash is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Coffee together © Priscilla Du Preeez is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- diana-polekhina-AzkX_56p-KQ-unsplash © Photo by Diana Polekhina on Unsplash is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 4.7: Eulogy-Good Words is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.8: Introducing a Speaker

“The purpose of the introduction is to make the speaker feel good and feel welcome before they speak.” This was the advice of a colleague of mine right before I had to introduce our university’s speaker. I took this advice and ran with it as I am tasked monthly with introducing speakers to our university faculty training sessions. You will likely be called upon to introduce a speaker at work or on campus so you should know the expectations of this type of speech.

Speech introductions have three main purposes

1. To build up the speaker’s ethos in the minds of the audience. You want your audience to feel like the speaker is credible to speak on the topic.
2. To introduce the topic to the audience. The more they hear the basics of the topic, the more they will be able to remember the topic.
3. To make the speaker feel welcome and to make them feel good before they speak.

Gather Your Information

Ask the speaker for biographical information you can share in their introduction.

Ask the speaker for the title of their speech.

“Google” the person, check their LinkedIn, ask people who know them for the information you might include.

Ask them what they want to be called. Some prefer Mr. and Ms. and others prefer their title. Some like to be called Professor while others may prefer Doctor.

Sample Introduction of a Headline Speaker



Sample Introduction of Student Graduation Speaker



Format for Speech Introductions

Most speech introductions are read off of manuscripts or detailed notes. There is a chapter on how to write and use a manuscript here.

References

Bhuj, N. (2017). Best introduction speech for Barack Obama. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XU-BUWZPVo0 Standard YouTube License.

Degenerous, E. (2009). Ellen at Tulane Commencemen. [Video] YouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0e8ToRVOtRo Standard YouTube License.

Dunham, J. (2019). Valedictorian comes out as autistic during speech.[Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/GtPGrLoU5Uk Standard YouTube License.

This page titled 4.8: Introducing a Speaker is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.9: Tribute Speech- Celebrate the Occasion, the Person, or the Monument



A tribute is a type of celebratory speech that honors a person, a monument, a holiday, or an event.

Tribute to a Person

A tribute to a person typically includes one of these items:

- Small descriptions so we can “see” the person in their element.
- Stories of their deeds.
- Stories of how the person affected others.
- Funny or emotional moments.
- The legacy that person is leaving.

Tribute to an Event or Occasion

Tributes to occasions can be any of the following:

- Milestone Birthday, Retirement, Anniversary
- Mother’s day, Father’s Day, Veteran’s Day, Memorial Day, D-Day
- Race for the Cure, We Day
- Family reunion, School reunion

Tributes to occasions typically include:

- Emphasis on shared values
- Appreciation for the people involved
- Origin and evolution of the event
- Stories of people related to the event
- The larger context surrounding the event

Gather all the information

- Who is the audience?
- Are there other speakers?
- What is the time limit?
- Is this formal or informal?
- Will there be a podium? microphone?

Brainstorming a Person

- What life lessons did they teach you?

- How are you different because of this person?
- What are some of their favorite things?
- What are their best qualities? Tell a story about that quality
- What three words best describe this person?
- What makes this person so great?
- What is the funniest thing that you remember?
- What is this person known for?
- What are some sayings—one-liners—they are known for?
- What is something simple that they do that demonstrates their character?
- What is unique about her lifestyle or behavior?
- What is a special gift that they gave you and why is it so special?
- What does this person do for fun?
- What does he do when he is stressed?
- What adventure have you shared with this person?
- What's a story that everyone tells about this person?
- What helpful advice has this person given you?
- Every time you see a _____, you'll think of ____ because ———
- Look through a photo album—what one or two pictures tell about them ?
- What smell do you associate with this person

Make Everyone Feel Included

Notice how this speaker invites all listeners to be part of the memorial.

> *I stand here today to pay tribute to the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building Bombing Memorial in Oklahoma City.*
>
> *This memorial represents the honor and strength as well as all the **pain of every person** who remembers that historical day.*
>
> *It has helped an **immense number of people** to cope with this national tragedy*
>
> *It is a place of reflection, emotion, and healing.*

In this excerpt, Drew speaks to all those who are present at the Doolittle Raider reunion (A reunion of men who in 1942 led the first attack after the bombing of Pearl Harbor)

> *Each of **us** in this room has our own memories of growing up with these men and the reasons why they are so **special to us**. For these men, it is an everyday occurrence that someone thanks them for their service to their country and what they did 65 years ago. So today is my pleasure **to share with you** the reason why these men are my heroes and why one of them impractically means the world to me.*
>
> *I hope each of **you** will always remember the little things these men have done for **you.** L.M. Heroux once said "heroism is not just pulling a child from a burning house or a driver from an icy river or a kitten from a tall tree. Heroism is also holding the door for a frail elderly and driving courteously and cooperatively and listening with an attentive heart to a friend's words. Small daily acts of love are as heroic as big once-in-a-lifetime acts of rescue."*

In this tribute to his teacher, "the greatest swing pusher" Hosea Born reminds the group of a common thing, finding your name on the desk.

> *Walking into a new teacher's classroom is terrifying. We have all been there. You remember. Finding your desk with your name on it. My name tag was an apple. Tribute to the best swing pusher.*

Magnify the Small Things

Caitlyn Steiner wrote a tribute speech about the love her grandparent have for each other. Notice how she uses the little things to demonstrate love.

> *Love appreciates the smallest details the most. My grandpa still puts the toothpaste on both their toothbrushes every morning. My grandma still hangs a towel on the rack for my grandpa every day after he gets in the shower. And they still slow dance together every night in the living room before they go to bed.*

In this example, Fawn Kurtzo gives a birthday tribute to her brother Buck. As you read this manuscript excerpt, I want to draw your attention to the fact that each line is a story for those who know him.

> *We are gathered here today to celebrate another year in the life of Buck.*
>
> *Congratulations Buck? Who am I kidding, CONGRATULATIONS US!*
>
> *We all survived another year of*
>
> *10,000 questions why,*
>
> *mental duels,*
>
> *being outshot with bullets and arrows,*
>
> *countless times of side-splitting laughs as he carried the life of the party //*
>
> *begin terribly humiliated in a game of dominoes //*
>
> *and just flat being outlasted by this kid!*

Celebrate Don't Inform

People in the audience may not know the person you are celebrating. Resist the temptation to give an informative speech about your person, that is the equivalent of reading someone's Wikipedia biography–boring. Instead, pick a few things about them to celebrate.

In this tribute to his hometown dirt roads, Nathan Brock's speech is a good example. He tells us the facts without sounding like an informative speech, I kept this sample in a manuscript format so you could see the emphasis and the rhythm. When you see /// it means to pause.

> ***So, here's to you,*** *dirt roads*
>
> *the defining feature of my hometown.*
>
> *Here's to you, dirt roads, /// the place of my upbringing in middle-of-nowhere America.*
>
> ***Pawnee**, Oklahoma is a town with many dirt roads*
>
> *A town with a population of 2,136//*
>
> *It felt like less.*
>
> ***When** Googling "living in Pawnee, Oklahoma" one can find a list of pros and cons*

> ***Pros*** *include "cost-of-living"*
>
> ***Cons*** *include "unattractive setting*
>
> *That is where you came in, dirt roads.*

Let Us See

Describe the situation or person in vivid detail so we can see the person in their element. Jeremy Stuthard gave a tribute to his Grandma and said they were "Two peas in a pod." Notice how in one sentence you get a sense of grandma's humor and personality. from only one line, "I remember when you dumped a whole bucket of water on me, to wake me up, just to have me help you with your TV." In another example, Patience Beard describes cooking with her grandma, "Nana ALWAYS let me lick the spoon. We would make icing all from scratch she would turn that mixer on and it would never fail– icing would fly everywhere and her laugh …….would echo through the whole room." In each example, you can "see" the interaction in your mind. The speaker didn't tell you that his grandma was a trickster, he showed you that. Patience didn't tell you her grandma cooked for her, she "showed" you that she did.

Teach Little Lesson in the Small Things

In tribute speeches, the little things are often the big things. What I mean by that is you can tell a story that appears to be a simple story but it is really about something deeper. In this speech, Brittany Brunson is telling the story about riding in her dad's lap, but really it is a metaphor for their relationship. I kept this in manuscript form so you couldn't get a feel for how she intended it to be heard.

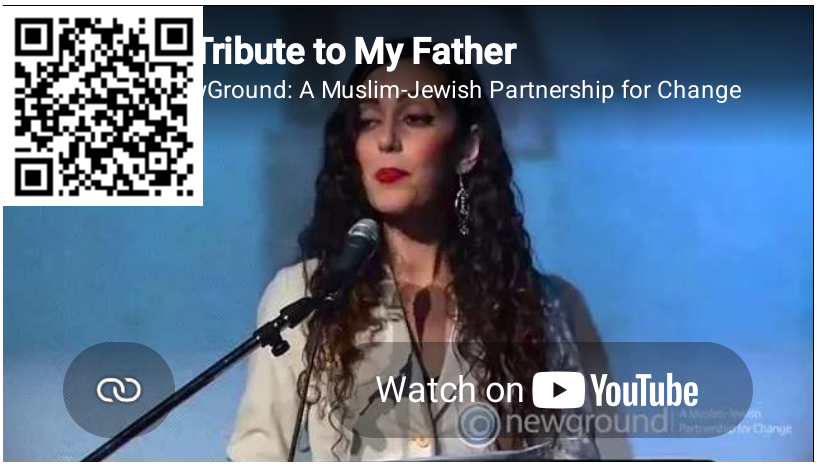
> *I don't remember much from the age of 7//*
>
> *But I do remember getting to sit on my dad's lap and driving down the alley.*
>
> *I couldn't reach the pedals // so my dad was in charge of those//*
>
> *Although I thought I was in charge of the wheel//*
>
> *My dad had ultimate control because if I ever got to close to the wall of the alleyway //*
>
> *my dad would steer me right back to the center.*
>
> *Ironically, I never got in big trouble growing up*
>
> *// except for maybe prank calling the police one time……. but anyways//*
>
> *I never got in big trouble growing up because if I ever got close to that barrier of bad choices /// my dad //steered me right back to the center.*
>
> *Although I thought I had control of the wheel of my life*
>
> *ultimately my dad guided me on to the right path //*
>
> *that led me to hold myself to a higher standard // and stand firm in my beliefs.*

Tell Stories

Watch How Kevin Durant turns his most valuable player award acceptance speech into a tribute to his mother calling her the real MVP. Telling stories that highlight personal stories with the person you are giving tributing can be very powerful.



In this tribute speech to her father, she tells a story of how a Jewish man and a Muslim man can transcend boundaries and become friends.



Yamani, N. (2015). A Tribute to My Father. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdRCNuBcAWQ

Tribute Speech at We Day



We Day was an annual series of stadium-sized youth empowerment events organized by We Charity, a Canadian charity founded by brothers Marc and Craig Kielburger. WE Day events host tens of thousands of students and celebrate the effect they have made on local and global issues.



Sadhguru (2020). A Tribute to All Healthcare Workers



Notice how Tom Hanks makes specific references to parts from the Star Wars movie in his tribute to George Lucas. His references are things that everyone has in common.

American Film Institute. (2009). Tom Hanks Salutes George Lucas at the AFI Life Achievement Award.



Trump, D. (2018). President Donald Trump Full Speech: Honors 9/11 Victims at Shanksville Memorial. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02YA6Nz70MA

Tribute to Famous Person

When giving a tribute to a famous person that you do not know personally, it is important to resist giving a biographical speech. Instead, you should talk about how that person influenced you in some way. The story of them becomes the story of you and them.

In his tribute to Stan Lee, David Lester wrote,

One of my earliest experiences with his work, is through his comics. When my mom would take forever shopping in Walmart, I would fly to the magazine section find those comic books and my time——— just——— evaporated.

Later he mentions the relationship again

> *The first Marvel movie I remember seeing saw was IRON MAN. I remember seeing Robert Downey Jr. beat up terrorists and change the way we see superheroes, not as just statues but as complex people like us.*

In his conclusion, he brings it around to impact on all of us

> *BUT Do you wanna know who Stan thought the real superheroes were? It's not the ones we talk about all the time. It's not the ones that are played by Chris Evans, Chris Pratt, and Chris Hemsworth. NO! It's us, the fans. We were the heroes all along. Looking out for each other. Supporting people around us who needed it the most. Protecting others from harm. Standing as examples for our community for what we can become. Doing more than the average man would do. That one person can make a difference. That you don't need a cape just to be a hero. He brought us together. He did all of this.*

Tribute to a Reunion by Drew

Today it is my honor to have been asked to speak at the Doolittle Raider of Reunion. As many we all know on April 18th 1942, 80 brave men flew on the first ever joint mission of the Navy and Air Force Reserves to give the United States its first attack on Japanese main land after Pearl Harbor. 600 miles off the shore of Japanese mainland the USS Hornet was spotted by a fishing boat. General Doolittle ordered the men to launch early causing the men not to have enough fuel to make it to unoccupied China as planned. All, but one of the 16 planes either crashed landed or the crew bailed out. Eight men were taken prisoners of war, but only four came home. These four men endured 40 months of being malnourished and tortured.

Of those four men, I have the greatest honor of calling my great-grandfather. For those who do not know these men on a personal level they are heroes for the actions taken on that day 65 years ago, but for those of us who have the honor on knowing these men personally they are heroes for so many other reason.

These men are our fathers, grandfathers and even great-grandfathers.

These men have been and will be apart of our lives in ways that go far beyond the Tokyo Raid.

These men are the crews that have made sure our families lives were on the right path.

Most of you know him as Lt. Col. Robert L Hite, but to me he is Bobby Hite. My great-grandfather is like the parachute he used to bail out of his plane that day. He has guided our family through the years making sure we reached the ground safely. He has done everything from slipping me a few dollars for a college student to taking us to lunch ever Saturday. As a child I can remember waiting on Saturdays for that special honk he had to inform us he was there.

I remember when my Uncle got married, I was so upset because I was going to ruin my perfect attendance record if I came to Fort Smith with my parents. Bobby Hite hating to see me so upset told my parents that he and nanny would wait for me to get out of school on Friday and drive me up because that's what would make me happy.

The times he gave his "driving lessons", told stories of when he managed the Camden Hotel and of course waiting every Christmas morning for nanny and him to arrive before we could see what Santa had brought are all memories that mean the world to me and

my two brothers.

Each of us in this room has our own memories of growing up with these men and reasons why they are so special to us. For these men, it is an everyday occurrence that someone thanks them for their service to their country and what they did 65 years ago. So today is my pleasure to share with you the reason why these men are my heroes and why one of them impractically means the world to me.

I hope each of you will always remember the little things these men have done for you. L.M. Heroux once said “heroism is not just pulling a child from a burning house or a driver from an icy river or a kitten from a tall tree. Heroism is also holding the door for a frail elderly and driving courteously and cooperatively and listening with an attentive heart to a friend’s words. Small daily acts of love are as heroic as big once-in-a-lifetime acts of rescue.”

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Spend a lot of time brainstorming, reflecting, researching, and talking to others before you begin to write.
- Write in a manuscript format.
- Structure your speech so your audience feels like they are part of something.
- Celebrate the person’s accomplishments and don’t make it an informative speech about them.
- Tells stories when possible.
- Try incorporating colorful language: Simile, metaphor, antithesis, alliteration, parallel construction.
- Consider using a theme that fits the person or the situation.

References

Durant, K. (2014). 2013-14 NBA Most Valuable player acceptance speech. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GTiCUPZ9kw&t=329s

Lester, D. Tribute to Stan Lee. University of Arkansas Advanced Public Speaking.

Waln, F. (2017). Inspirational Native American Grank Walkn tells his story at WE Day! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2SE-19WqS8 Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- m-t-elgassier-G_acucnTJNw-unsplash © MT ElGassier is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 4.9: Tribute Speech- Celebrate the Occasion, the Person, or the Monument is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.10: Informative Speech

An informative speech teaches so others can learn. It is a fact-based speech designed to convey knowledge and understanding. Typically these speeches define, explain, or describe.

Types of Informative Speeches

Speeches About Objects and People

- Self-introduction
- Telling about a place
- Telling about historical events
- Biographical speech

Speeches About Processes

- Explain how something works
- How to make something
- How to apply for something
- How to do something

Speeches About Events

- Describing an event
- Telling what happened at an event
- Inform about the history of an event

Speeches About Concepts

- Tell what a group believes
- Define specific terms
- Explain theories
- Tell about political, religious, or economic concepts

Speeches About Awareness

- Public service announcements
- Teach about safety procedures

Orientation Speeches

- Business process orientation
- New employee orientation
- New product information
- College orientation

Lectures

- Classroom lectures
- Community lectures

Things to Think About When Giving an Informative Speech

Narrow Your Topic

It is better to talk in detail about a smaller aspect than to try to tell everything. For example, I once had a student try to teach us how to build a computer in seven minutes. There were many technical terms and we were overwhelmed. The next week, a student showed up how to replace one component in a computer. I went home and tried it, and because he explained it clearly, I could do it.

Speech coach, Dale Ware says, “Too many people try to put too much information in one presentation, a big mistake; keep it simple.”

Define Terms

I attended a community lecture on wild edible plants in the Ozarks. The speaker said, “This plant has a cathartic effect” and “I like this for its astringent properties.” I thought I knew what these terms might mean but I wasn’t sure so I looked them up while he was talking. At least I had one of them right. The point is that I missed part of his lecture when I was looking up unclear terms.

Make it Personal

“I want to talk to *you* today about” is much more personal than saying, “I will explain how”

Use Stories When Possible

When possible, work stories into your speech. Make it personal by telling stories about how the topic relates to you.

There is an entire chapter on stories.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- An informative speech is a fact-based speech designed to convey knowledge and understanding.
- Always define terms.
- Include a story when possible.

References

Jeary, T. (1997). *Inspire any audience: Proven secrets of the pros for powerful presentations.* River Oak.

Tucker, B. Barton, K., Burger, A., Drye, J. Hunsicker, C. Mendes, A. and LeHew, M. (2019). *Exploring public speaking: 4th Edition*. Communication Open Textbooks. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/communication-textbooks/1

Valenzano, J.M., Kuypers, J.A., & Braden, S.W. (2019). *The speaker: The tradition and practice of public speaking: 4th edition.* Fountain Head.

This page titled 4.10: Informative Speech is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Considerations for Speech

5.1: Things That Do Not Belong In Your Speech- Curse Words, ISTS, Slang, and Bafflegab

5.2: Rhetorical History- Interview with Two Old Dead Greek Guys

5.3: Fallacies--Warning! Deceptive, Hateful Speech Coming Your Way

5.4: The Science of Persuasion- A Little Theory Goes a Long Way

---

This page titled 5: Considerations for Speech is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

5.1: Things That Do Not Belong In Your Speech- Curse Words, ISTS, Slang, and Bafflegab



Sometimes big words can mean so little.

I'm so sorry. If you were my student the semester after I graduated from graduate school, I really need to apologize. I need to apologize for using my graduate student vocabulary in your freshman course. I need to apologize for telling you about the detailed educational philosophy behind everything I did. I am so sorry I used the words "pedagogy" and "learning objectives" in the lectures about how to give a good speech.

In my defense, most new teachers do this. I can remember having a teacher who was finishing up her dissertation–she baffled me with her brilliant vocabulary and impressed me with her cerebral lectures. I have no idea what she said, but at least she sounded smart while saying it.

In this chapter, I am going to talk about why you should avoid big words and specialty language. In fact, I am going to share with you many other things you should avoid in your speech as you seek to get your point across to your audience.

Beware of the Curse of Knowledge

When I was in graduate school I suffered from the curse of knowledge. Actor and communication expert, Alan Alda in his book, *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on my Face* says,

> *Once we know something, it's hard to unknow it, to remember what it's like to be a beginner. It keeps us from considering the listener. Using shorthand that is incomprehensible to the other person, or referring to a process they're unfamiliar with, we lock them out, and we don't even realize it because we can't believe we are the only person who knows this stuff.*

The problem is people are "unable to ignore the additional information they possess," according to economists Camerer, Loewenstein, and Weber. These researchers questioned whether or not it was beneficial to know more when it came to sales. In short, their finding was that it is not beneficial. If you know too much information, it is hard not to use that information and too much information can be overwhelming. It is hard to remember what it was like before you had that knowledge. It is hard to put yourself in the mind of your audience who does not understand. Sometimes, knowledge is a curse.

Go to one of your friends and ask them to help you with a little experiment. Ask them to “guess this song” and then tap out the tune to the “Star-Spangled Banner” with your finger. Did they guess it? Chances are they can’t. Try another common song like “happy birthday.” Chances are that as the tapper, you are going to get frustrated because it is so obvious and so easy to guess but most people just won’t get it.

This is a mock-up of what a graduate student at Stanford did. Elizabeth Newton first asked how likely it would be that the person listening would guess the tapped song. They predicted the odds were about 50 percent. The guessers got it right only 2.5% of the time. What seemed obvious to the tapper was not obvious to the listener. You can see where this is going. To bring it back to the earlier study, a CEO who says she is “unlocking shareholder value” might just sound like random tapping to those unfamiliar with the phrase. Sometimes, knowledge is a curse.

In your speech, you must remember what it was like to not know and use your naivete in your speech. Part of this is to avoid big words, jargon, and slang. Let’s break these down one at a time.

Avoid Big Words (unless you need to impress people at an academic conference)

Why use a three-dollar word when a two-dollar word will do? Words like facetious, discombobulation, obfuscate, and cacophony make you sound smart, but they won’t make you understood. There is a time and place for your ‘big” vocabulary, but it is rarely in your speech.

As with all things, context is key. If you are a graduate student or faculty member at an academic conference, you should whip out all those “three-dollar words.” You should also use those big words if you are called to be an expert witness. Dr. Robert Cialdini, a persuasion researcher, says professional witnesses who use big words are more persuasive. Jurors think, “That witness said an important word that I don’t understand, he must be smart. I’ll trust what he said to be true.” Since most of the time, you are not at an academic conference, nor are you called to be an expert witness, you should stick with the simple words.

Side note: If you plan on using a big word you are not familiar with, look up the proper pronunciation of the word. Practice saying the word multiple times and put a pronunciation key in your notes. Nothing kills your credibility like stumbling over big words.



Avoid Bafflegab (Eschew Obfuscation)

According to Milton Smith, originator of the term bafflegab said,

> *Bafflegab is multiloquence characterized by consummate interfusion of circumlocution or periphrasis, inscrutability, incognizability, and other familiar manifestations of abstruse expatiation commonly used for promulgations implementing procrustean determinations by governmental bodies.*

In short, it is using fancy words used to sound smart or to deliberately confuse your audience. William Lutz called it this inflated language. Most of the time, your audience is confused and not impressed. My dad used to tell me not to confuse my audience or I would be “up the proverbial tributary of deification without and adequate means of propulsion.”

Consider This When Speaking English to a Group of International People

National Public Radio shared a program about the challenges to non-American English speakers. Consider the scenario where speakers from Germany, South Korea, Nigeria, and France are having a productive conversation in English. An American enters the conversation and says, “let’s take a holistic approach” and “you hit it out of the park”. Suddenly, understanding goes down. Research indicates, when an American enters the conversation, understanding goes down because they tend to use simple words and phrases that can be challenging for nonnative speakers.

Prepone That! Your Accent Is Funny! Readers Share Their ESL Stories

> *Sergio Serrano is a professor of engineering science and applied mathematics at Temple University. Having lived in North America for 40 years after growing up in Bogotá, Colombia, Serrano shares his experience speaking English in academic settings and dealing with accent stereotypes.*
>
> *Sergio Serrano has participated in many international scientific conferences across the globe. “In a typical situation, a group of foreign researchers are discussing a complex technical issue with very precise and elaborate formal English,” Serrano says, “until an American joins the group.”*
>
> *In our previous article about speaking English, we discussed research that found understanding goes down in a room of nonnative speakers when a native English speaker joins the conversation. The research found that communication is inhibited in part due to native speakers’ use of language not held in common, like culturally specific idioms.*
>
> *But this scenario doesn’t fit with Serrano’s experiences of English, where nonnative English speakers who learned the language in a classroom are often more educated on grammar rules and complex technical terms than American native speakers.*
>
> *For Serrano, when an American joins in a conversation among nonnative speaking scientists, the conversation does falter, but not because the American’s language is too complex.*
>
> *“On the contrary, communication ends because [the foreign researchers] cannot explain to the American, in simple language, the advanced topics they were discussing. Yet, the American takes over the conversation.”*

Complete excerpt from:
McCusker, C. (2021). Prepone that! Your accent is funny! Readers share their ESL stories. https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/05/16/995963311/prepone-that-your-accent-is-funny-readers-share-their-esl-stories

Avoid Jargon (well, mostly)

Jargon is the specialized language of a group or profession. If you are part of the group and speaking to an audience made up of people from that group, then you should use jargon, in fact, it would be hard for you not to. If, however, there are outsiders in the audience, you should be sure to define unknown terms or exclude them altogether.

Just for fun, I asked my social circle to come up with jargon they might hear in their specialty, and here are a few of their replies.

- Contras open to double f at the end of that crescendo.
  (Tubas get very loud after the buildup–Marching band directions)
- Make sure you maintain cover when that pinwheel crosses the yard line.
  (Make sure the drumline is lined up front to back as it spins over the football field’s yard line–Drum Corp directions)
- Soon, you will ETS and will no longer eat MRE’s and wear BDU’s. (Soon you will get out of the military and no longer have to eat dehydrated food and wear soldier uniforms–US Army.)
- The scuttlebutt is we won’t endex until next week. (Rumor has it this operation won’t be over until next week–Marines)

? Double Speak

William Lutz, the American linguist, coined the term doublespeak to mean language that deliberately obscures, disguises, distorts, or reverses the meaning of words.

"Doublespeak is a matter of intent. You can identify doublespeak by looking at who is saying what to whom, under what conditions and circumstances, with what intent, and what result. If a politician stands up and speaks to you and says, 'I am giving you exactly what I believe,' and then turns around and does the opposite, then you've got a pretty good yardstick. She was pretending to tell me something, and it turns out it wasn't what she meant at all, she meant something different," says Mr. Lutz.

Lutz claims doublespeak is distorting the language to the benefit of the speaker. Let's talk about each of these in speechmaking: Jargon, euphemism, bureaucratese, and inflated language.

Jargon: We talked about that already as the special language of a group. If you are an insider, you should use it, but when you are not, you should avoid it altogether.

Euphemism: Words that are used in place of something offensive or unpleasant. When it comes to speechmaking, euphemisms aren't always bad. For example, when giving a eulogy, most people prefer to say, "passed away" or "went on to a better place." That type of euphemism is a form of politeness it moves on to be doublespeak when it is used to mislead. Lutz points to the pentagon using the phrase, "Incontinent ordinance" to mean bombs that fall on civilian targets, and "unlawful arbitrary detention" which means to be held without a trial. He also uses the example from when a bill was proposed asking for money for a "radiation enhancement device" it was talking about buying a neutron bomb.

Inflated Language: Inflated language is designed to make the simple seem complex or to give an air of importance to things, or situations. Instead of using the phrase invasion, the pentagon chose to say they had "predawn verticle insertion." Sarcastic teachers will sometimes tell their students to "eschew obfuscation" (eshew=avoid; obfuscation-confusing and ambiguous language).

Bureaucratese: Lutz nicknames this "gobbledygook." In short, it is piling on of words by either giving a bunch of large words or just a large quantity of words. Alan Greenspan testified before that Senate Committee, "It is a tricky problem to find the particular calibration in timing that would be appropriate to stem the acceleration in risk premiums created by falling incomes without prematurely aborting the decline in the inflation-generated risk premiums."

Avoid Slang (Most of the time)

Slang is the informal language of a particular group. Because it is seen as "informal," it should be avoided in formal speeches like career speeches, academic speeches, and professional speeches. In less formal speeches, slang can be useful. If you are an insider to the group, slang can build credibility. Studies found that it created a more supportive classroom climate when a teacher used positive slang such as "cool" and "awesome,"

Use slang sparingly and with intent. Slang that is doesn't fit the audience and context may rob you of your credibility and muddle the message's meaning. When it comes to slang when in doubt, don't.

Avoid Cliches (Like the Plague)

Clichés are overused expressions that have lost their meaning over time. Cliches can make you seem too lazy to come up with concrete words and some people find them annoying. If you are writing a formal essay, all experts say to avoid cliches. If you are making a formal academic presentation, avoid cliches. In speeches, sometimes they work, but other times the meaning gets lost.

Cliches are culturally bound so they may be misunderstood. Let's take the cliche, "The devil's in the details." Does that mean details are bad like the devil is bad? Or does it mean the reason there are details is that the devil makes us have them? If you don't know the actual meaning of the cliche it can be really confusing.

> *(The devils in the details mean that the details may take more effort than you think or there may be hidden problems).*

Like everything in this chapter, context and audience matter. Some cliches may be just right for an audience so that is why researching your audience is important.

Click here for the internet's largest list of cliches.



Avoid Cusswords (Most of the d@#! time)

To cuss or not to cuss, that is the question?

If you would have asked me that question, ten years ago, I would have advised you that under no circumstances should you ever swear in a speech. I have to be honest here, however, some of my favorite speeches use swear words. Dr. Randy Pausch says curse words in the Last Lecture and Dr. Jerry Harvey's lecture on Abilene Paradox just would not be the same without him telling you the cuss word spoken by his grandfather. When speakers say cuss words, they risk losing credibility points with the audience. When there are credibility points to spare, a well-placed swear word may actually make them seem more approachable. If, however, you are a speaker who is on the same level as your audience, you might not want to risk those credibility points.

> *Instead of thinking of swearing as uniformly harmful or morally wrong, more meaningful information about swearing can be obtained by asking what communication goals swearing achieves. Timothy Jay and Kristin Janschewitz, researchers who study taboo language.*

If you want to swear in your speech, ask yourself "Why? What do I want to achieve?" Your goal as a speaker should be to get your message across to your audience. With that in mind, you should decide if there is someone in your audience who would be offended by your word and if that offense would cause them not to listen to your message. If that is the case, you should leave the swear word out.

What Do You Think of a College Teacher Who Swears

Researchers looked at what college students thought when their teachers said swear words. The impact on students was influenced by whether teachers were swearing to be funny, swearing at a person, or swearing about the class content. As you can imagine, students did not like a teacher to swear at students. The other types of swearing caused mixed reactions. When asked, students felt like classroom swearing, made them feel:

- Closer to course content.
- More alert.
- Slightly offended or uncomfortable.
- Like the teachers was trying too hard.
- Like teacher seemed less in control.
- No change in how they felt about the teacher.

Students thought that swearing was part of the instructor's personality tended to cause them to perceive the teacher as verbally aggressive a trait associated with diminished student learning and student satisfaction.

Reflect on a college teacher you had that said curse words in class, did you like them more? Did they lose credibility points? Did you find them more approachable?

The Profanity President: Trump's Four-Letter Vocabulary

Read this excerpt from the New York Times about President Trump's cusswords in speeches. As you read, ask yourself whether you think swearing hurt or helped his credibility. If you were his political advisor, what would you tell him to do?

> *In a single speech on Friday alone, he managed to throw out a "hell," an "ass" and a couple of "bullshits" for good measure. In the course of just one rally in Panama City Beach, Fla., earlier this month, he tossed out 10 "hells," three "damns" and a "crap." The audiences did not seem to mind. They cheered and whooped and applauded.*
>
> *"I'd say swearing is part of his appeal," said Melissa Mohr, the author of "Holy Sh*t: A Brief History of Swearing," published in 2013. "It helps create the impression that he is saying what he thinks, 'telling it like it is.' We tend to believe people when they swear, because we interpret these words as a sign of strong emotions. In his case, the emotion is often powerful anger, which his supporters seem to love." New York Times*

You are the political advisor, what would you advise him to do?
Can you think of other examples of swearing in political speeches?
How did reading those presidential swear words impact you?

Avoid the ISTS

Ists do not belong in your speech. Avoid racist, sexist, agist, heterosexist, ableist language. And while you are at it, make sure you know the preferred name for people groups.

The "right" word to use changes over time and changes based on context. When I started to write this chapter, I thought I would make a list of what words to say and what words not to say. It was going to be the definitive list of what to call people. I quickly realized that by the time this book was published, those words might change. So, now I am telling you that knowing the right term is an important part of your speech research.

As a speaker, it is your responsibility to use inclusive language and to choose your words in a way your audience feels included and respectful. It is your responsibility to research your subject and your audience and this includes how to use respectful language.

I found this guide from the University of South Carolina helpful: Inclusive Language Guide from University of South Carolina Aiken.

Discuss This

Read one of these articles and discuss how it applies to word choice and public speaking.

Seattle city gov't bans the words "citizen" and "brown bag," for obvious reasons

Centuries-Old Law Against Cursing In Public Repealed By Virginia Legislators

Supreme Court Sides with Teen Cheerleader in Free Speech Case Over Vulgar Snapchat Post

Words That Significantly Hurt Politicians

The wrong word at the wrong time to the wrong audience can be problematic for a speaker. For a politician, it can be career changing. Here are a few examples of times politicians got it wrong.

If you are easily offended, you might skip this section.

You People

> *"Good and decent people all over this country, and particularly you folks, have got bars on windows. Drug use is absolutely devastating to our country and absolutely devastating to you and your people." Ross Perot, presidential candidate.*

Basket of Deplorables

> *"You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump's supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right? The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic — you name it. And unfortunately, there are people like that. And he has lifted them up." Hillary Clinton, Democratic candidate for the Presidency.*

Legitimate Rape

> *In an interview for KTVI-TC, the question was posed "An abortion could be considered in the case of a tubal pregnancy, what about in the case of rape?" Politician Todd Akin replied. "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down. But let's assume that maybe that didn't work or something: I think there should be some punishment, but the punishment ought to be of the rapist, and not attacking the child." Todd Akin, Republican candidate for the Senate.*

I'm Not a Witch

> *In an interview, Christina O'Donnel told Maher that she dabbled into witchcraft but never joined a coven. Later she made a campaign video: "I'm not a witch. I'm nothing you've heard. I'm you. None of us are perfect, but none of us can be happy with what we see all around us: politicians who think spending, trading favors, and back-room deals are the ways to stay in office. I'll go to Washington and do what you'd do." Republican Candadate, Christine McDonnell*
> *(Fun fact, political coaches suggest you never repeat the accusation even to say I'm not because it reinforces it and makes it stick in the minds of listeners.)*

Extremism

> *"I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." Senator Barry Goldwater. (To use the word extremist always carries negative connotations.)*

You Ain't Black

> *Joe Biden: "Well I tell you what, if you have a problem figuring out whether you're for me or Trump, then you ain't black." Joe Biden, Democratic presidential candidate.*

Crisis of Confidence

> *It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation. The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America. The confidence that we have always had as a people is not simply some romantic dream or a proverb in a dusty book that we read just on the Fourth of July… Our people are losing that faith, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers*

> *of our democracy. President Jimmy Carter (Carter thought he would be respected for the honesty but all the negative words, made people feel bad).*

The Scream That Killed a Political Campaign

Anytime political mishaps come up, the Dean Scream is mentioned. It was the scream that seriously damaged his political campaign. This chapter is really about what words not to say, in this case, it is what sound not to make–beyond words.



Avoid Powerless Language (It really makes you sound smart, don't you think?)

Powerless language consists of words or phrases that weaken the language and undermine credibility. Powerless language results in the speaker being seen as less persuasive, less attractive, and less credible.

It is true that in social settings, you should be willing to use powerless language for the sake of cooperation, but in speeches, you should stick with sounding confident and powerful.

Examples of Powerless Language

Hedges: Statements that make a phrase sound less forceful.	• I'm *kinda* surprised at the research I found. • I *guess* I'd like to… • I *think* this point is important because
Hesitations: Words or sounds that are pauses in the speech like uh, um, er.	• Uh, I'd like to talk about… • W-w-w we can all agree. • I wish everyone would, er, uh consider this idea.
Intensifiers: Words that do not add meaning but attempt to magnify the emotional content.	• I'm not *very* excited about… The car is *really* expensive. I'm *super* excited about this new… "Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very'; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be." Mark Twain
Taq questions: Adding questions to the end of the sentence to make an assertion sound like a question.	• I think this is a great idea, *don't you*? It is OK to ask the audience questions. It becomes powerless language when you tag the question on so you don't sound certain of what you are saying.
Disclaimers: Information given before a statement that signals a problem, a lack of understanding, or anticipates doubts	• I'm not sure if I'm saying this right. • I probably shouldn't say this, but… • Don't get me wrong… • I know this sounds crazy but… • I'm no expert but…

Self Critical: Making negative statements about yourself	• Let me start by saying that I'm a terrible public speaker. • PowerPoint is not my thing, but here is a slide I made to illustrate.
Uptalk: Making voice go up at the end of a sentence making it sound like a question	

Powerless language is not always a bad thing, Dr. Fragale found that when doing group work, powerless language can make you appear more cooperative.

> *When people hear someone who is very confident and certain in the way that they speak, others think of that person as really dominant and ambitious and assertive, but they also think of that person as less warm, less collaborative and less cooperative. In groups that require a lot of teamwork, team members are looking for people who have good team skills, who care about other people. Those personality attributes are more important than how dominant or ambitious you are.*

Oftentimes, you will have a group project that leads up to a speech. In this scenario, you should use your cooperative speech for working with the team and your assertive language in the speech.

At first glance, this whole chapter looks like it is dedicated to things to avoid. In reality, it is dedicated to getting you to think about one big thing–context. Context matters. Who makes up your audience, what the expectations of the occasion are, and who you are in relation to each will impact how you should design your speech. The most important thing in speechmaking is to figure out how to share your message in a way that the audience can listen to and receive your message.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- The goal of your speech is to get your message across to your audience, by knowing the context, the occasion, and the audience you can avoid things that will cause them to not want to listen.
- Your credibility can be positively or negatively affected by your choice of words.
- Always be intentional with slang, jargon, and big words. Using them or not using them by choice in a way that connects with your audience.
- Always use inclusive language and adapt your vocabulary in a way your audience will feel respected and included.
- Beware of the curse of knowledge and realize that what is easy for you to understand may not be easy for your audience so adjust your speech accordingly.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

AP. (1992). Perot calls black group 'you people: Draws fire–some in NAACP audience welcome unpolished speech. *The Seattle Times.* https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/?date=19920712&slug=1501684

Alda, A. (2017). *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face: My Adventures in the Art and Science of Relating and Communicating.* Random House.

Baker, P. (2019). The profanity president: Trump's four-letter vocabulary. *The New York Times.* https://search.proquest.com/newspapers/profanity-president-trump-s-four-letter/docview/2244183119/se-2?accountid=8361

BBC. (2012). US row over Congressman Todd Akin's rape remark. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-19319240

Camerer, C., Loewenstein, G., & Weber, M. (1989). The curse of knowledge in economic settings: An experimental analysis. (1989). *Journal of Political Economy 97*(5). https://doi.org/10.1086/261651

Cialdini, R. (1993). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion.* William Morrow.

Dean, H. (2004). The scream that doomed Howard Dean. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6i-gYRAwM0

Generous, M. A., & Houser, M. L. (2019). "Oh, st! did I just swear in class?": Using emotional response theory to understand the role of instructor swearing in the college classroom. *Communication Quarterly, 67*(2), 178-198. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2019.1573200

Generous, M. & Frei, S. & Houser, M. (2014). When an instructor swears in class: Functions and targets of instructor swearing from college students' retrospective accounts. *Communication Reports. 28*. https://doi.org/10.1080/08934215.2014.927518

Gura, S. (2010). 'I'm not a witch," Republican candidate Christine O'Donnell tells Delaware voters. https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2010/10/05/130353168/-i-m-not-a-witch-republican-senate-candidate-christine-o-donnell-says-in-new-ad?fbclid=IwAR3UsTaVFnHkH4nGk8rmjblbR9ZlbY-3zIKLaydfjdHlQJM0a-mhufvLAno

Haleta, L.L. (1996) Student perceptions of teachers' use of language: The effects of powerful and powerless language on impression formation and uncertainty. *Communication Education* 45(1), 16-28. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529609379029

Harvey, J. (1981). Abillene Paradox. [Video] YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFQ-ukyhttps://doi.org/10.1080/08934215.2014.927518vAMk Standard YouTube License.

Heath, C. and Heath, D. (2008). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die.* New York, Random House

Heath, C & Heath, D. (2006). The curse of knowledge. *Harvard Business Review* https://hbr.org/2006/12/the-curse-of-knowledge.

Hicks, K. (2020). Biden says he regrets 'you ain't Black; comment: I shouldn't have said that". The Denver Channel. https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/election-2020/biden-says-he-regrets-you-aint-black-comment-i-shouldnt-have-said-that

Heyne, R. L. (2016). *"Fired up about education": A quantitative exploration of positive and negative slang. Theses and Dissertations. 572.*
https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/572 http://doi.org/10.30707/ETD2016.Heyne.R

Hogarth, R. M., & Reder, M.W., eds. (1986). The behavioral foundations of economic theory. *Supplement to Journal of Business*, *59*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X8800700214

Hosman, L. A., & Siltanen, S. A. (2011). Hedges, tag questions, message processing, and persuasion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *30(*3), 341–349. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X11407169

Hosman, L. & Siltanen, S. (2006). Powerful and powerless language forms. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 25*. 33-46. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X05284477

Jay, T. & Janschewitz, K. (2012). The science of swearing. *Psychological Science.* https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/the-science-of-swearing

Jenkins, J. (2002). A sociolinguistically based, empirically researched pronunciation syllabus for English as an international language. *Applied Linguistics*, *23*. 83-103. DOI:10.1093/applin/23.1.83

Johnson, C. &Vinson, L. (1990) Placement and frequency of powerless talk and impression formation. *Communication Quarterly* 38:4, 325-333. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463379009369770

Johnson, C.E. (1987) An introduction to powerful and powerless talk in the classroom, *Communication Education*, *36(*2), 167-172, DOI: 10.1080/03634528709378657

Kenan Flagler School of Business (2010). The power of powerless speech. https://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/news/the-power-of-powerless-speech/

Lepki, L. (2020). The internet'ss best list of cliches. https://prowritingaid.com/art/21/List-of-Clich%C3%A9s.aspx

Lutz, W. (1987). Language, appearance, and reality: Doublespeak in 1984. Institute of General Semantics. ETC 44(4). (no doi)

Mazer, J. P. & Hunt, S. K. (2008) "Cool" communication in the classroom: A preliminary examination of student perceptions of instructor use of positive slang, *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, *9*(1), 20-28, DOI: 10.1080/17459430802400316

Mazer, J. P., & Hunt, S. K. (2008). The effects of instructor use of positive and negative slang on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. Communication Research Reports, 25, 44 – 55. doi: 10.1080/08824090701831792

McCusker, C. (2021). Prepone that! Your accent is funny! Readers share their ESL stories. https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/05/16/995963311/prepone-that-your-accent-is-funny-readers-share-their-esl-stories

Pausch, R. (2007). Last lecture: Achieving your childhood dreams. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFQ-ukyvAMk

PBS Frontline. (2004). Interview with Frank Luntz. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/interviews/luntz.html

Reilly, K. (2016). Read Hillary Clinton's 'basket of deplorables' remarks about Donald Trump supporters. *Time Magazine*. https://time.com/4486502/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables-transcript/

Sketchplanations, (n.d.) How to speak plainly by poo. https://sketchplanations.com/how-to-speak-plainly-by-pooh-bear

Smith, M. (2011). Bafflegab. bafflegab.net.

Swartzman, E. (n.d.). Why doublespeak is dangerous. https://www.ericschwartzman.com/why-doublespeak-is-dangerous/

Vinson, L, Johnson, C.E., & Hackman, M.Z. (1993). Explaining the effect of powerless language use on the evaluative listening process: A theory of implicit prototypes. George Fox University Faculty Publications. https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1042&context=gfsb

Weiner, T. (2010). Alexander M. Haig Jr dies at 85; was a forceful Aide to 2 Presidents. T*he New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/us/politics/21haig.html

Media Attributions

- Frustrated face © OSPAN ALI on Unsplash is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- sketchplanations speak plainly © Sketchplanations is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- krakenimages-8RXmc8pLX_I-unsplash © krakenimages is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 5.1: Things That Do Not Belong In Your Speech- Curse Words, ISTS, Slang, and Bafflegab is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

5.2: Rhetorical History- Interview with Two Old Dead Greek Guys



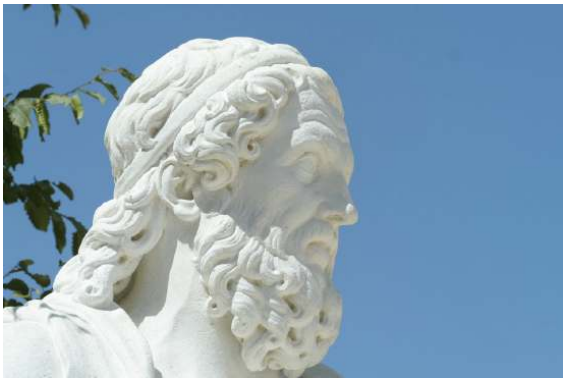
Character may almost be called
the most effective means of persuasion.
Aristotle

Any textbook on public speaking seems incomplete without shoutouts to the old dead Greek founders of the discipline. As a student, I felt like the history of rhetoric was irrelevant. I thought the historical information was placed in the book to give me words and dates to memorize.

Through the years, I've begun to look at these rhetoricians differently. I now see them as the bringers of interesting philosophical debates. Debates that are still argued today. To help you see this larger debate, I decided to take a different approach to this chapter. Imagine if you will, that I am a journalist sitting down at a coffee shop interviewing a couple of these famous rhetors. Read my interviews and decide which school of thought best fits what you believe and think about the function of speech. Reflect on the larger philosophical debate about society, education, and what it is to be a good citizen.

The Setting

In the early days of the Greek democratic city-states, citizens used speeches to defend themselves in court and to discuss public policy. Since a person's future often rested on the outcome of these speeches, it was very important that people learn to speak well. Itinerant speech trainers known as Sophists would travel around teaching citizens. These Sophists were teachers for hire and there was not a manual they went by nor was there any consistency in what they taught. A few of the students from this sophist movement went on to create schools with more consistency, with a larger curriculum, and eventually with written texts. The schools of Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle were the seedbed of today's rhetoric.



Coffee with Isocrates

Now it's time to grab a cup of coffee and sit down with the man who has been called the father of eloquence and the master of all rhetoricians, Isocrates.

Isocrates, thanks for coming out today to talk with me. Could you tell me a little about your early training?

> *Yes, I came from a family that had enough money to make sure I received training. The sophists were a group of itinerate teachers who would train young statesmen on how to be good citizens. They emphasized moral character and taught us how to give a good speech. I studied with Gordias, Prodicus, and Socrates.*
>
> *Sophists have a few good ideas. For example, Gorgias felt strongly that a passive audience could be moved by language and Protagoras made some good points about training people to think about both sides of an argument.*

For someone who was trained by sophists, I've heard you wrote some scathing things about them. Would you like to talk about that?

> *Sophists, what can I say about those guys? I put out a pamphlet about them called Against the Sophists. Did you know the name means "wisdom bearer?" For people who are supposed to share wisdom, they sure do spread lies. They deceive us with lies and they promise that their students will be happy and knowledgeable because of the knowledge that they teach, but they are making promises that they can't fulfill. I'm with Plato when he said they "are paid hunters after the young and wealthy" and "purgers of souls."*
>
> *At the core, we are just philosophically different. I think that the sophists are using language to make the worse seem better. They love to show off in public assemblies and hold contests against each other for the sake of gaining praise. They make a public spectacle and in doing so they hurt their own cause. Most of the time, people despise them.*

That is some strong talk.

> *You know it is. They think they are masters, but they revile and abuse each other. They use words like weapons– to abuse. What sophists sell is pure folly, one has to only look at how cheaply they sell their trade for. They teach lies and they don't even charge a good price for it.*

Is that why you started a new school, to contrast the sophists?

> *Yes. My new model is to establish a permanent academy of rhetoric at the Lyceum in Athens. There I can work with small groups of students, teach them a variety of subjects, and prepare them for public life. As the only teacher in my school, I can make sure they get a well-rounded and quality education. Unlike the sophists, I have stringent admission requirements, and I have high expectations for my students.*

So, an academy of rhetoric sounds interesting. Just to be clear, what do you mean by rhetoric?

> *Rhetoric is the worker of persuasion. It is that outward feeling and inward thought of not merely expression, but reason, feeling, and imagination. It is the thing that raises us above animals and enables us to live a civilized life. It helps us to talk to others about areas of dispute and helps us to seek light for ourselves on things that are unknown.*

It sounds like you have an elevated belief about what speech can do.

> *Yes. None of the things which are done with intelligence take place without the help of speech. Both our thoughts and our actions are guided by speech. And it is that understanding that is employed by those who have the most wisdom.*

Well, I heard that the Roman Statesman, Cicero * is a big fan of your school. He has been quoted as saying Isocrates's school is "like a Trojan horse where nothing but leaders come forth." What do you say to that?

> *I am certainly proud of my students and the things they have been able to accomplish. My success comes in part from the selection process. I only pick students who already have a natural aptitude and are good debaters. I then take these students and I emphasize ability, practice, and training.*

What is your philosophy of education?

> *Students need to be well educated in a variety of subjects to be good citizens. We are one of the first programs to promote a liberal arts education teaching them not just oratory but composition, history, citizenship, culture, and morality. We are training our students for public life so they can address practical problems.*

I've heard you have a tailored approach to teaching.

> *Since I have small classes of 4 to 5 students–never more than nine. I can get to know my students and their strengths and weaknesses. For some students, I use the spur approach to spur them along and for others I use the bridle approach and pull them back. I may need to check the one's exuberance and boldness of style and for another I need to press them towards more exuberance.*

What are some of your other approaches to teaching?

> *Well, here in Athens, we have a lot of public speakers, so I encourage my students to wander around and observe speakers in public forums. I encourage them to learn through imitation.*

I've heard kairos is important for you. Can you explain to me kairos?

> *Yes. Kairos is Greek for the "right time." It is one of the most important characteristics of effective rhetorical discourse. When working with my students, there is a big emphasis on kairos or adapting to the timing and the needs of the occasion. Kairos is about more than just time, it also includes place, demands of the culture, the situation, and the nature of the audience.*
>
> *Archers are familiar with kairos because it is used in archery. Kairos is reading the signs to know the moment to release the arrow so it will hit the target with sufficient force. I feel very strongly about teaching kairos. I want my students to compose and deliver speeches on various subjects and to know how to adapt those subjects to the audience, location, and occasion.*

I've heard you use your skills as a speechwriter?

> *Yes, in the early days. I wrote speeches for others to give in the law courts. The craft is called logography and I took it up when my family's wealth was lost due to the*

> *Peloponnesian War. While it was a lucrative profession, I tend to downplay it because some think it is disingenuous to have others write their speeches for them.*

Speaking of criticism. Some have criticized you because you write speeches and you teach speech, but you don't make public speeches.

> *Nature has placed me at a disadvantage. I wasn't born with a strong enough voice to deal with the mob. I don't have the strength to take the abuse. I don't have the strength, but my students do.*
>
> *It might help to add an illustration here. Are you familiar with a whetstone–that rock that is used to sharpen a sword of ax? Well, a whetstone cannot cut things by itself, but it can make other things sharp enough so that they can do so. I like to think that I am the stone used to sharpen my students.*

Thank you so much Isocrates this has been very informative. Have a great day.

? Let's Talk About How Isocrates' Ideas Relate to Today

- Isocrates believed someone had to have a natural talent for oratory before they could be taught. What do you think about this notion–is it a knack or an art?
- Isocrates was criticized for writing other people's speeches. This practice still takes place today as politicians have professional speech writers. Is it ethical to use another's words and present them as your own?
- One of Isocrates' teaching methods was to have students practice speaking by imitation. Do you think this a helpful practice, why or why not?
- The school Isocrates began was the first step in moving towards what would become a liberal arts education. What are the pros and cons of a liberal arts education?

From the letter, you can easily see there were competing ways of thinking about rhetoric, how it should be taught, and what its role was in society. To better understand a different view of rhetoric, let's look at Aristotle.



Coffee with Aristotle

Let's grab another cup of coffee and sit down with one of Isocrates' rivals. This man was nicknamed the "man who knows everything" and he literally wrote the book on rhetoric. Without further ado, let's talk to the man himself, Aristotle.

Aristotle, thanks so much for meeting with me. It was a little hard to find you here in hiding. Would you like to tell me a little about that?

> *Yes, my student, Alexander became a great man and a strong warrior. They have nicknamed him "Alexander the Great." While on a conquest in Babylon, he died of a mysterious illness. Shortly after that, a huge anti-Macedonian wave swept. I decided to flee and see how the whole thing plays out. Since my mother has an estate at Chalcis, it made sense to hang out here for a while.*
>
> *In this climate, laying low is a good idea. You know what they did to Socrates right? Hemlock? Poison? I refuse to allow the Athenians to sin twice against philosophy.*

Sounds like quite a story, let's back up to find out how you got here. It is my understanding that as a young man, you went to the Academy.

> *At age 17, I moved from my hometown in Stagira to Athens to enroll in Plato's Academy. It was a wonderful place of learning. Plato and I grew to be good friends in my time there. After I finished my studies, I began to teach there. I think I was at the Academy for a total of 20 years. After Plato passed, I decided to move on and further develop my ideas of philosophy, science, and rhetoric.*

So tell me about your relationship with Alexander?

> *Sure. I was hired by King Philip II of Macedon to tutor to his 13-year-old son, Alexander. In exchange, Philip agreed to rebuild my hometown of Stageira, to free the slaves, and pardon the exiles. I tutored Alexander and many of his friends throughout their early teen years. I taught them medicine, philosophy, morals, religion, logic, and art.*
>
> *When Alexander began his conquests, he took an annotated copy of the Iliad which I gave him along on his campaigns. That man loved Homer. Many people knew him as a fierce warrior, but I knew him as the foremost ambassador of Athenian culture to the world.*

Eventually, you moved on and started your own school, is this correct?

> *Yeah, not long after Alexander conquered Athens, I began a school. As a nonresident in Athens, I couldn't exactly own property, so I rented space at the gymnasium– the Lyceum and I set up a school. There I taught students knowledge, philosophy, and rhetoric. It is important to me to make the lectures open to the public and free of charge.*

I've heard they call your pupils by an unusual name, Peripatetics?

> *Funny name, huh? Yes. Peripatetics are people who walk about. I like to take my students outside when I am teaching. We walk around from place to place as we learn our lessons. Because of that, some people refer to my school as the Peripatos.*

Tell me about how your library fits with the larger philosophy of rhetoric.

> *I have been able to amass collections from all over. This collection is what I believe to be one of the world's first great libraries. In addition to things I have gathered, I have added my own writings. This library is a great place where students can gain knowledge and learn to become well-rounded people and well-informed orators.*

So, I've heard you differ from Isocrates in believing that rhetoric can be learned?

> *Yes, of course. Isocrates believed you were born with the knack to speak, and he only takes students who have the knack and the money. I differ with that and believe that it is not a knack, but an art. An art I freely teach to those who want to come listen. Like other arts, rhetoric can be learned.*

I guess it makes sense then you would write your students a textbook on how to master that art.

> *Yes, it is called Rhetoric. It lays out my formulas for the structure of persuasion and for sound arguments.*

So, let's start with the title, Rhetoric. How do you define rhetoric and what do you think its purpose is?

> *Rhetoric is the process of discovering the available means of persuasion. First and foremost, rhetoric is about allowing truth to prevail. Rhetoric gives people the ability connect ideas and experiences. It allows us to teach others.*
>
> *Another important function of rhetoric is that it gives us a means to defend ourselves. It bridges public and private and allows us to discuss political life.*

You talk about that in your book. Could you lay out your major ideas?

> *I am happy to highlight a few things for you. I agree with Isocrates that at the heart of rhetoric is an understanding of occasions and audiences. When we break down rhetoric, it comes in three main types, each one deals with a different aspect of time, audience, and occasion. Forensic speech takes place in the courtroom and deals the timing of things that have already happened. We must decide if someone is innocent or guilty given the evidence–it is the rhetoric of accusation and defense. Deliberative speech takes place in the legislative session and is primarily concerned with the future. In other words, if we pass this law, how will it affect our citizens in the future? The last type of speech, epideictic, deals with how we celebrate the present. Celebrating holidays, victories, and shared values. It is the rhetoric of praise or blame.*

Speaking of praise and blame, what do you think of the playwright Aristophanes making fun of rhetoricians in his play, *The Clouds*? Have you seen it? This comedy features a fictionalized sophist named Socrates who operates the Thinkery. A rich man sends his son, who has build up a huge gambling debt, to the Thinkery to learn how to turn inferior arguments into superior arguments so he can talk his way out of his debt in court.

> *Oh yeah, Aristophanes was funny saying rhetoricians are like the clouds that can take any shape they please to get what they want. I wrote about this in my book, Rhetoric. The problem is that we allow judges to decide the law on case-by-case basis. People have to use forensic rhetoric to convince the judge of their innocence. It is like measuring something with a crooked ruler. We created a system where people have to use excessive "cloudy" rhetoric because our ill-defined laws leave so much up to the whims of judges who can be bribed or persuaded. If we invested more time in the nobler task of deliberative rhetoric, we would have more well-defined laws. That would mean that there was less of a need for the type of rhetoric that Aristophanes so easily pokes fun of.*

In your book, you talk about what is most essential to rhetoric–the proofs.

> *Yes, there are three main proofs or reasons to believe. The first and most authoritative is called ethos and it has to do with the credibility. People are more likely persuaded by a*

> *speaker they find possesses practical intelligence, a virtuous character, and goodwill. We believe good people more fully and more readily than others; this is true no matter what the topic is.*
>
> *Next an audience is persuaded through pathos, an appeal to their emotions. A speaker proves their point by passion, for example righteous anger. They might use emotion, or they might rouse emotion in the audience. That emotion is what fuels listeners to modify judgments.*
>
> *In my opinion, the most important proof is that of reason, logos. People are persuaded by facts, data, and reasoning. A rhetorician might prove his case through the cogency of his reasoning. These three–ethos, pathos, logos are inseparable. You can reason with passion and that passion reveals your character.*

Would you say the highest purpose is politics?

> *Not really. I believe that the final purpose for human existence is to pursue happiness. This happiness comes from developing arete (personal excellence) and by maintaining a virtuous life. I part with my friend Plato who thinks that virtue is wrapped up in knowledge. Instead, I believe that virtue is about finding balance. Not to much and not too little. Rhetoric is a big part of finding that balance.*

This has been very insightful, thank you so much for your time.

Let's Talk About How Aristotle's Ideas Relate Today

- Aristotle believed rhetoric was a skill that could be taught. He created a very detailed manual (Rhetoric) about how to learn to be a good orator. What do you think, are good orators born or made?
- Aristotle believed one of the primary purposes of rhetoric was to let truth prevail. What other purposes for rhetoric can you think of?
- The peripedics were students who walked around. Some professions are going to walking meetings. What are the advantages of a moving classroom?
- Aristotle suggests laws are poorly defined, and judges can be persuaded. He reasons that this is the reason that people must use over the top rhetoric in the courtroom. Would you say this is still an issue? What might be a better way?
- Aristotle says if we spent more time talking about how to make good laws, we would spend less time defending ourselves in court. What are your thoughts on this?
- Aristotle suggests ethos, pathos, logos are inseparable. Can you think of examples where you might exclude one of them?
- What is the meaning of life? The Greeks spent considerable time writing about this. Aristotle suggests it is to pursue well being and find balance. How does this compare with your own ideas? How is this tied to rhetoric?

From this letter, you can easily see there were competing ways of thinking about rhetoric, how it should be taught, and what its role was in society. To better understand a different view of rhetoric, let's look at Aristotle.

Among the ancient manuscripts that have been uncovered is a letter from Isocrates to Alexander the Great. In this letter, Isocrates tells why he would be a better teacher for him instead of Aristotle. It is a great example of the larger debate between the major teachers and schools of thought.

To Alexander:

> *I know very well that you are surrounded by men who slander me as being mentally decrepit and a babbler through old age. Just read this letter and you will see it is written with the ordinary vigor which I possessed as a young man.*

Here is my advice to you. It is certainly all right to be a friend of mankind in general and particularly to be on good terms politically with Athens. Further-more, it is certainly good to study philosophy. But, to begin with the latter point, by philosophy I mean what I call philosophy, not what is professed by contemptible sophists such as Aristotle, a worthy follower of other sophists like Plato whom I have been fighting from the very beginning of my activities.

In other words, take philosophy to be what sensible men think it to be, not what fools make it out to be. As to the former points: you associate with the wrong kind of Athenians, some bearing ill-will, some lacking common sense-it wouldn't be surprising if they had evil designs, and I am afraid you will come to grief if you let them in on your plans. Those whom you admit to your company should be level-headed people who know how to take care of their affairs, men of experience.

…

Here is my own program of education. We should learn to speak – viz. the kind of speeches which can be used in practical everyday affairs and those which will enable us to deliberate about public affairs. If you will pursue this kind of philosophy, you will be able to form a sound opinion about the future, you will be able to give proper orders to your subjects, you will be able to judge correctly what is good and just and what is not so, and you will know how to reward and punish.

Compare this program of education with what the sophists from the Academy have to offer. They will teach you to quibble and split hairs concerning problems of no practical value whatsoever. They will never enable you to cope with the actualities of daily life and politics. They will teach you to disdain opinion (common sense) in spite of the fact that common sense assumptions are the only basis for ordinary human affairs and they are sufficient to judge the course of future events. Instead of common sense opinions, they will make you chase after a phantom which they call true and precise knowledge, as distinct from mere opinion. Even if they could reach their ideal of precise and exact knowledge – it would be a knowledge of things entirely useless. Do not be deceived by their extravagant notions of goodness and justice or their opposites. These are just ordinary human notions not so very difficult to understand, and you need them only to help you to meet out rewards and punishments.

Sober up, therefore, give up your present studies under Aristotle and others of his ilk, and study the way I told you to. Only in this way can you hope to become another Philip (Alexander's dad) in due time.

From,
Isocrates

Try this: Read this letter again making a list of all the insults Isocrates offers about Aristotle and sophists.
Try this: Read this out loud in your best political sarcasm voice.

? Vocabulary

Ethos: Persuasion that comes from source credibility

Kairos –the timing and the occasion

Logos: Persuasion that comes from logical appeals.

Lyceum–The temple of Apollo used by Isocrates, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as a place to meet students and teach them about philosophy and rhetoric.

Pathos: Persuasion that comes from emotional appeals.

Peripatetics–people who walk about while learning. The name for Aristotle's followers

Sophist--itinerate teachers who trained people in public speaking. Means "wisdom bearing"

Here are two videos that anchor what we have just learned about Aristotle and Isocrates. Watch them as a helpful review.





? Try Out a Greek Debate

Grab and friend and asked them to help you to practice your rhetoric as you work through the issue that Pericles and Protagoras spent a whole day discussing.

"In an athletic contest, a man had been accidentally hit and killed with a javelin. Was his death to be attributed to the javelin, to the man who threw it, or to the authorities responsible for the conduct of the games?"

*Yes, I realize that Cicero was 106-46 BCE and Isocrates was 438-338 BCE, I just really wanted to include that quote.

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

Aristotle. (1926). *The "Art" of Rhetoric.* Trans. John Henry Freese. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Aristotle (1926). *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. H. Rackham. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Aristotle. (2015). Rhetoric. Translated by Robers, W Rhys.

Benoit, W. (1990). Isocrates and Aristotle on rhetoric. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 20*(3), 251-259. Retrieved May 10, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3885845

Benoit, W.L. (1984). Isocrates on rhetorical education. *Communication Education, 33*:2, 109-119, DOI: 10.1080/03634528409384727

Burton, K. M. (1991) Formal Analysis of Plato's Gorgias. *Anthós.* 1(2).

Cicero. (1942) *De. Oratore.* tr E.W. Sutoon and H. Rackham. Harvard University Press.

Foolish Musings. (2020). Isocrates and rhetoric. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4KgzME98ug Standard Youtube License.

Griffin, M. Boardman, J.; Griffin, J., and Murray, O. (2001). The Oxford Illustrated History of the Roman World. Oxford University Press.

Langston, C. (2016). How to use rhetoric to get what you want. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3klMM9BkW5o Standard Youtube License.

Papillion, T. (2009). Isocrates' techne and rhetorical pedagogy. *Rhetorical Society Quarterly 25*(1), 149-163. doi:10.1080/02773949509391038

The Sophists (2012). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/

Isocrates, Against the Sophist tr George Norlin.

Isocrates, Antidosis.

Isocrates, To Philip

Merlan, P. (1954). Isocrates, Aristotle and Alexander the Great. *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte, 3*(1), 60-81. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4434381

Nichols, M. (1987). Aristotle's Defense of Rhetoric. *The Journal of Politics, 49*(3), 657-677. doi:10.2307/2131273

Noël, M. (2011). Isocrates and the rhetoric to alexander: Meaning and uses of tekmerion. *Rhetorica, 29*(3), 319-0_5. DOI:10.1525/RH.2011.29.3.319

Phillips, D. D. (27 March 2003). *Orator Biographies. www.stoa.org*. The Stoa: a consortium for electronic publication in the humanities.

Plato in Twelve Volume (1921). Vol. 12 translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921.

Pseudo-Plutarch. Isocrates, Panagyricus.

Rapp, C. (2010) Aristotle's Rhetoric. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/* Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/

Rorty, A. O. (1996). Structuring Rhetoric. In Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg (ed.). *Essays on Aristotle's* Rhetoric. University of California Press.

Senteniaeantiquae. (2018). Meme police: A collection of things Aristotle did not say. https://sententiaeantiquae.com/original-projects-and-translations/memes

Tierney, M. (1942). Aristotle and Alexander the Great. *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, 31*(122), 221-228. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30098049

Media Attributions

- Greek Building © Roger Goh is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Parc_de_Versailles,_Rond-Point_des_Philosophes,_Isocrate,_Pierre_Granier_MR1870_05 © Coyau is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license
- aristotle © Tilemahos Efthimiadis is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

---

This page titled 5.2: Rhetorical History- Interview with Two Old Dead Greek Guys is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

5.3: Fallacies--Warning! Deceptive, Hateful Speech Coming Your Way



Learning to detect fallacies helps you fine tune your bs meter.

A fallacy is an error in reasoning. It is a weak argument. To be more specific, a fallacy is an "argument" in which the premises given for the conclusion do not provide the needed degree of support. By becoming aware of the most common fallacies, you can avoid them in your own speech and detect them when others use them. My goal here is to teach you to identify some of the most common fallacies and to make you a human fallacy detector.

I had someone ask me, "What's wrong with fallacies, everyone uses them; in fact, it seems to help politicians get elected?" Let me tell you what is wrong with fallacies.

- They distract us from the real issue.
- They "trick" us into faulty reasoning.
- They deceive us into believing bad conclusions.
- They keep us from having a good discussion of the topic at hand.

The venerable tradition of respectful argumentation, based on evidence, conducted with courtesy, and leading to the greater exposition of truth is a precious part of our heritage in this land of freedom.
James Shannon, the youngest college president in the US.

There are many fallacies. Instead of overwhelming you with the large list, I decided to share with you the most common ones that occur in persuasive and political types of speeches.

Red Herring



A red herring fallacy gets its name from the sport of fox hunting. In foxhunting, riders on horses follow their dogs who are chasing a fox. Riders sometimes keep a fish, –a red herring–in their saddlebags. If they are ahead in the chase, they can stop and drag the fish across the fox's scent and make the trail go a different direction. When the opponents' dogs encounter the fishy smell, it distracts them from their mission of fox chasing.

A red herring fallacy occurs when a speaker distracts listeners with sensational, irrelevant material. Sometimes it happens when the speaker changes the subject and sometimes it happens when the speaker brings up irrelevant information to the topic. Why is this a problem? It is a problem because it sidetracks the argument at hand. It seeks to "win" an argument by diversion. Take this example, "We admit that voting to support school choice is a popular measure. But we also urge you to note that there are so many issues on this ballot that the whole thing is getting ridiculous." The argument at hand is whether or not to vote for school choice but the speaker distracts us by bringing up the point that there are too many issues on the ballot. It may be true that there are too many issues on the ballot, but that doesn't make the school choice something we should vote for or not.

In this video clip, notice how Senator Ted Lamar (R) distracts from the issue of background checks with the topic of video games.



The question: Can you envision a way of supporting the universal background checks bill?

Senator Lamar Alexander's answer: Video games are a bigger problem than guns because video games affect people.

Yes, it may be true video games affect people but that doesn't mean we should or should not have universal background checks. Bringing up video games is a way to divert the audience's attention and to avoid the question. Smells fishy to me.

Trump Attempts to Draw Attention to ISIS

Here is another example of a red herring. Donald Trump was asked about making inappropriate remarks about women. He replied that "he wasn't proud" and then quickly diverted the topic to ISIS.



Slippery Slope



Oftentimes a speaker will argue one bad thing will result in many other bad things. This is done without proving these negative things will happen. A slippery slope causes the discussion to get off track. If you are not careful, you will find yourself arguing the ending claim and miss the real debate. Consider this example. In talking about gay marriage, Republican candidate for Governor, Rebecca Kleefisch went down a slippery slope that led to tables and dogs. “At what point are we going to OK marrying inanimate objects? Can I marry this table, or this, you know, clock? Can we marry dogs?”

DirectTV made fun of the slippery slope fallacy in a commercial.





Removal of Robert E Lee Statue from Column in New Orleans. May 2017.

When talking about the removal of public statues, President Trump went down a slippery slope. “This week it’s Robert E. Lee. I notice that Stonewall Jackson’s coming down. I wonder; is it George Washington next week, and is it, Thomas Jefferson, the week after? You know, you really do have to ask yourself, where does it stop?”

In speaking about the Iraq threat, President George W. Bush said, “I’m not willing to stake one American life on trusting Saddam Hussein. Failure to act would embolden other tyrants, allow terrorists access to new weapons and new resources, and make blackmail a permanent feature of world events. The United Nations would betray the purpose of its founding and prove irrelevant to the problems of our time. And through its inaction, the United States would resign itself to a future of fear.”

Discuss This

“Can people be persuaded?’ is a very different question from ‘Can arguments be won?’ People change their minds about things all the time, but I’m not sure that anybody ever wins an argument. Persuasion is not a zero-sum game. It occurs when somebody moves, even slightly, away from one position and toward another. It is entirely possible for two (or more) people to move closer to each other’s positions during an argument without either one being able to claim victory over the other.

But we like to win, and we hate to lose, so the fact that people don’t usually win arguments doesn’t stop most of us from trying. And we all think we know what winning means: It means crushing opponents and making them cry. It means humiliating them in front of a crowd. And it means displaying our power and our rightness for all the world to see and acknowledge. And this means that we often end up trying to win by employing rhetorical strategies that are fundamentally incapable of persuading anybody of anything. And that looks a lot like losing.”

Austin, M. (2019). We must not be enemies: Restoring America’s civic tradition. Rowman & Littlefield.

1. Would you agree, ” I’m not sure that anybody ever wins an argument?” Why or why not?
2. How do fallacies interfere with the ability of one person to move closer to another?
3. Do you agree “we often end up trying to win by employing rhetorical strategies that are fundamentally incapable of persuading anybody of anything?”
4. When people resort to fallacies (attacks, diversions), is it “losing?”

Ad Hominem

We have a Congress
that spent money
like John Edwards
at a beauty shop.
Mike Huckabee (R)
Republican Presidential Candidate Debate

An Ad Hominem fallacy is one where the speaker attacks the person rather than the point. There are four major forms of attacking the person:

Ad hominem abusive: Instead of attacking a point, the argument attacks the person who made the assertion.

> *Democrat Alan Grayson described Republicans as "foot-dragging, knuckle-dragging Neanderthals who know nothing but 'no.'"*
>
> *Charley Reese from the Daily Iberian wrote, "That's what abortion is – killing innocent humans for money. Abortionists are government licensed hit men."*

Ad hominem circumstantial: Instead of attacking the point, the person attacks the circumstances. They imply guilt by association.

> *Sara Palin, Republican Vice Presidential hopeful implied that Barak Obama was friends with terrorists. "Our opponent though is someone who sees America, it seems, as being so imperfect that he's palling around with terrorists who would target their own country."*

Ad hominem tu quoque: The attacker suggests the person is a hypocrite and because they are a hypocrite, you can't believe any point they make.
When Al Gore was traveling to speaking engagement on the topic of global warming, he was criticized for traveling by private jet. As President Obama was talking about gun control, speakers pointed out he was surrounded by secret service agents with guns. The argument itself should be discussed–gun control, climate change–the fact that the speaker may or may not be a hypocrite doesn't mean the issue is right or wrong.

Poisoning the well: The speaker attacks the credibility of a person before they speak to bias listeners against the speaker. This fallacy is based on the belief that the enemy used to put tainted meat down into the town well so all the water that would come out of the well would be tainted and make people sick. The idea is that if a speaker taints a person's credibility, then everything that comes out of their mouth is something harmful. Just because a person had poor judgment in one situation, doesn't mean that they are incorrectly handling the topic at hand.

For a great overview of Ad Hominem, watch this short video.



The Great Lipstick War

Sarah Palin, Republican Vice-Presidential candidate ran with a persona of being feisty and tough In a speech, she made this statement to charge up her base: "You know they say the difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull–lipstick. " Not long after, Obama said in a speech, "You can put lipstick on a pig. It's still a pig." Obama claimed it wasn't a statement directed at Palin, what do you think? Watch these clips and see what you think.





Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump

Political researchers Tedesco and Dunn published a political analysis examining 136 political television advertisements from the 2016 US presidential election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton and this is what they found.

Despite Trump's reputation for ad hominem attacks throughout the primary and general election phases of the presidential campaign, it was Clinton who waged more ad hominem attacks in her advertisements, mostly focused on labeling Trump as unfit for office. Trump and his supportive political action committee groups were more likely to run contrast ads to compare differences between his policies and Clinton's policies, but Clinton's campaign failed to use a full range of message strategies to contrast her policies with Trump's and to bolster her own image through her campaign ads. Tedesco and Dunn

Tedesco, J. C., & Dunn, S. W. (2019). Political Advertising in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election: Ad Hominem Ad Nauseam. American Behavioral Scientist, 63(7), 935–947. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218756919

War Hero



Donald Trump attacked former prisoner of war and politician John McCain: “He’s a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren’t captured.”

Pelosi Calls Trump Morbidly Obese



Little Marco Attacks Trumps Little Hands the State of Trump’s Manhood



Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc

Talking to cashiers at fast-food restaurants causes obesity
(the more I talk to fast food cashiers, the heavier I get).
Author unknown

The fallacy here is the assumption that one thing caused another without proof of the link. When you study statistics, you will learn the phrase “correlation does not mean causation” which means just because two things seem to happen together, doesn’t mean that the one actually caused the other. Post hoc ergo propter hoc = after this therefore because of this and is a fallacy of false cause. Just because two things are consecutive, doesn’t mean that one caused the other. I do still believe that it rains every time I wash my car.

Sports fans have a lot of these– “my team lost Friday because I forgot to wear my lucky hat.” Speaking of hats, watch this scene from the West Wing as the “president” educates his staff about cowboy hats and fallacies.



Autism in children is often detected at the same ages as they are getting immunizations leading to the incorrect assumption that one causes the other. “Just the other day, two years old, two and a half years old, a child, a beautiful child went to have the vaccine, and came back, and a week later got a tremendous fever, got very, very sick, now is autistic.” Donald Trump

---

That’s Latin for ’I’m old enough I should see a propterhoctologist”, right?
Mark Miller.

Faulty Analogy

Comparing things that are dissimilar in some important way

Former Arkansas Governor, Mike Huckabee (R) said at a Freedom Summit that he is beginning to believe there’s “More freedom in North Korea sometimes than there is in the United States. When I go to the airport, I have to get in the surrender position. People put hands all over me. And I have to provide a photo ID in a couple of different forms and prove that I really am not going to terrorize the airplane. But if I want to go vote, I don’t need a thing.” He was arguing why there needs to be government-required identification when voting but this comparison of airport inspection to a country with severe human rights violations is distracting and not a fair analogy.

“You know Obamacare is really I think the worst thing that has happened in this nation since slavery. And it is in a way, it is slavery in a way, because it is making all of us subservient to the government, and it was never about health care. It was about control.” Political candidate Ben Carson (R) at Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C.

What do you think? Good metaphor or faulty analogy?

I grew up castrating hogs on an Iowa farm,
so when I come to Washington,
I'll know how to cut pork.
Joni Ernst (R-IA)

Improperly used comparisons can be a problem. Andina Wise in an opinion piece in Scientific American highlights that discussing military metaphors to fight COVID-19 undermines the practice of medicine. She highlights the wartime rhetoric using words that: Doctors are *fighting* on the *frontlines* without sufficient *ammunition*. They are *battling* the *enemy and doctors from every specialty* have been *redeployed.* They are *at war*. She warns that using wartime rhetoric sends a "precarious message.".

> *To adopt a wartime mentality is fundamentally to allow for an all-bets-are-off, anything-goes approach to emerging victorious. And while there may very well be a time for slapdash tactics in the course of weaponized encounters on the physical battlefield, this is never how one should endeavor to practice medicine.*

Watch this video, it includes some powerful and relevant examples of false analogies.



Non sequitur



Non sequitur is reasoning in which principles and observations are unrelated to each other or to the conclusion drawn. Literally means "it does not follow." If I mix red paint and green paint will never make blue paint, that's not logical. Similarly, a non sequitur is not a logical conclusion of the ideas they are combining.

Snow in 50 states does not mean climate change is fake.
It is not a logical conclusion

"The liberals, the environmentalists, extremists, the Al Gores of the world
were wrong on science – and today we know it…
I've got a scoop shovel for you if you want to come any place
in the 50 states in America —
for the first time in the history of keeping records,
there's snowfall on the ground in all 50 states.
It's tough to make an argument
when the evidence is all around us
with the snowy white wonder and a crystal cathedral."
Steve Kin, Republican from Iowa speaking at CPAC

Is Veggie Pizza Un-manly? Serving Up a Non-Sequitur



The more toppings a man has on his pizza,
I believe the more manly he is.
A manly man doesn't want it piled high with vegetables.
He would call that a sissy pizza.

Herman Cain, former presidential nominee
and CEO of Godfather's Pizza

"You know, education–if you make the most of it–you study hard, you do your homework, and you make an effort to be smart, you can do well. If you don't, you get stuck in Iraq." Democratic Senator John Kerry botching a joke about President Bush getting us stuck in Iraq

Are Males Really Piglets Who Hunt Giraffes?

Newt Gingrich (R), Speaker of the House, in a lecture on *Renewing American Civilization* argued against women in the military with this quote:

> *If combat means living in a ditch, females have biological problems staying in a ditch for thirty days because they get infections and they don't have upper body strength. I mean, some do, but they're relatively rare.*

> *On the other hand, men are basically little piglets, you drop them in the ditch, they roll around in it, doesn't matter, you know. These things are very real. On the other hand, if combat means being on an Aegis-class cruiser managing the computer controls for twelve ships and their rockets, a female may be again dramatically better than a male who gets very, very frustrated sitting in a chair all the time because males are biologically driven to go out and hunt giraffes.*
>
> *(It is not logical that the reason women should not be in combat is because men are pigs who want to go hunt giraffes).*

Hasty generalization

Drawing conclusions based on insufficient or non-representative observations.

> *People often commit hasty generalizations because of bias or prejudice. For example, someone who is a sexist might conclude that all women are unfit to fly jet fighters because one woman crashed one. People also commonly commit hasty generalizations because of laziness or sloppiness. It is very easy to simply leap to a conclusion and much harder to gather an adequate sample and draw a justified conclusion. Thus, avoiding this fallacy requires minimizing the influence of bias and taking care to select a sample that is large enough. Nizkor Project*

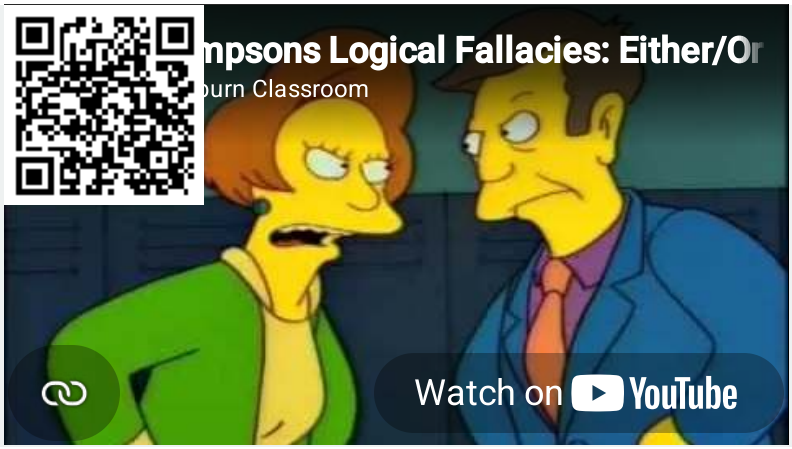
Steve King assumes Mexicans are drug dealers: "For everyone who's a valedictorian, there's another 100 out there who weigh 130 pounds — and they've got calves the size of cantaloupes because they're hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the desert." Representative Steve King, a Republican from Iowa making assumptions about immigrants from Mexico.

Herman Cain assumes Muslims are militants: "I would not be comfortable [with a Muslim in my administration] because you have peaceful Muslims and then you have militant Muslims, those that are trying to kill us. And so when I said I wouldn't be comfortable, I was thinking about the ones that are trying to kill us, number one. Secondly, yes, I do not believe in sharia law in American courts. I believe in American laws in American courts. Period. There have been instances in New Jersey. There was an instance in Oklahoma where Muslims did try to influence court decisions with sharia law. I was simply saying very emphatically American laws in American courts." Republican Tea Party Candidate, Herman Cain.

Either-or-thinking (Also Called False Dilemma)

Framing choices so that listeners think they have only two options and one of them is obviously preferred. I saw someone with a shirt on the other day that said, "America, love it or leave it." It set up only two options. What if someone mostly loves America, but doesn't like the health care system? What if they like America, but see that there is unfair distribution of wealth? What if they think another country has a better political system? Setting it up like there are only two choices when clearly most things have many shades of gray is creating a false dilemma.

📌 Either Or Fallacy in The Simpsons



”So, it is with conviction that I support this resolution as being in the best interests of our nation. A vote for it is not a vote to rush to war; it is a vote that puts awesome responsibility in the hands of our President and we say to him – use these powers wisely and as a last resort. And it is a vote that says clearly to Saddam Hussein – this is your last chance – disarm or be disarmed.” Hillary Clinton (D)

“Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” George W. Bush (R) statement to Congress after 9/11.

We can either tax and regulate cannabis for adult use, reduce violence, and enrich our state, or we can continue a policy that enriches the cartels and has always has a racially biased pattern of enforcement. Ben Jealous candidate during a Democratic primary for Governor

“And the reason is because there really are only two alternatives here. Either the issue of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon is resolved diplomatically through a negotiation or it’s resolved through a force, through war.” Barack Obama (D)

Strawman



“Another well known, and much used, device
is to misrepresent my position
and attack things I have never said.”
Rachel Carson

Strawman fallacy is where a speaker belittles or trivializes an argument to refute them easily. The speaker cannot defeat the real issue so they frame the issue as silly –they make a straw doll–a fake argument that looks a little like the real one that is easily defeated. Often the issue they attack has a semblance of the real issue but is different in significant ways.

Consider this example, President Obama introduced a provision that would allow Medicare to pay for counseling on end-of-life issues if the patient asked for it. Doctors could counsel patients about end-of-life care issues such as living wills and hospice care. Senator Chuck Grassley, Iowa Republican said in a town hall meeting. “In the House bill, there is counseling for end of life. You

have every right to fear. You shouldn't have counseling at the end of life, you should have done that 20 years before. Should not have a government-run plan to decide when to pull the plug on grandma." Notice what happened, he changed counseling about end-of-life issues into pulling the plug on grandma. In this example, Grassly created the issue into something that sounds ridiculous and is easy to defeat.

---

1. So to say we're going to basically outlaw coal, which is what this administration has done, is so self-defeating. it destroys jobs, it destroys communities, it's not helping us, and it's not helping global warming. Carly Fiorina (R) in an interview with Katie Couric. Why is this a strawman? Because this is not what the current administration has done, it is an exaggerated strawman that is easy to knock down. According to an article in VOX on this quote. "US coal has taken a beating from natural gas, renewables, and efficiency — the market, in other words — but it still provides more than a third of US electricity. And EPA expects that under the Clean Power Plan, that share will be at 27 percent in 2030. That estimate is probably high, given how uncompetitive coal has become, but even if it drops to 20 percent, that's a fifth of US electricity and a long way from outlawed. "

I think it's terrible if you go with what Hillary is saying in the ninth month you can take the baby and rip the baby out of the womb of the mother just prior to the birth of the baby. Now, you can say that that's okay, and Hillary can say that that's okay, but it's not okay with me. Because based on what she's saying and based on where she's going and where she's been, you can take the baby and rip the baby out of the womb in the ninth month, on the final day. And that's not acceptable. Donald Trump said about Hillary Trump's position on abortion at the final presidential debate. This mischaracterized her position.

? Hitler Fallacy

There are few observations that have proven more durable than Godwin's Law. Created in 1990 by attorney Mike Godwin, it is quite simple:

> *The more heated a political argument becomes, the higher the likelihood that one side will mention Adolf Hitler. Whoever mentions Hitler first, loses the argument. Danile Elbaum*

In fact, comparing someone to Hitler to invalidate their point is so popular it's been given its own fake Latin name, the *reductio ad Hitlerum* – a play on the very real logic term *reductio ad absurdum.* It's mostly used to point out the fallacy of comparing almost anyone to Hitler.

Can You Find All the Fallacies?

We've been battling this socialist health care, the nationalization of health care, that is going to absolutely kill senior citizens. They'll put them on lists and force them to die early because they won't get the treatment as early as they need. […] I would rather stop this socialization of health care because once the government pays for your health care, they have every right to tell you what you eat, what you drink, how you exercise, where you live. […] But if we're going to pay 700 million dollars like we voted last Friday to put condoms on wild horses, and I know it just says an un-permanent enhanced contraception whatever the heck that is. I guess it follows that they're eventually get around to doing it to us. This is a statement by Representative Louie Gohmert (R-TX) from Texas in an interview with Alex Jones.

1. "Socialist health care" is a strawman
2. "Kill senior citizens" and "force them to die early" is a slippery slope and a Post hoc ergo propter hoc.
3. "One the government pays for your healthcare….tell you…eat, drink…live" is a Post hoc ergo propter hoc.
4. "Condoms on wild horses" is a red herring and a strawman
5. "They will get around to doing that to us" is a slippery slope and post hoc.

Can You Find All the Fallacies?

Fayetteville, Arkansas proposed to make sure that no one is denied employment, housing, or public accommodations. Michelle Duggar, wife of Jim Bob Duggar from the reality show 19 Kids and Counting read this script and it was sent as a robocall to local citizens.

"Hello, this is Michelle Duggar. I'm calling to inform you of some shocking news that would affect the safety of Northwest Arkansas women and children. The Fayetteville City Council is voting on an ordinance this Tuesday night that would allow men – yes I said men – to use womens and girls restrooms, locker rooms, showers, sleeping areas and other areas that are

designated for females only. I don't believe the citizens of Fayetteville would want males with past child predator convictions that claim they are female to have a legal right to enter private areas that are reserved for women and girls. I doubt that Fayetteville parents would stand for a law that would endanger their daughters or allow them to be traumatized by a man joining them in their private space. We should never place the preference of an adult over the safety and innocence of a child. Parents, who do you want undressing next to your daughter at the public swimming pool's private changing area? I still believe that we are a society that puts women and children first. Women, young ladies and little girls deserve to use the restroom or any other facility in peace and safety."
Listen to the robocall

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- A fallacy is a weak argument in which the premises given do not provide needed support–it is a weak argument
- Red herring fallacy occurs when a speaker distracts listeners with sensational, irrelevant material.
- Slippery slope fallacy occurs when the speaker argues that one bad thing will result in many other bad things. This is done without proving that these negative things will happen.
- Ad Hominem fallacy here the speaker attacks the person rather than the point.
- A post hoc ero propter hoc fallacy is the assumption that one thing caused another without proof of the link.
- A faulty analogy is comparing things that are dissimilar in some important way.
- Non sequitur fallacy is reasoning in which principles and observations are unrelated to each other or to the conclusion drawn.
- Hasty generalization is drawing conclusions based on insufficient or non-representative observations.
- Either-or-thinking is framing choices so that listeners think they have only two options and one of them is obviously preferred.
- Strawman fallacy is where a speaker belittles or trivializes an argument to refute them easily

Please share your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas

I want to hear from you.

Do you have an activity to include?
Did you notice a typo that I should correct?
Are you planning to use this as a resource and do you want me to know about it?
Do you want to tell me something that really helped you?

Click here to share your feedback.

References

ABC News. (2016). Trump v. Rubio. Trump defense size of his manhood, 'Little hands'. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ve6I92hEozo Standard YouTube License.

Alexander, L. (2013). Republican senator says guns don't kill people, video games do. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuiDBr0WnZU&t=13s Standard YouTube License.

Ambinder, M. (2009, July 10). "Pals around with terrorist": Palin wasn't that rogue after all. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2009/07/-pals-around-with-terrorists-palin-wasnt-that-rogue-after-all/21044/

Arp, R., Barbone, S., and Brice, M. (2018). Bad Arguments: 100 of the most important fallacies in western philosophy. John Wiley and Sons. http://DOI:10.1002/9781119165811

Associated Press. (2008). Raw Video: Obama's Lipstick Comment. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuizXVoY2bc Standard YouTube License.

ATV Safety-Ted Dinosaur with Feathers (2017). U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/gdclccn.2019666541

Austin, M. (2019). *We must not be enemies: Restoring America's civic tradition*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Bluedorn, H. (2000). Red herring again. Fallacy Detective. http://www.fallacydetective.com/news/read/red-herring-again

Bolano, A. (2020, June 09). 6 false Dichotomy examples & how to counterthem. https://www.developgoodhabits.com/false-dichotomy/

Bruckbaker, B. (2006), Kerry remark draws sharp criticism. *Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/business/technology/2006/10/31/kerry-remark-draws-sharp-criticism/e87244fd-e349-4943-82cf-0b461c4eb0d1/

Bush, G.W. (2002). President Bush's Speech on the Use of Force. https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/08/national/president-bushs-speech-on-the-use-of-force.html

Bush, G. W. (2001, Sept 20). President Bush Addresses the Nation. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html

Bush, G. W. (August 28, 2007) President Bush Addresses the 89th Annual National Convention of the American Legion http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/08/20070828-2.html

Cillizza, C. (2016). *The remarkable thing about Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton's incredibly high negatives: Race to the bottom, here we come!*. Washington: WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post. https://search.proquest.com/blogs,-podcasts,-websites/remarkable-thing-about-donald-trump-hillary/docview/1782379172/se-2?accountid=8361

Clinton. H. (2002). Clinton on Iraqi War Resolution. http://www.cs.cornell.edu/people/eric/Activism/hillary-iraq.htm

CNN (2011). CNN: Lipstick comment made Palin a star. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtZfGgen30c Standard YouTube License

CNN (2000, Aug 15). U.S. Representative Harold Ford delivers remarks at Democratic National Convention http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/conventions/democratic/transcripts/u110815.html

Colburn Classroom (2019). Simpson's logical fallacies: Either/or fallacy. [Video] YouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q25fApNZI0 Standard YouTube License

Cook. J. (2020). False analogies about cupcakes and obesity. [Video] YouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1jMqW9HHWs Standard YouTube License.

CTV News. (2020). Pelosi: Trump shouldn't take hydroxychloroquine because he's morbidly obese. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwM9YmVsnFU Standard YouTube License.

Elbaum, D. (2018). When it is Okay to Evoke Hitler and the Nazis. AJC Global Voice. https://www.ajc.org/news/when-is-it-okay-to-evoke-hitler-and-the-nazis

Fallacy Files (n.d.). http://www.fallacyfiles.org/redherrf.html

Fallacious Trump Podcast. (2019). Red Herring Fallacy-Fallacious Trump e33. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_vf6PxomAI&t=49s Standard YouTube License

Fang, L. (2009, July 27). Gohmert trades ideas with conspiracy theorist, says Obama health plan will 'absolutely kill senior citizens'. https://archive.thinkprogress.org/gohmert-trades-ideas-with-conspiracy-theorist-says-obama-health-plan-will-absolutely-kill-senior-d6adf6d0e1c4/

Foxnews. (2011, September 22). Fox News-Google GOP Debate. https://www.foxnews.com/tech/fox-news-and-google-to-host-gop-presidential-debate-on-sept-22

Fuller, M. (2013, August 13). Ten most Quotable members of Congress. Roll Call. https://www.rollcall.com/news/10-most-quotable-members-of-congress

Gill, T. (2014). Michelle Guffar robocall tries to rally opposition to Fayetteville's civil rights proposal. Fayetteville Flyer. https://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2014/08/18/michelle-duggar-robocall-tries-to-rally-opposition-to-fayettevilles-anti-discrimination-proposal/

Harrison, P. (2009). Post hoc, ergo propter hoc. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL_vHDjG5Wk Standard Youtube License.

Intelligite (2012, Feb 21). Ad Hominem (Appeal to personal attack). [Video] YouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD50OTR3arY

Kiff, S. (2016). No, Donald Trump, abortions do not happen at 9 months pregnant. *Vox.* https://www.vox.com/2016/10/19/13341532/abortion-9-months-trump

Lindsey, D. (n.d). A list Of fallacious arguments http://www.don-lindsay-archive.org/skeptic/arguments.html#hominem

Logical Fallacies and the Art of Debate (n.d.). http://www.csun.edu/~dgw61315/fallacies.html#Non%20sequitur

Page, C. (1995). Newt on ditches and dirty britches. *Chicago Tribune.* https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1995-01-22-9501210248-story.html

Politifact. (2011) Herman Cain said government bureaucrats will determine when you get a CAT scan once the new health care law begins. politifact.com/factchecks/2011/sep/27/herman-cain/herman-cain-said-government-bureaucrats-will-deter/

Hughs newsletter from a college president (n.d). https://streetcarsuburbs.news/hughs-news-letter-from-a-college-president/

Human Rights Campaign, (n.d). Rick Santorum: Compares same-sex marriage to 9/11. https://www.hrc.org/resources/2016republicanfacts-rick-santorum

Infrogmation. (2017, May 23). Robert E Less statue removed from column New Orleans 19 May 2017. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_E_Lee_statue_removed_from_column_New_Orleans_19_May_2017_12.jpg

Kornacki, S. (2010). Steve King: Snowfall proves Al Gore wrong. Salon. https://www.salon.com/2010/02/19/king_on_global_warming/

Lall, R.R. (2020). John Bolton and the 'post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy about Iran. https://rashmee.medium.com/john-bolton-and-the-post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc-fallacy-about-iran-53fc13ef557d

Molloy, D. (2017, Nov 24). Why does everyone keep making Nazi comparisons? https://www.bbc.com/news/world-39266863

Montopoli, B. (2009, August 12). Grassley warns of the government pulling the plug "on grandma." CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/grassley-warns-of-government-pulling-plug-on-grandma/

NPR. (2017, August 16). Does Trump's slippery slope argument about Confederate statues have merit? National Public Radio. https://www.npr.org/2017/08/16/543973293/does-trumps-slippery-slope-argument-about-confederate-statues-have-merit

The Nizkor Project Fallacies. (n.d.). http://www.nizkor.org/features/fallacies/index.html#index

O'Hair, D. Stewart, R. & Rubenstein, H. (2004). *A Speaker's Guidebook Text and Reference Second Edition.* Bedford.

Preece, D. (2013). DirectTV Commercial–Don't wake up in a roadside ditch. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIv3m2gMgUU&t=3s. Standard YouTube License.

Richards, A. (July 19, 1988). *Democratic National Convention Keynote Address retrieved* http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/annrichards1988dnc.htm

Roberts, D. (2015). Carly Fiorina did a 4-minute riff on climate change. Everything she said was wrong. https://www.vox.com/2015/8/21/9186313/carly-fiorina-climate-wrong

Some Common Fallacies. (n.d.) http://www.ucs.louisiana.edu/~kak7409/Fallacies.html

Sprague, J. & Stuart, D. (2005). A Speakers Handbook. Thomas Wadsworth.

Steven's guide to logical fallacies. (n.d.). http://www.onegoodmove.org/fallacy/toc.htm

Szoldra, P. (2014). Mike Huckabee: North Korea sometimes has more freedom than the US. *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/mike-huckabee-north-korea-2014-4

Tedesco, J. C., & Dunn, S. W. (2019). Political Advertising in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election: Ad Hominem Ad Nauseam. *American Behavioral Scientist, 63*(7), 935–947. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218756919

Trump, D. (2015). Trump: McCain not a war hero. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNugcPeCZZE Standard Youtube License.

Valenzano, J. M, Kuypers, J.A., Braden, S. W. (2019) The Speaker: The tradition and practice of public speaking (4th edition): Fountainhead Press.

Washington Post (2012). Republican Primary Debate, Reagan Library, Simi Valley California. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/2012-presidential-debates/republican-primary-debate-september-7-2011/

Washington Post (2013). Ben Carson: Obamacare worst think since slavery https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/carson-obamacare-is-worst-thing–since-slavery/2013/10/11/e40289d6-328d-11e3-89ae-16e186e117d8_video.html

Wise, A. (2020, April 17). Military metaphors distort the reality of COVID-19. Scientific American. https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/military-metaphors-distort-the-reality-of-covid-19/

YourDictionary. Fallacy Examples. https://examples.yourdictionary.com/straw-man-fallacy-examples.html

Media Attributions

- bsmeter © "BS-meter" by awp101 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA (Attribution NonCommercial ShareAlike) license
- Diversion © Nelson Ndongala
- Slippery slope © Andreas Levers is licensed under a CC BY-NC (Attribution NonCommercial) license
- 256px-Robert_E_Lee_statue_removed_from_column_New_Orleans_19_May_2017_12 © Infrogmation of New Orleans is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license
- trex © Joseph Galbo, US Consumer Product Safety Commission
- nicolas-perondi-UxRhrU8fPHQ-unsplash © Nicolás Perondi
- Strawman (2) © Kevin Lawver is licensed under a CC BY-NC (Attribution NonCommercial) license

This page titled 5.3: Fallacies--Warning! Deceptive, Hateful Speech Coming Your Way is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

5.4: The Science of Persuasion- A Little Theory Goes a Long Way



Don’t raise your voice, improve your argument.
— Desmond Tutu, human rights activist

I want to dive into some of the theories and models of persuasion to help you understand how people think. Knowing how to persuade is one thing, knowing the mechanics of persuasion is moving you to the advanced level. This information will guide you to form strong persuasive arguments. Knowledge is power and I am giving you the power to know how to persuade. I want to educate you to utilize the psychology of persuasion but also want to encourage you to do it ethically.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

When I was in graduate school, my computer got attacked with the Michelangelo virus. In short, when I turned on my computer on Michelangelo’s birthday, it wiped out everything on my computer. At least that’s what they told me at the computer repair store. I had spent a month of my life researching and writing my persuasion paper and it was gone in an instant. In a moment of what can best be described as a graduate school freak out, I went to the store to buy a new computer. I looked at the salesperson and said, “Quick, show me which computer to buy.” He pointed at one, I bought it, and went home and started writing.

Was I persuaded to buy a computer by the salesperson? I bought one so clearly, I was persuaded, right? Which persuasion technique did he use? Could this even count as an act of persuasion? Sometimes, we just want to decide without putting too much thought into it. You could argue that I didn’t put any thought into it. I didn’t have time to research; I didn’t have the mental capacity to think about which computer was best for me. I trusted the decision to the person in the computer store–he was the one in the red shirt after all. He worked there so he must know about computers.

The next time I bought a computer, I wasn’t in such a stressful situation. I took my time and shopped around. I talked to multiple salespeople, and I read reviews. I even made a spreadsheet of the features and the prices. I put a lot of thought into picking the right computer. Was I any more or less persuaded to buy? After all, in both cases, I bought a computer.

Petty and Cacioppo developed the Elaboration Likelihood Model as a way to explain how persuasion works in different scenarios–particularly, how sometimes we think a lot about our decisions and how sometimes we look for other ways to be persuaded. They said we go on different persuasion routes. When we are thinking (cognitive elaboration) about our decision, they would say, we are taking the central route. We take this thinking route when there is personal involvement and personal relevance. When we are not thinking–because of the situation, our mood, our inability to understand, or the fact that it is not a big decision for us– they would say we are taking the peripheral route. The peripheral route can be thought of as deciding based on anything other than deep thought. In my case, my decision was made based on the authority of the person.

Which of the computers do you think I would likely suggest to a friend–the one bought fast because it was recommended or the one bought after much research? Which computer did I think was the best computer? If you guessed the one that I shopped around for, you would be right. That is the computer I would most likely believe was the best one and that is the one I would most likely recommend to a friend. It makes sense. When we think about our decisions, persuasion is more long-lasting, we are more committed to the decision, and we are more likely to tell others.

What does any of this have to do with you writing a persuasion speech? Knowing that people are persuaded differently can help you design your persuasive arguments. Deciding whether you are going for thoughtful or peripheral persuasion is key.

I used to work for a non-profit and did a lot of fundraising speeches. If I wanted people to be persuaded to give money and have a long-term emotional and financial commitment to the organization, it made sense to persuade them via the central (thinking) route. That meant, I had to tell them what we did and give them facts and details about our organization. I had to build trust and I had to help them believe in the cause.

By contrast, my son was in marching band so there was always a fundraiser where we sold overpriced candy to our friends to support his upcoming trip. The persuasion I used was usually some version of, "My son is selling candy bars for his upcoming band trip, would you help support him." There was not a lot of thinking when people were buying these candy bars. They were buying because they liked my son, they knew me, or because I bought cookies from their daughter for her fundraiser. This was peripheral persuasion one candy bar at a time.

Elaboration Likelihood Model - What's the Big Idea?



- If you want your persuasion to be long-lasting, persuade them via the central route. Offer facts, data, and solid information
- If you want a quick persuasion where they don't put much thought into it or if your audience is not very knowledgeable, tired, or unmotivated, persuade them by the peripheral route.

Judgmental Heuristics

In Elaboration Likelihood Model, we find that people are persuaded in one of two ways– because they are thinking about it–the central route–or they are not thinking about it–peripheral. There is an entire chapter dedicated to how to research which is the central route so for now, I want to talk about the peripheral route.

Researcher and business speaker, Robert Cialdini, has spent a lot of time researching peripheral routes to persuasion. He suggests that we often take shortcuts in decision-making, he calls it judgmental heuristics. Heuristics is just a fancy way of saying shortcut. We often take shortcuts in making our judgments. For example, we might believe that expensive products are better products and use that to decide which item to buy. Cialdini has identified several different shortcuts that people use when making decisions.

- Authority
- Liking
- Commitment and Consistency
- Social Proof
- Scarcity
- Reciprocation
- Unity

Authority

When my doctor prescribes a medicine, I don't ask if it's the best, I just take it. He is the authority after all. When a man in a uniform in the computer store tells me which computer to buy, I believe him, he is the pro. It can be helpful to trust those who know more than you on a topic. The power of authority can be very persuasive.

As a speaker, you can capitalize on the persuasive power of authority by telling a story of your encounter with the product–in this case you have the authority of one who knows. I heard many speeches about the benefits of cold showers, but it was not until I had a student who told me his specific story that I was persuaded enough to try it for myself. Another way you can leverage authority is to cite credible people. You can enhance your own ethos by the way you research and handle your sources. Make sure that you use credible sources and make sure that you mention the title of your sources. For example, Say "Dr. Martin, a heart surgeon at the Mayo Clinic."

Liking

People are persuaded by those they like–that is obvious. What is not so obvious are the ways that liking can be enhanced–similarity, compliments, and concern. People are more likely to like people who dress like them. If you are giving a speech to a group in ties, you should dress formally. If the group is more of a T-shirt and khakis type, you shouldn't dress as formally. People like people who are similar. By researching your audience well, you can find ways to look for common ground.

Another way to enhance liking is with a sincere compliment. I'm not talking about a cheesy, overly flattering type. I am also not suggesting that you lie. I am saying that you can find something to like about them and let them know. In her TED Talk, Lizzie Valasquez had a very enthusiastic front row and she looked down and said, "You guys are like the best little section right here." Finally, people like those who are passionately concerned about an issue. As a speaker, don't aim to be perfect, aim to be passionate.

Commitment Consistency

Commitment/consistency has to do with finding something that people are already demonstrating a commitment to and then encouraging them to act in a consistent manner. If you see someone carrying a water bottle, you can say, "I see you are committed to health. I notice you take that bottle with you to all your classes. I would like you to think about one more thing that can influence your health." In this example, you find something that a person is committed to and you encourage them to be consistent.

When you research your audience, find things that they care about and touch on those as you encourage them to be consistent. When I spoke to community groups as a fundraiser, I would look up their mission and it often involved something about helping people so I might say, "I see from your mission that you are community-minded. I would like to share with you one more way that you can carry your mission into this community by helping."

Social Proof

People look to other people to know how to act. Every time, I buy things online, I look to see how others have evaluated the product first. I ask my friends if they have ever tried the product and what they think. I look to others to help me decide.

If you are doing a persuasive speech on a product, you can ethically persuade using social proof by showing how many stars a product has or you could read a poll about how many people support a measure. You can also interview those who are similar to your audience and then report back your findings. Talking about what Instagram and YouTube influencers believe can be powerful if it is someone the audience cares about.

Each of these judgmental heuristics carries with it the danger of abuse, so it is important to be ethical in your use of persuasion. I would be remiss if I didn't mention to you that when it comes to social proof, it can become a bandwagon fallacy. Take for example fad diets. Just because they are popular, doesn't mean they are healthy. Just because everyone thinks it is true, that doesn't mean that it is true. When persuading using social proof, we want to ethically show why others like something and avoid the bandwagon fallacy which assumes that just because a lot of people like something that it must be good.

Scarcity

I am such a sucker for limited-time-only sales. I'm also a victim of buying something because it is the last one. People hate to miss out on things which is why scarcity as a persuasive tool is so powerful. Scarcity can happen because there is not very much of something, (limited numbers) or there is not very long to get it, (limited time) or the information is restricted (limited information).

As a speaker, you can encourage your audience to act immediately because the deadline is coming soon or to buy a product because they are likely to sell out.

People hate to have their options limited. “Don’t tell me I can’t have it because then I want it.” Researchers talk about this in terms of psychological reactance. Psychological reactance is a heightened motivational state in reaction to having our freedoms restricted. This, in part, explains why ammunition sales skyrockets under the threat of gun control measures and why teenagers fall even more madly in love when parents forbid them to date. Leveraging psychological reactance ethically can be tricky, but it can de be done. “There are just 20 more days until the election to research your candidate” or “concert tickets usually sell out the first few hours so if you want to go you have to be ready.” These are honest statements that can encourage the audience to act.

Reciprocity

If you do something for me, I feel obligated to do something for you. This is why I always feel obligated to buy a gift for someone who buys me one or to say something nice to someone who compliments me. One of my students persuaded us to try making gifts instead of buying them. She demonstrated an easy-to-make and thoughtful gift and then she gave us a hand out of the steps and supplies. Attached to the handout was a coupon for the local craft store. The act of giving us a handout and the added free coupon enhanced the likelihood that we would comply. In case you are wondering, yes, I was persuaded. Yes, I took the coupon, bought the supplies, and made family and friends etched glasses for Christmas.

Jane McGonigal in her TED Talk, *The Game that Can Give You 10 Extra Years of Life*, said: So, here’s my special mission for this talk: I’m going to try to increase the life span of every single person in this room by seven and a half minutes. Literally, you will live seven and a half minutes longer than you would have otherwise, just because you watched this talk.” She is promising to give us something in exchange for our time so we feel the pressure to listen.

Unity

People want to feel a sense of unity with a group. This group can be everything from their favorite sports team to whether they or dog or cat lovers. Finding ways to help the audience feel like a special group or like they are part of something, can be important to persuasion. “Join the club,” “be one of us,” “as Razorback’s we all feel…” are examples of how that is used. Another way to activate the principle of unity is to use insider language (if you are part of the group if not, it comes off as sucking up or cheesy).

Cialdini called these seven the “weapons of influence.” To me, the idea of persuasion as a weapon assumes that it is used to attack or to defend. I prefer to use the metaphor of a tool instead of that of a weapon–allow me to illustrate. I am a gardener, so I use the shovel to dig holes to plant flowers–it works as a tool. If I see poison ivy, I might use the shovel to defend myself by removing the poison ivy. If I see a snake, I might hit it with my shovel, and then the shovel becomes a weapon. These persuasion principles can be that way as well. They can be tools or they can be weapons and it is up to the one holding the tool to decide which was to use this information.

Judgemental Heuristics - What's the Big Idea?

- People take shortcuts when making decisions: authority, liking, commitment and consistency, social proof, scarcity, reciprocation, unity.
- It is important to be ethical when you use shortcuts.

You cannot reason people out of a position
that they did not reason themselves into.
— Ben Goldacre, Bad Science

Social Judgment Theory

I have a colleague that travels around the country speaking on college campuses and at farmer’s markets telling people why they should not eat meat. He finds the eating of meat completely unethical.

I’ve noticed that when it comes to meat-eating, people have strong opinions on either side. Think about it, would you eat a horse? dog? goat? rabbit? Some of you have grown up eating meat all your lives and consider it a tasty and healthy way to eat. For others of you, the very thought of eating any animal product seems cruel. Most reading this will fall somewhere in between. Look at the chart below and decide, which of the category best describes you.

Eats all meat—horse, goat, dog, lamb, beef, pork, chicken, rabbit, fish	**Carnivore** *Technically Omnivore unless you only eat meat.*
Eats many types of meat–goat, lamb, beef, pork, chicken, rabbit, fish	
Eats many types of meat–deer, beef, pork, chicken, fish	
Eats domestic meat— beef, pork, chicken, fish	
Eats some meat–chicken, fish	**Flexitarian**
Eats fish, eggs, and dairy	**Pescatarian**
Eats eggs	**Ovo-vegetarians**
Eats no meat or eggs but consume dairy	**Lacto-vegetarian**
Eats no meat or eggs but consume honey	**Beegan**
Eats no animal products at all	**Vegan**

As you looked at the list there were some categories you found acceptable, and some you did not. In all honesty, most of you did not think that I was going to suggest eating dogs and horses. When you saw that on the list, most of you didn't think of those as tasty options. Social Judgement Theory proposed by Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall suggests that on any topic from diet to abortion and gun control to movie choices, we have an idea of what we like and are willing to accept and what is out of the question. The researchers studied human judgment to understand when persuasive messages are likely to succeed, and it comes down to how we fit into the ranges and how closely that message is to what we already believe. Each of us has a favorite position on any given topic, they call that the anchor position. As you looked on the chart and picked the category that best describes you, you found your anchor position. On the list, you likely found several categories that you would be willing to accept and maybe several categories you reject entirely.

Let's go back to a colleague of mine, remember, the one who speaks on campuses about veganism. When he looks at this chart, the only position he is willing to accept is to eat no animal products at all. The researchers would say that he is ego-involved because he has a large group of ideas he rejects. How hard would it be to get him to try eating a dog? a goat? an egg? As you can imagine, if I suggest that he tries eating goat, he will think that position is too extreme and that as individuals we are far apart in what we believe. On the other hand, I might be able to nudge him up the continuum a little. Maybe, I could convince him to try honey. After all, no bees were harmed from making honey and it does not contain any meat. People with extreme views can be moved, but only in small increments. If I want the persuasion to work, I might be able to persuade him to try honey.

Now, think of a friend you might know who hunts, and fishes, and eats deer, rabbit, and squirrel. This friend of yours likes trying different types of jerky-like elk and moose. How hard would it be to convince him to try eating a dog? How about a goat? Since your friend has a large range of ideas he already accepts, adding one more animal to the list of things he eats might not be that hard. He would be much more likely to try a dog than would my vegan friend. It doesn't matter how good we are at persuading as much as how close that persuasion is to what they already believe.

In any audience, you will have people all up and down the spectrum of beliefs. It is your responsibility to try to find out as much as you can about your audience before your speech, so you will know generally where they are. You will have more luck persuading people if you try to move them a little as opposed to move them a lot. Every semester, a vegan group comes to the University of Arkansas campus and passes out flyers promoting a vegan lifestyle. I've noticed their messages have slowly changed from meat is murder and you should never eat meat because production is hard on the environment to a more palatable message to try eliminating meat one day a week. Maybe these vegans learned about Social Judgement Theory or maybe they learned by trial and error that moving someone from one extreme to the next is an unlikely feat.

Alexander Edwards Coppock did his dissertation looking at small changes in political opinions, he found the following:

1. When confronted with persuasive messages, individuals update their views in the direction of information. This means, if you give them good information, they are likely to be persuaded by it.
2. People change their minds about political issues in small increments. Like mentioned before, they are more likely to move in small increments.

3. Persuasion in the direction of information occurs regardless of background characteristics, initial beliefs, or ideological position. Translation, good information can be very persuasive regardless of what they believed before.
4. These changes in political attitudes, in most cases, lasted at least 10 days. In other words, good facts help people to change their attitudes and that information can stick.

In summary, if you provide people information and attempt to persuade them in small increments regardless of their prior beliefs, they can change their political attitude and that change will stick.

Social Judgement Theory - What's the Big Idea?



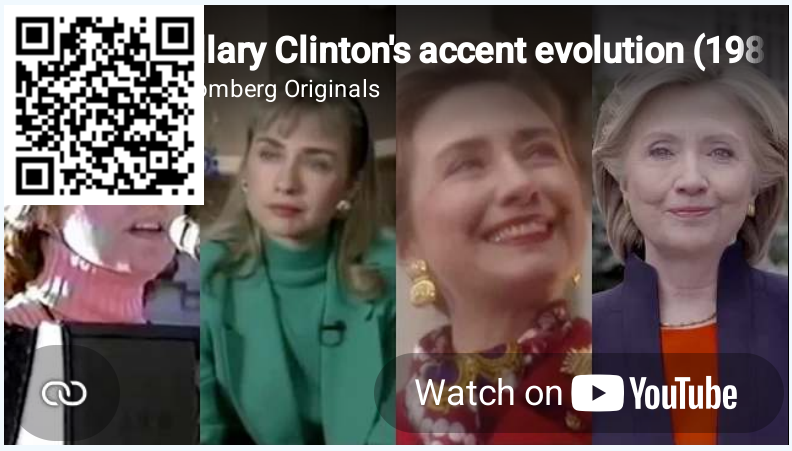
- People have preexisting beliefs on topics. Some people have many variations they are willing to accept, and other people are very set in their ways and will only tolerate a narrow set of beliefs.
- It is nearly impossible to get people to move from one extreme to the next. It is better to get them to move their position a little.
- If you try to move people with narrow views, they will likely reject your ideas and think you are too extreme.
- People who have a wide variance of beliefs are more open-minded to change as long as you don't try to move them too far from their anchor position.

Michael Austin Believes We Should Encourage Open Discussion

Small acts of persuasion matter, because there is much less distance between people's beliefs than we often suppose. We easily confuse the distance between people's political positions with the intensity of their convictions about them. It is entirely possible for people to become sharply divided, even hostile, over relatively minor disagreements. Americans have fought epic political battles over things like baking wedding cakes and kneeling during the national anthem. And we once fought a shooting war over a whiskey tax of ten cents per gallon. The ferocity of these battles has nothing to do with the actual distance between different positions, which, when compared to the entire range of opinions possible in the world, is almost negligible.

None of this means that we can persuade our opponents easily. Persuading people to change their minds is excruciatingly difficult. It doesn't always work, and it rarely works the way we think it will. But it does work, and the fact that it works makes it possible for us to have a democracy.
— Michael Austin, We Must Not Be Enemies: Restoring America's Civic Tradition

Discuss This



When trying to persuade others. It is helpful to dress similar to the audience and adapt your speech to the audience and context. After all, you would not use a college-level vocabulary when speaking to third graders. When does adaptation, become manipulation? Some people noted that Hillary Clinton changed her accent to adapt to her role and her audience. Watch this video and discuss what you think–Is she adapting appropriately or over adapting in a manipulative manner.

Lawrence Rosenblum, a psychology professor at the University of California, studies speech imitation and he says "When people are imitated, they are more likely to like the person they're interacting with — they're more likely to rate the interaction as successful." As mentioned before, we like people who are like us. Rosenblum also noted that people tend to naturally imitate others' body language and speech when making a point. Particularly if it is a persuasive point. He would suggest that we don't even think about it, we just adapt.

So what do you think about Hillary Clinton's accent change? Would it make you like her more? Did it seem to be a natural adaptation? If you were a political speech coach, what would you suggest that she do?

To be persuasive we must be believable;
to be believable we must be creditable;
to be credible we must be truthful.
— Edward R. Murrow, American Journalist

Ethics in Persuasion

You are given a lot of power when you have the platform and an audience. It is important that you use that power ethically. Researchers Baker and Martinson created the TARES test as a way to examine the ethics of persuasive messages. Read through these questions to see if your persuasive message meets the five principles for ethical persuasion.

TARES Test: Five Principles for Ethical Persuasion

Truthfulness (of the message)

> *"The Principle of Truthfulness requires the persuader's intention not to deceive, the intention to provide*
> *others with the truthful information they legitimately need to make good decisions about their lives."*

1. Is this communication factually accurate and true, and also truthful?
2. Does it deceive others either overtly or covertly?
3. Is this communication consistent with open, sincere, and honest communication?
4. Is it responsive to the persuadees' human need to have truthful information to inform their life decisions?
5. If this message communicates only part of the truth, what are my justifications for disseminating this selective (incomplete) truth?
6. Will the people receiving this message feel they have been deceived if later they learn the whole truth?
7. Is this communication substantially complete?
8. Does it satisfy a reasonable person's requirements for information in this situation?
9. Will people have reason to question my honesty and trustworthiness as a result of this communication?
10. What can I do to ensure that this persuasive message is truthful?

Authenticity (of the Persuader /Speaker)

The Principle of Authenticity "combines a cluster of related issues including integrity and personal virtue in action and motivation; genuineness and sincerity in promoting particular products and services to particular persuadees; loyalty to appropriate persons, causes, duties, and institutions; and moral independence and commitment to principle."

1. Does this action compromise my integrity?
2. Does it conform to my highest principles?
3. Would I want others to follow the same rule in similar circumstances?
4. Does this action arise out of noble intentions and motivations?
5. Although I may have the right to do this, is it the right thing to do?
6. Would I ideally want to live in a world in which people routinely engaged in this type of action?
7. What good reasons and justifications do I have for advocating this product, service, or cause (other than purely self-serving reasons)?
8. Do I truly think and believe that the persuadees will benefit (or will be doing the right thing) if they are persuaded to act or think in the ways that this persuasive communication suggests they should?
9. What can I do to conduct myself as an authentic person in this situation?

Respect (for the Persuadee)

The Principle of Respect requires that professional persuaders "regard other human beings as worthy of dignity, that they do not violate their rights, interests, and well-being for raw self-interest or purely client-serving purposes. It assumes that no professional persuasion effort is justified if it demonstrates disrespect for those to whom it is directed."

1. Is the persuasive appeal made to the decency in people?
2. Have I respected the receivers of this persuasive message by appealing to their higher inclinations and their basic goodness, by not pandering, exploiting, or appealing to their lower or baser inclinations?
3. Does this action or communication respect the persuadee as a human being worthy of dignity and respect?
4. Have I taken the rights, interests, and well-being of others into consideration as much as my own?
5. Does it facilitate persuadees' capacity to reflect and to make responsible choices about their lives?
6. Is the quality of this information adequate to the information needs of the persuadees?
7. What ethical responsibility do I have for the people I am targeting with this persuasion?
8. Does this action promote raw self-interest at the unfair expense of or to the detriment of persuadees?
9. What can I do to be more respectful of and more responsible to the people I am persuading, and all others who will be affected by this persuasion?
10. Does this persuasive appeal contribute to understanding, consideration, reflection, and valid reasoning, and facilitate informed, free-will assent and consent?

Equity (of the Persuasive Appeal)

The Principle of Equity "requires that persuaders consider if both the content and the execution of the persuasive appeal are fair and equitable if persuaders have fairly used the power of persuasion in a given situation or if they have persuaded or manipulated unjustly."

1. Is the context, nature, and execution of this persuasive act fair?
2. Is the power of persuasion used fairly and justly?
3. Would I feel that the persuasion in this situation was fair, just, ethical, and appropriate if it were communicated to me or to people I know and love?
4. Is this persuasive appeal sensitive to the needs, interests, concerns, and sensibilities of the persuadees?
5. Have I unfairly targeted specific (or vulnerable) audiences and made claims outside of their ability to understand the context and underlying claims of the communication?
6. Does it allow for both reflection and counterargument?
7. Do the receivers of the message know that they are being persuaded rather than informed?
8. What can I do to make this persuasive appeal fairer and more equitable?

Social Responsibility (for the Common Good)

The Principle of Social Responsibility " focuses on the need for professional persuaders to be sensitive to and concerned about the wider public interest or the common good. It represents an appeal to responsibility, to the community over [raw] self-interest, profit, or careerism"

1. Does this action recognize the interdependency of persons in society, of persons as communal beings?
2. Is the action/ communication responsible to individuals, society, the public, and the public interest?
3. Does this action take responsibility to promote and create the kind of world and society in which persuaders themselves would like to live with their families and loved ones?
4. Will the product or issue I am promoting cause harm to individuals or to society?
5. Have I considered the responsibility to fairly represent issues and to allow and foster public consideration of alternative views?
6. Has this action's potential negative impact on individuals and the common good been taken into account and responded to appropriately?
7. Does this persuasive communication promote (or strain) understanding and cooperation among constituent groups of society?
8. Have I unfairly stereotyped constituent groups of society in this promotion/ communication campaign?
9. Will this action (or not having this information) cause disproportionate harm to any person, group, or interest?
10. Does this persuasive communication elucidate issues, dispel confusion and ignorance, and encourage public dialogue based on truthful information?

** The TARES test was originally developed to test advertising and public relations campaigns. It was applied here to persuasive speeches. For relevance and ease of use, the list of questions on the test was paired down. The original paper and full list of questions can be accessed here: http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/the_tares_test-_five_principles_for_ethical_persuasion.pdf

We've talked about three major persuasive theories, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Judgmental Heuristics, and Social Judgement Theory. Each one offers insight into how people are persuaded. Woven in all of these is a thread of ethics. Thinking about persuasion as you build your speech and building your points based on proven models will help you to take your persuasive speaking to the next level.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- The Elaboration Likelihood Model assumes that people are persuaded via a thinking (central) or nonthinking (peripheral) route.
- Judgmental Heuristics is using shortcuts to decide. These shortcuts are authority, commitment/consistency, unity, reciprocity, liking, scarcity, social proof.
- Social Judgment Theory suggests that people are best persuaded when a message is not too far from what they already believe, and it is better to persuade people in small increments.
- The TARES test examines the ethics of a persuasive message: Truthfulness, authenticity, respect, equity, social responsibility.

References

Austin, M. (2019). *We must not be enemies: Restoring America's civic tradition.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Baker, S. & Martinson, D.L. (2001). The Tares Test: Five principles for ethical persuasion. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics. 16 (*2&3). 148-175. http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/the_tares_test-_five_principles_for_ethical_persuasion.pdf

Bloomberg Quicktake (2015). Hillary Clinton's accent evolution (1983-2015). [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCyvyyo6dtQ Standard YouTube License.

Brehm J. W. (1966). *A theory of psychological reactance*. Academic Press.

Brehm J. W. & Brehm S. S. (1981). *Psychological reactance – a theory of freedom and control*. Academic Press.

Cialdini, R.B. (2016). *Pre-suasion: A revolutionary way to influence and persuade.* Simon and Schuster.

Cialdini, R.B. (2009). *Influence science and practice.* Pearson.

Coppock, A. E. (2016). Positive, small, homogeneous, and durable: Political persuasion in response to information. [Doctoral Dissertation, Columbian University]. Proquest https://doi.org/10.7916/D8J966CS Available

https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8J966CS

Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *58*, 203–210.

Gass, R.H. & Seiter, J.S. (2014). *Persuasion, social influence, and compliance gaining.* Pearson

Goldwater, B. Bad science quote. Goodreads.

Hogan, K. (1996). *The psychology of persuasion: how to persuade others to your way of thinking.* Pelican.

Hovland, C.I. & Sherif, M. (1980). *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude change*. Greenwood.

McGonigal, J. (2010). Gaming can make a better world TED Talk.[Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Murrow, E. R. Quote. Goodreads.

O'Keefe, D. (2008). *The international encyclopedia of communication*. John Wiley and Sons.

Petty, R.E. & Cacioppo, J.T. (1984). Source factors and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Consumer Research*, *11*, 668–672.

Petty, R.E. and Cacioppo, J.T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change.* Springer-Verlag.

Sherif, C. W. & Sherif, M. (1976). *Attitude as the individuals' own categories: The social judgment-involvement approach to attitude and attitude change. Attitude, ego-involvement, and change.* Greenwood Press.

Steindl, C., Jonas, E., Sittenthaler, S., Traut-Mattausch, E., & Greenberg, J. (2015). Understanding Psychological Reactance: New Developments and Findings. *Zeitschrift fur Psychologie*, *223*(4), 205–214. https://doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000222

Tutu, D. (2004). *Address at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Houghton, Johannesburg, South Africa. Goodreads.*

Tyson, J. (2021). Picture: eat what makes you happy. https://unsplash.com/photos/ZA9PHAnVP5g

Valasquez, L. (2013). How do you define yourself? TED Talk. [Video] YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/lizzie_velasquez_how_do_you_define_yourself?language=en Standard YouTube License.

Media Attributions

- Man in front of group © Campaign Creators is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- ELM © Joe1992 is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license
- jon-tyson-ZA9PHAnVP5g-unsplash © John Tyson is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

This page titled 5.4: The Science of Persuasion- A Little Theory Goes a Long Way is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lynn Meade via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

Index

Glossary

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

Detailed Licensing

Overview

Title: Advanced Public Speaking (Meade)

Webpages: 78

All licenses found:

- CC BY 4.0: 97.4% (76 pages)
- Undeclared: 2.6% (2 pages)

By Page

- Advanced Public Speaking (Meade) - *CC BY 4.0*
  - Front Matter - *CC BY 4.0*
    - TitlePage - *CC BY 4.0*
    - InfoPage - *CC BY 4.0*
    - Table of Contents - *Undeclared*
    - Licensing - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 1: Writing a Speech - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.1: Public Speaking--So What, Who Cares? - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.2: Engage Your Audience- Don't Spit Random Words at Generic People - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.3: Brainstorming- Moving the Cheese Out of the Way So You Can Find Your Best Ideas - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.4: Opening a Speech- Get Their Attention from the Start! - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.5: Closing a Speech- End with Power and Let Them Know It is Time to Clap - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.6: The Power of Story- The Secret Ingredient to Making Any Speech Memorable - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.7: Giving and Receiving Feedback- It is Harder Than You Think - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.8: Organizing a Speech and Harnessing the Power of Three - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.9: Transitions- Bridging Ideas for a Seamless Presentation - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.10: Research- Finding and Citing Your Research - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.11: Ceremonial Speaking- Identification, Magnification, Narration - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.12: Professional Speechwriting- Using Colorful Language in Your Speech - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.13: Professional Speechwriting- Metaphor, Simile, and Theme - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 1.14: Professional Speechwriting- Vivid and Sensory Words Make Your Speech Come Alive - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 2: Presenting a Speech - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.1: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Brain - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.2: Overcome Communication Apprehension by Hacking Your Body - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.3: Delivery Advice- Do Not Imagine the Audience Naked! Managing Eye Contact, Movement, and Gestures - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.4: Using a Microphone Effectively- Turn It Off Before Going to the Bathroom - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.5: Why Your Voice is the Most Important Part of Your Speech- If They Can't Hear You It is Only a Frustrating Exercise in Lip Reading - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.6: Speaking to a Camera- Making Eye Contact is Key - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.7: Delivery Methods- Which One Should I Use? - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 2.8: Speaking from a Manuscript- How to Read and not Look Like You Are Reading - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 3: Presentation Aids for Speech - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 3.1: Props- It is More Than Just Setting Stuff on a Table - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 3.2: Don't Ruin a Great Presentation with Terrible Slides - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 3.3: Data Visualization- Using Statistics, Numbers, and Charts Without Boring Your Audience - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 4: Speeches - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.1: Persuasive Speechmaking- Pitching Your Idea and Making it Stick - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.2: Career Speech- Tell Them Who You Are and Why You Matter to Them - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.3: Elevator and Career Fair Pitch- Standing Out While Still Fitting In - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.4: Toast Speech - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.5: Award Speech- And the Winner is... - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.6: Graduation Speeches- Speeches You Give in Pointy Hats - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.7: Eulogy-Good Words - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.8: Introducing a Speaker - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 4.9: Tribute Speech- Celebrate the Occasion, the Person, or the Monument - *CC BY 4.0*

- 4.10: Informative Speech - *CC BY 4.0*

- 5: Considerations for Speech - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 5.1: Things That Do Not Belong In Your Speech- Curse Words, ISTS, Slang, and Bafflegab - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 5.2: Rhetorical History- Interview with Two Old Dead Greek Guys - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 5.3: Fallacies--Warning! Deceptive, Hateful Speech Coming Your Way - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 5.4: The Science of Persuasion- A Little Theory Goes a Long Way - *CC BY 4.0*
- 6: Classroom Activities and Additional Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.1: Student Engagement- Tips For Teachers - *Undeclared*
  - 6.2: Movie Speeches to Inspire, Dissect, and Discuss - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.3: The Leader Who Withheld Their Story by Bob Kienzle - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.4: Informative Speeches- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.5: Persuasive Speaking- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.6: Interview Questions - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.7: Spoken Word Poetry - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.8: Everyone Makes Mistakes- Watch These Speaker Blunders - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.9: Charts, Data, and Numbers- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.10: Practice Speeches- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.11: Delivery- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.12: Fallacies- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.13: Audience Analysis- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.14: Story- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.15: Overcoming Apprehension- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.16: Specialty Speeches- Pecha Kucha, Ignite, Moth - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.17: Language- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.18: Writing a Speech- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.19: Presentation Aids- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.20: Colorful Language- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.21: Opening and Closing- Activities and Resources - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.22: Resources to Discuss Free Speech - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 6.23: Public Speaking Resources- Open Source Textbooks, Assessment Tools, Webtools - *CC BY 4.0*
- Back Matter - *CC BY 4.0*
  - Index - *CC BY 4.0*
  - Glossary - *CC BY 4.0*
  - Detailed Licensing - *CC BY 4.0*