

PERSUASION AND CRITICAL THINKING



Kelsey Paiz
Diablo Valley College

Persuasion and Critical Thinking

Adapted from *Stand Up, Speak Out*

with excerpts from *Communication in the Real World*

Edited by Kelsey Paiz

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 adaptations contact info@LibreTexts.org or visit our main website at <https://LibreTexts.org>.

This text was compiled on 06/16/2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Persuasion and Critical Thinking

Licensing

1: What is Persuasion?

- 1.1: Persuasion - An Overview
- 1.2: Types of Persuasive Speeches

2: Basics of Persuasive Thinking

- 2.1: Persuasive Thinking

3: Persuasive Strategies

- 3.1: Ethos
- 3.2: Logos
- 3.3: Pathos

4: Preparing a Speech

- 4.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic
- 4.2: Researching and Supporting Your Speech
- 4.3: Organizing
- 4.4: Outlining

5: Speaking Confidently

- 5.1: What Is Communication Apprehension?
- 5.2: All Anxiety Is Not the Same- Sources of Communication Apprehension
- 5.3: Reducing Communication Apprehension
- 5.4: Coping with the Unexpected

6: Delivery

- 6.1: Four Methods of Delivery
- 6.2: Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery
- 6.3: Using Notes Effectively
- 6.4: Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery

7: Types of Persuasive Speeches

- 7.1: Types of Persuasive Speeches

8: Persuasive Strategies - Logical Fallacies

- 8.1: Fallacies

9: Ethics Matters

- 9.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking
- 9.2: The Ethics Pyramid

- [9.3: Ethics in Public Speaking](#)
- [9.4: Free Speech](#)
- [9.5: Chapter Exercises](#)

[10: Persuasive Theories - Cognitive Dissonance Theory](#)

- [10.1: Cognitive Dissonance Theory](#)

[11: Organizing Policy Speeches](#)

- [11.1: Organizing Policy Speeches](#)

[12: Persuasive Theories - Elaboration Likelihood Model](#)

- [12.1: Elaboration Likelihood Model](#)

[13: Mass Media and Persuasion](#)

- [13.1: Technological Advances- From the Printing Press to the iPhone](#)
- [13.2: Functions and Theories of Mass Communication](#)
- [13.3: Mass Communication and Ethics](#)

[Index](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Detailed Licensing](#)

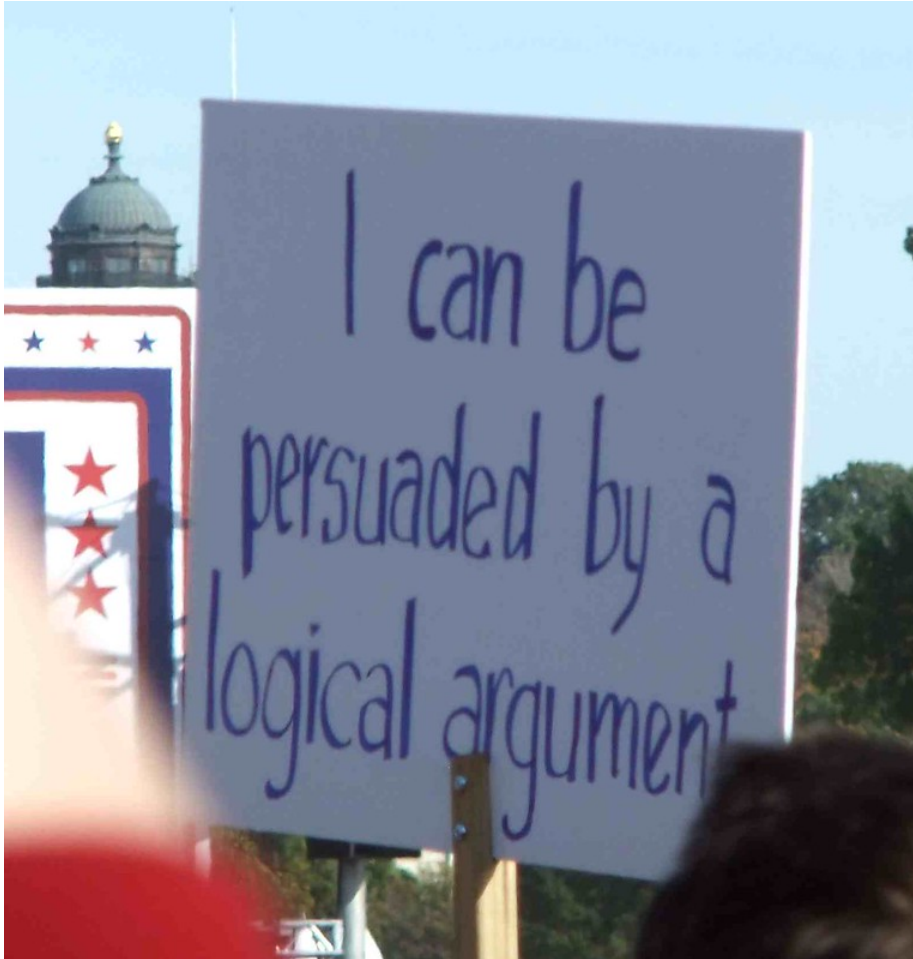
Licensing

A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in [Back Matter/Detailed Licensing](#).

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: What is Persuasion?

Foundations of Persuasion



Martha Soukup – [I Can Be Persuaded](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Every day we are bombarded by persuasive messages. Some messages are mediated and designed to get us to purchase specific products or vote for specific candidates, while others might come from our loved ones and are designed to get us to help around the house or join the family for game night. Whatever the message being sent, we are constantly being persuaded and persuading others. In this chapter, we are going to focus on persuasive speaking. We will first talk about persuasion as a general concept. We will then examine four different types of persuasive speeches, and finally, we'll look at three organizational patterns that are useful for persuasive speeches.

[1.1: Persuasion - An Overview](#)

[1.2: Types of Persuasive Speeches](#)

1: [What is Persuasion?](#) is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

1.1: Persuasion - An Overview

Learning Objectives

1. Define and explain persuasion.
2. Explain the theory of persuasion discussed in the text: social judgment theory.

Persuasion: An Overview



NBS NewsHour – [Podium](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

In his text *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century*, Richard Perloff noted that the study of persuasion today is extremely important for five basic reasons:

1. The sheer number of persuasive communications has grown exponentially.
2. Persuasive messages travel faster than ever before.
3. Persuasion has become institutionalized.
4. Persuasive communication has become more subtle and devious.
5. Persuasive communication is more complex than ever before (Perloff, 2003).

In essence, the nature of persuasion has changed over the last fifty years as a result of the influx of various types of technology. People are bombarded by persuasive messages in today's world, so thinking about how to create persuasive messages effectively is very important for modern public speakers. A century (or even half a century) ago, public speakers had to contend only with the words printed on paper for attracting and holding an audience's attention. Today, public speakers must contend with laptops, netbooks, iPads, smartphones, billboards, television sets, and many other tools that can send a range of persuasive messages immediately to a target audience. Thankfully, scholars who study persuasion have kept up with the changing times and have found a number of persuasive strategies that help speakers be more persuasive.

What Is Persuasion?

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

Change Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

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

You can also attempt to persuade an individual to change her or his value toward something. Value refers to an individual's perception of the usefulness, importance, or worth of something. We can value a college education or technology or freedom. Values, as a general concept, are fairly ambiguous and tend to be very lofty ideas. Ultimately, what we value in life actually motivates us to engage in a range of behaviors. For example, if you value technology, you are more likely to seek out new technology or software on your own. On the contrary, if you do not value technology, you are less likely to seek out new technology or software unless someone, or some circumstance, requires you to.

Lastly, you can attempt to get people to change their personal beliefs. Beliefs are propositions or positions that an individual holds as true or false without positive knowledge or proof. Typically, beliefs are divided into two basic categories: core and dispositional. Core beliefs are beliefs that people have actively engaged in and created over the course of their lives (e.g., belief in a higher power, belief in extraterrestrial life forms). Dispositional beliefs, on the other hand, are beliefs that people have not actively engaged in but rather judgments that they make, based on their knowledge of related subjects, when they encounter a proposition. For example, imagine that you were asked the question, “Can stock cars reach speeds of one thousand miles per hour on a one-mile oval track?” Even though you may never have attended a stock car race or even seen one on television, you can make split-second judgments about your understanding of automobile speeds and say with a fair degree of certainty that you believe stock cars cannot travel at one thousand miles per hour on a one-mile track. We sometimes refer to dispositional beliefs as virtual beliefs (Frankish, 1998).

When it comes to persuading people to alter core and dispositional beliefs, persuading audiences to change core beliefs is more difficult than persuading audiences to change dispositional beliefs. For this reason, you are very unlikely to persuade people to change their deeply held core beliefs about a topic in a five- to ten-minute speech. However, if you give a persuasive speech on a topic related to an audience’s dispositional beliefs, you may have a better chance of success. While core beliefs may seem to be exciting and interesting, persuasive topics related to dispositional beliefs are generally better for novice speakers with limited time allotments.

Change Behavior

The second type of persuasive speech is one in which the speaker attempts to persuade an audience to change their behavior. Behaviors come in a wide range of forms, so finding one you think people should start, increase, or decrease shouldn’t be difficult at all. Speeches encouraging audiences to vote for a candidate, sign a petition opposing a tuition increase, or drink tap water instead of bottled water are all behavior-oriented persuasive speeches. In all these cases, the goal is to change the behavior of individual listeners.

Why Persuasion Matters

Frymier and Nadler enumerate three reasons why people should study persuasion (Frymier & Nadler, 2007). First, when you study and understand persuasion, you will be more successful at persuading others. If you want to be a persuasive public speaker, then you need to have a working understanding of how persuasion functions.

Second, when people understand persuasion, they will be better consumers of information. As previously mentioned, we live in a society where numerous message sources are constantly fighting for our attention. Unfortunately, most people just let messages wash over them like a wave, making little effort to understand or analyze them. As a result, they are more likely to fall for half-truths, illogical arguments, and lies. When you start to understand persuasion, you will have the skill set to actually pick apart the messages being sent to you and see why some of them are good and others are simply not.

Lastly, when we understand how persuasion functions, we’ll have a better grasp of what happens around us in the world. We’ll be able to analyze why certain speakers are effective persuaders and others are not. We’ll be able to understand why some public speakers can get an audience eating out of their hands, while others flop.

Furthermore, we believe it is an ethical imperative in the twenty-first century to be persuasively literate. We believe that persuasive messages that aim to manipulate, coerce, and intimidate people are unethical, as are messages that distort information. As ethical listeners, we have a responsibility to analyze messages that manipulate, coerce, and/or intimidate people or distort information. We also then have the responsibility to combat these messages with the truth, which will ultimately rely on our own skills and knowledge as effective persuaders.

Theories of Persuasion

Understanding how people are persuaded is very important to the discussion of public speaking. Thankfully, a number of researchers have created theories that help explain why people are persuaded. While there are numerous theories that help to explain persuasion, we are only going to examine one here: social judgment theory.

Social Judgment Theory

Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland created social judgment theory in an attempt to determine what types of communicative messages and under what conditions communicated messages will lead to a change in someone’s behavior (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). In essence, Sherif and Hovland found that people’s perceptions of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors exist on a

continuum including latitude of rejection, latitude of noncommitment, and latitude of acceptance (Figure 1.1.1 “Latitudes of Judgments”).

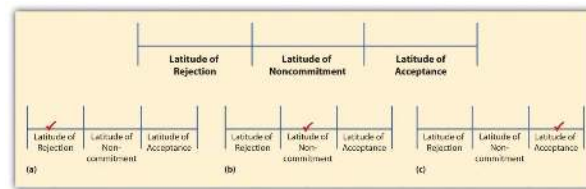


Figure 1.1.1: Latitudes of Judgments

Imagine that you’re planning to persuade your peers to major in a foreign language in college. Some of the students in your class are going to disagree with you right off the bat (latitude of rejection, part (a) of Figure 1.1.1 “Latitudes of Judgments”). Other students are going to think majoring in a foreign language is a great idea (latitude of acceptance, part (c) of Figure 1.1.1 “Latitudes of Judgments”). Still others are really going to have no opinion either way (latitude of noncommitment, part (b) of Figure 1.1.1 “Latitudes of Judgments”). Now in each of these different latitudes there is a range of possibilities. For example, one of your listeners may be perfectly willing to accept the idea of minoring in a foreign language, but when asked to major or even double major in a foreign language, he or she may end up in the latitude of noncommitment or even rejection.

Not surprisingly, Sherif and Hovland found that persuasive messages were the most likely to succeed when they fell into an individual’s latitude of acceptance. For example, if you are giving your speech on majoring in a foreign language, people who are in favor of majoring in a foreign language are more likely to positively evaluate your message, assimilate your advice into their own ideas, and engage in desired behavior. On the other hand, people who reject your message are more likely to negatively evaluate your message, not assimilate your advice, and not engage in desired behavior.

In an ideal world, we’d always be persuading people who agree with our opinions, but that’s not reality. Instead, we often find ourselves in situations where we are trying to persuade others to attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors with which they may not agree. To help us persuade others, what we need to think about is the range of possible attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that exist. For example, in our foreign language case, we may see the following possible opinions from our audience members:

1. **Complete agreement.** Let’s all major in foreign languages.
2. **Strong agreement.** I won’t major in a foreign language, but I will double major in a foreign language.
3. **Agreement in part.** I won’t major in a foreign language, but I will minor in a foreign language.
4. **Neutral.** While I think studying a foreign language can be worthwhile, I also think a college education can be complete without it. I really don’t feel strongly one way or the other.
5. **Disagreement in part.** I will only take the foreign language classes required by my major.
6. **Strong disagreement.** I don’t think I should have to take any foreign language classes.
7. **Complete disagreement.** Majoring in a foreign language is a complete waste of a college education.

These seven possible opinions on the subject do not represent the full spectrum of choices, but give us various degrees of agreement with the general topic. So what does this have to do with persuasion? Well, we’re glad you asked. Sherif and Hovland theorized that persuasion was a matter of knowing how great the discrepancy or difference was between the speaker’s viewpoint and that of the audience. If the speaker’s point of view was similar to that of audience members, then persuasion was more likely. If the discrepancy between the idea proposed by the speaker and the audience’s viewpoint is too great, then the likelihood of persuasion decreases dramatically.

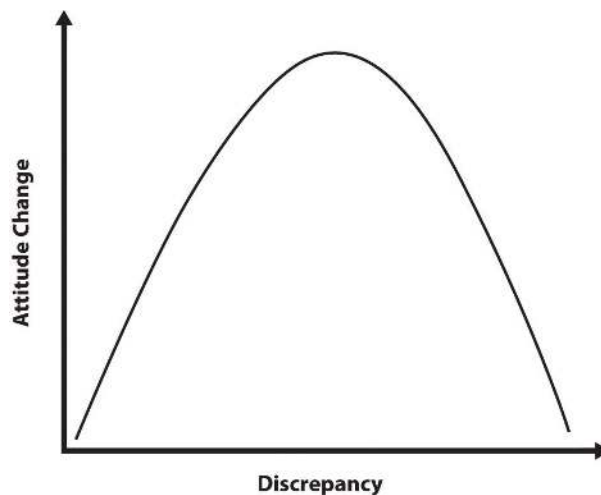


Figure 1.1.2: Discrepancy and Attitude Change

Furthermore, Sherif and Hovland predicted that there was a threshold for most people where attitude change wasn't possible and people slipped from the latitude of acceptance into the latitude of noncommitment or rejection. Figure 1.1.2 "Discrepancy and Attitude Change" represents this process. All the area covered by the left side of the curve represents options a person would agree with, even if there is an initial discrepancy between the speaker and audience member at the start of the speech. However, there comes a point where the discrepancy between the speaker and audience member becomes too large, which move into the options that will be automatically rejected by the audience member. In essence, it becomes essential for you to know which options you can realistically persuade your audience to and which options will never happen. Maybe there is no way for you to persuade your audience to major or double major in a foreign language, but perhaps you can get them to minor in a foreign language. While you may not be achieving your complete end goal, it's better than getting nowhere at all.

Key Takeaways

- Persuasion is the use of verbal and nonverbal messages to get a person to behave in a manner or embrace a point of view related to values, attitudes, and beliefs that he or she would not have done otherwise. Studying persuasion is important today because it helps us become more persuasive individuals, become more observant of others' persuasive attempts, and have a more complete understanding of the world around us.
- Social judgment theory says that persuaders need to be aware of an audience's latitudes of acceptance, noncommitment, and rejection in order to effectively persuade an audience.

Exercises

1. Imagine you're giving a speech to a group of college fraternity and sorority members about why hazing shouldn't be tolerated. Explain the persuasive process using the theory of persuasion discussed in this chapter.

References

- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, & Company.
- Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58, 203–210.
- Frankish, K. (1998). Virtual belief. In P. Carruthers & J. Boucher (Eds.), *Language and thought* (pp. 249–269). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Frymier, A. B., & Nadler, M. K. (2007). *Persuasion: Integrating theory, research, and practice*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Perloff, R. M. (2003). *The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the 21st Century* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 5–6.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123–205.

Sherif, M., & Hovland, C. I. (1961). *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

1.1: Persuasion - An Overview is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

1.2: Types of Persuasive Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among the four types of persuasive claims.
2. Understand how the four types of persuasive claims lead to different types of persuasive speeches.
3. Explain the two types of policy claims.

Types of Persuasive Speeches



Burns Library, Boston College – [Maya Angelou](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Obviously, there are many different persuasive speech topics you could select for a public speaking class. Anything from localized claims like changing a specific college or university policy to larger societal claims like adding more enforcement against the trafficking of women and children in the United States could make for an interesting persuasive speech. You'll notice in the previous sentence we referred to the two topics as claims. In this use of the word "claim," we are declaring the goodness or positivity of an attitude, value, belief, or behavior that others may dispute. As a result of the dispute between our perceptions of the goodness of an attitude, value, belief, or behavior and the perceptions of others, we attempt to support the claim we make using some sort of evidence and logic as we attempt to persuade others. There are four common claims that can be made: definitional, factual, value, and policy.

Definitional Claims

The first common types of claims that a persuasive speaker can make are definitional or classification claims. Definitional claims are claims over the denotation or classification of what something is. In essence, we are trying to argue for what something is or what something is not. Most definitional claims falling to a basic argument formula:

X is (or is not) a **Y** because it has (or does not have) features **A**, **B**, or **C**.

For example, maybe you're trying to persuade your class that while therapeutic massage is often performed on nude clients, it is not a form of prostitution. You could start by explaining what therapeutic massage is and then what prostitution is. You could even look at the legal definition of prostitution and demonstrate to your peers that therapeutic massage does not fall into the legal definition of prostitution because it does not involve the behaviors characterized by that definition.

Factual Claims

Factual claims set out to argue the truth or falsity of an assertion. Some factual claims are simple to answer: Barack Obama is the first African American President; the tallest man in the world, Robert Wadlow, was eight feet and eleven inches tall; Facebook wasn't profitable until 2009. All these factual claims are well documented by evidence and can be easily supported with a little research.

However, many factual claims cannot be answered absolutely. Some factual claims are simply hard to determine the falsity or trueness of because the final answer on the subject has not been discovered (e.g., when is censorship good, what rights should animals have, when does life begin). Probably the most historically interesting and consistent factual claim is the existence of a higher power, God, or other religious deity. The simple fact of the matter is that there is not enough evidence to clearly answer this factual claim in any specific direction, which is where the notion of faith must be involved in this factual claim.

Other factual claims that may not be easily answered using evidence are predictions of what may or may not happen. For example, you could give a speech on the future of climate change or the future of terrorism in the United States. While there may be evidence that something will happen in the future, unless you're a psychic, you don't actually know what will happen in the future.

When thinking of factual claims, it often helps to pretend that you're putting a specific claim on trial and as the speaker your job is to defend your claim as a lawyer would defend a client. Ultimately, your job is to be more persuasive than your audience members who act as both opposition attorneys and judges.

Value Claims

The final type of claim is a value claim, or a claim where the speaker is advocating a judgment claim about something (e.g., it's good or bad, it's right or wrong, it's beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral).

Let's look at three value claims. We've italicized the evaluative term in each claim:

- Dating people on the Internet is an *immoral* form of dating.
- SUVs are *gas guzzling monstrosities*.
- It's *unfair* for pregnant women to have special parking spaces at malls, shopping centers, and stores.

Each of these three claims could definitely be made by a speaker and other speakers could say the exact opposite. When making a value claim, it's hard to ascertain why someone has chosen a specific value stance without understanding her or his criteria for making the evaluative statement. For example, if someone finds all forms of technology immoral, then it's really no surprise that he or she would find Internet dating immoral as well. As such, you need to clearly explain your criteria for making the evaluative statement. For example, when we examine the SUV claim, if your criteria for the term "gas guzzling monstrosity" are ecological impact, safety, and gas consumption, then your evaluative statement can be more easily understood and evaluated by your audience. If, however, you state that your criterion is that SUVs are bigger than military vehicles and shouldn't be on the road, then your statement takes on a slightly different meaning. Ultimately, when making a value claim, you need to make sure that you clearly label your evaluative term and provide clear criteria for how you came to that evaluation.

Policy Claims

The third common claim that is seen in persuasive speeches is the policy claim—a statement about the nature of a problem and the solution that should be implemented. Policy claims are probably the most common form of persuasive speaking because we live in a society surrounded by problems and people who have ideas about how to fix these problems. Let's look at a few examples of possible policy claims:

- The United States should stop capital punishment.
- The United States should become independent from the use of foreign oil.
- Human cloning for organ donations should be legal.
- Nonviolent drug offenders should be sent to rehabilitation centers and not prisons.
- The tobacco industry should be required to pay 100 percent of the medical bills for individuals dying of smoking-related cancers.
- The United States needs to invest more in preventing poverty at home and less in feeding the starving around the world.

Each of these claims has a clear perspective that is being advocated. Policy claims will always have a clear and direct opinion for what should occur and what needs to change. When examining policy claims, we generally talk about two different persuasive goals: passive agreement and immediate action.

Gain Passive Agreement

When we attempt to gain the passive agreement of our audiences, our goal is to get our audiences to agree with what we are saying and our specific policy without asking the audience to do anything to enact the policy. For example, maybe your speech is on why the Federal Communications Commission should regulate violence on television like it does foul language (i.e., no violence until after 9 p.m.). Your goal as a speaker is to get your audience to agree that it is in our best interest as a society to prevent violence from being shown on television before 9 p.m., but you are not seeking to have your audience run out and call their senators or congressmen or even sign a petition. Often the first step in larger political change is simply getting a massive number of people to agree with your policy perspective.

Let's look at a few more passive agreement claims:

- Racial profiling of individuals suspected of belonging to known terrorist groups is a way to make America safer.

- Requiring American citizens to “show their papers” is a violation of democracy and resembles tactics of Nazi Germany and communist Russia.
- Colleges and universities should voluntarily implement a standardized testing program to ensure student learning outcomes are similar across different institutions.

In each of these claims, the goal is to sway one’s audience to a specific attitude, value, or belief, but not necessarily to get the audience to enact any specific behaviors.

Gain Immediate Action

The alternative to passive agreement is immediate action, or persuading your audience to start engaging in a specific behavior. Many passive agreement topics can become immediate action-oriented topics as soon as you tell your audience what behavior they should engage in (e.g., sign a petition, call a senator, vote). While it is much easier to elicit passive agreement than to get people to do something, you should always try to get your audience to act and do so quickly. A common mistake that speakers make is telling people to enact a behavior that will occur in the future. The longer it takes for people to engage in the action you desire, the less likely it is that your audience will engage in that behavior.

Here are some examples of good claims with immediate calls to action:

- College students should eat more fruit, so I am encouraging everyone to eat the apple I have provided you and start getting more fruit in your diet.
- Teaching a child to read is one way to ensure that the next generation will be stronger than those that have come before us, so please sign up right now to volunteer one hour a week to help teach a child to read.
- The United States should reduce its nuclear arsenal by 20 percent over the next five years. Please sign the letter provided encouraging the president to take this necessary step for global peace. Once you’ve signed the letter, hand it to me, and I’ll fax it to the White House today.

Each of these three examples starts with a basic claim and then tags on an immediate call to action. Remember, the faster you can get people to engage in a behavior the more likely they actually will.

Key Takeaways

- There are four types of persuasive claims. Definition claims argue the denotation or classification of what something is. Factual claims argue the truth or falsity about an assertion being made. Value claims argue a judgment about something (e.g., it’s good or bad, it’s right or wrong, it’s beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral). Lastly, policy claims argue the nature of a problem and the solution that should be taken.
- Each of the four claims leads to different types of persuasive speeches. As such, public speakers need to be aware what type of claim they are advocating in order to understand the best methods of persuasion.
- In policy claims, persuaders attempt to convince their audiences to either passively accept or actively act. When persuaders attempt to gain passive agreement from an audience, they hope that an audience will agree with what is said about a specific policy without asking the audience to do anything to enact the policy. Gaining immediate action, on the other hand, occurs when a persuader gets the audience to actively engage in a specific behavior.

Exercises

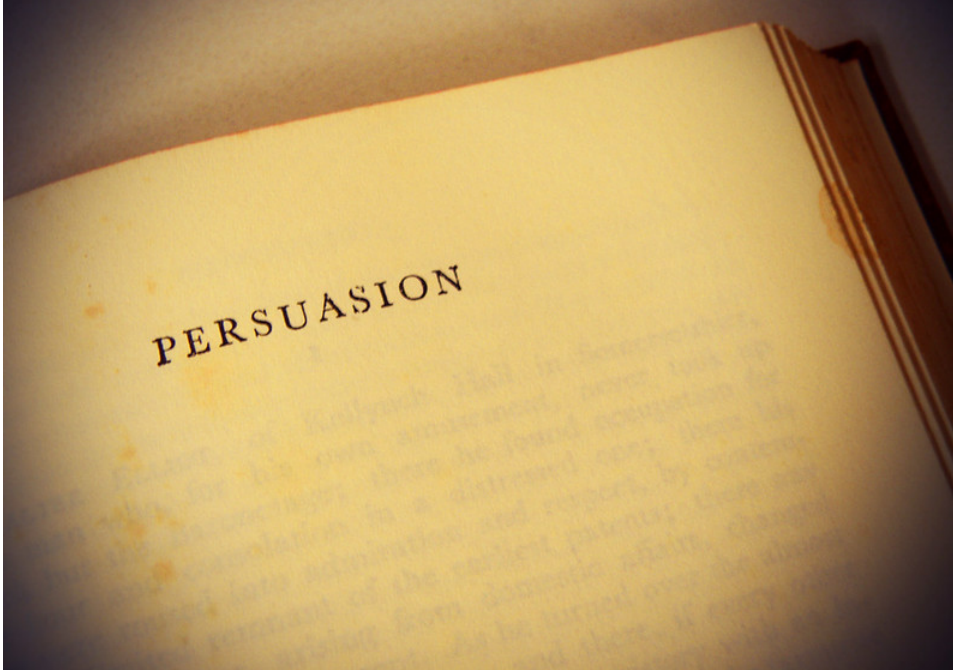
1. Look at the list of the top one hundred speeches in the United States during the twentieth century compiled by Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html>). Select a speech and examine the speech to determine which type of claim is being made by the speech.
2. Look at the list of the top one hundred speeches in the United States during the twentieth century compiled by Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst and find a policy speech (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html>). Which type of policy outcome was the speech aimed at achieving—passive agreement or immediate action? What evidence do you have from the speech to support your answer?

1.2: Types of Persuasive Speeches is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Basics of Persuasive Thinking

Basics of Persuasive Thinking



reihayashi – [Persuasion](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Communicative messages surround us. Most try to teach us something and/or influence our thoughts or behaviors. As with any type of communication, some messages are more engaging and effective than others. I'm sure you have experienced the displeasure of sitting through a boring class lecture that didn't seem to relate to your interests or a lecture so packed with information that your brain felt overloaded. Likewise, you have probably been persuaded by a message only to find out later that the argument that persuaded you was faulty or the speaker misleading. As senders and receivers of messages, it's important that know how to create and deliver persuasive messages.

[2.1: Persuasive Thinking](#)

[2: Basics of Persuasive Thinking](#) is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

2.1: Persuasive Thinking

Learning Objectives

1. Explain how claims, evidence, and warrants function to create an argument.
2. Identify strategies for choosing a persuasive speech topic.
3. Identify strategies for adapting a persuasive speech based on an audience's orientation to the proposition.
4. Distinguish among propositions of fact, value, and policy.
5. Choose an organizational pattern that is fitting for a persuasive speech topic.

Persuasive Thinking and Speaking

We produce and receive persuasive messages daily, but we don't often stop to think about how we make the arguments we do or the quality of the arguments that we receive. In this section, we'll learn the components of an argument, how to choose a good persuasive speech topic, and how to adapt and organize a persuasive message.

Foundation of Persuasion

Persuasive speaking seeks to influence the beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors of audience members. In order to persuade, a speaker has to construct arguments that appeal to audience members. Arguments form around three components: claim, evidence, and warrant. The claim is the statement that will be supported by evidence. Your thesis statement is the overarching claim for your speech, but you will make other claims within the speech to support the larger thesis. Evidence, also called grounds, supports the claim. The main points of your persuasive speech and the supporting material you include serve as evidence. For example, a speaker may make the following claim: "There should be a national law against texting while driving." The speaker could then support the claim by providing the following evidence: "Research from the US Department of Transportation has found that texting while driving creates a crash risk that is twenty-three times worse than driving while not distracted." The warrant is the underlying justification that connects the claim and the evidence. One warrant for the claim and evidence cited in this example is that the US Department of Transportation is an institution that funds research conducted by credible experts. An additional and more implicit warrant is that people shouldn't do things they know are unsafe.



Figure 2.1.1: The Toulmin Model

The quality of your evidence often impacts the strength of your warrant, and some warrants are stronger than others. A speaker could also provide evidence to support their claim advocating for a national ban on texting and driving by saying, "I have personally seen people almost wreck while trying to text." While this type of evidence can also be persuasive, it provides a different type and strength of warrant since it is based on personal experience. In general, the anecdotal evidence from personal experience would be given a weaker warrant than the evidence from the national research report. The same process works in our legal system when a judge evaluates the connection between a claim and evidence. If someone steals my car, I could say to the police, "I'm pretty sure Mario did it because when I said hi to him on campus the other day, he didn't say hi back, which proves he's mad at me." A judge faced with that evidence is unlikely to issue a warrant for Mario's arrest. Fingerprint evidence from the steering wheel that has been matched with a suspect is much more likely to warrant arrest.

As you put together a persuasive argument, you act as the judge. You can evaluate arguments that you come across in your research by analyzing the connection (the warrant) between the claim and the evidence. If the warrant is strong, you may want to highlight that argument in your speech. You may also be able to point out a weak warrant in an argument that goes against your position,

which you could then include in your speech. Every argument starts by putting together a claim and evidence, but arguments grow to include many interrelated units.

Choosing a Persuasive Speech Topic

As with any speech, topic selection is important and is influenced by many factors. Good persuasive speech topics are current, controversial, and have important implications for society. If your topic is currently being discussed on television, in newspapers, in the lounges in your dorm, or around your family's dinner table, then it's a current topic. A persuasive speech aimed at getting audience members to wear seat belts in cars wouldn't have much current relevance, given that statistics consistently show that most people wear seat belts. Giving the same speech would have been much more timely in the 1970s when there was a huge movement to increase seat-belt use.

Many topics that are current are also controversial, which is what gets them attention by the media and citizens. Current and controversial topics will be more engaging for your audience. A persuasive speech to encourage audience members to donate blood or recycle wouldn't be very controversial, since the benefits of both practices are widely agreed on. However, arguing that the restrictions on blood donation by men who have had sexual relations with men be lifted would be controversial. I must caution here that controversial is not the same as inflammatory. An inflammatory topic is one that evokes strong reactions from an audience for the sake of provoking a reaction. Being provocative for no good reason or choosing a topic that is extremist will damage your credibility and prevent you from achieving your speech goals.

You should also choose a topic that is important to you and to society as a whole. As we have already discussed in this book, our voices are powerful, as it is through communication that we participate and make change in society. Therefore we should take seriously opportunities to use our voices to speak publicly. Choosing a speech topic that has implications for society is probably a better application of your public speaking skills than choosing to persuade the audience that LeBron James is the best basketball player in the world or that Superman is a better hero than Spiderman. Although those topics may be very important to you, they don't carry the same social weight as many other topics you could choose to discuss. Remember that speakers have ethical obligations to the audience and should take the opportunity to speak seriously.

You will also want to choose a topic that connects to your own interests and passions. If you are an education major, it might make more sense to do a persuasive speech about funding for public education than the death penalty. If there are hot-button issues for you that make you get fired up and veins bulge out in your neck, then it may be a good idea to avoid those when speaking in an academic or professional context.



Figure 2.1.2: Michael Vadon – [Nigel Farage](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Choosing such topics may interfere with your ability to deliver a speech in a competent and ethical manner. You want to care about your topic, but you also want to be able to approach it in a way that's going to make people want to listen to you. Most people tune out speakers they perceive to be too ideologically entrenched and write them off as extremists or zealots.

You also want to ensure that your topic is actually persuasive. Draft your thesis statement as an "I believe" statement so your stance on an issue is clear. Also, think of your main points as reasons to support your thesis. Students end up with speeches that aren't

very persuasive in nature if they don't think of their main points as reasons. Identifying arguments that counter your thesis is also a good exercise to help ensure your topic is persuasive. If you can clearly and easily identify a competing thesis statement and supporting reasons, then your topic and approach are arguable.

Review of Tips for Choosing a Persuasive Speech Topic

1. Choose a topic that is current.
 - **Not current.** People should use seat belts.
 - **Current.** People should not text while driving.
2. Choose a topic that is controversial.
 - **Not controversial.** People should recycle.
 - **Controversial.** Recycling should be mandatory by law.
3. Choose a topic that meaningfully impacts society.
 - **Not as impactful.** Superman is the best superhero.
 - **Impactful.** Colleges and universities should adopt zero-tolerance bullying policies.
4. Write a thesis statement that is clearly argumentative and states your stance.
 - **Unclear thesis.** Homeschooling is common in the United States.
 - **Clear, argumentative thesis with stance.** Homeschooling does not provide the same benefits of traditional education and should be strictly monitored and limited.

Adapting Persuasive Messages

Competent speakers should consider their audience throughout the speech-making process. Given that persuasive messages seek to directly influence the audience in some way, audience adaptation becomes even more important. If possible, poll your audience to find out their orientation toward your thesis. I read my students' thesis statements aloud and have the class indicate whether they agree with, disagree with, or are neutral in regards to the proposition. It is unlikely that you will have a homogenous audience, meaning that there will probably be some who agree, some who disagree, and some who are neutral. So you may employ all of the following strategies, in varying degrees, in your persuasive speech.

When you have audience members who already agree with your proposition, you should focus on intensifying their agreement. You can also assume that they have foundational background knowledge of the topic, which means you can take the time to inform them about lesser-known aspects of a topic or cause to further reinforce their agreement. Rather than move these audience members from disagreement to agreement, you can focus on moving them from agreement to action. Remember, calls to action should be as specific as possible to help you capitalize on audience members' motivation in the moment so they are more likely to follow through on the action.

There are two main reasons audience members may be neutral in regards to your topic: (1) they are uninformed about the topic or (2) they do not think the topic affects them. In this case, you should focus on instilling a concern for the topic. Uninformed audiences may need background information before they can decide if they agree or disagree with your proposition. If the issue is familiar but audience members are neutral because they don't see how the topic affects them, focus on getting the audience's attention and demonstrating relevance. Remember that concrete and proxemic supporting materials will help an audience find relevance in a topic. Students who pick narrow or unfamiliar topics will have to work harder to persuade their audience, but neutral audiences often provide the most chance of achieving your speech goal since even a small change may move them into agreement.

When audience members disagree with your proposition, you should focus on changing their minds. To effectively persuade, you must be seen as a credible speaker. When an audience is hostile to your proposition, establishing credibility is even more important, as audience members may be quick to discount or discredit someone who doesn't appear prepared or doesn't present well-researched and supported information. Don't give an audience a chance to write you off before you even get to share your best evidence. When facing a disagreeable audience, the goal should also be small change. You may not be able to switch someone's position completely, but influencing him or her is still a success. Aside from establishing your credibility, you should also establish common ground with an audience.



Figure 2.1.3: Chris-Havard Berge – *Shaking Hands* – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Acknowledging areas of disagreement and logically refuting counterarguments in your speech is also a way to approach persuading an audience in disagreement, as it shows that you are open-minded enough to engage with other perspectives.

Determining Your Proposition

The proposition of your speech is the overall direction of the content and how that relates to the speech goal. A persuasive speech will fall primarily into one of three categories: propositions of fact, value, or policy. A speech may have elements of any of the three propositions, but you can usually determine the overall proposition of a speech from the specific purpose and thesis statements.

Propositions of fact focus on beliefs and try to establish that something “is or isn’t.” Propositions of value focus on persuading audience members that something is “good or bad,” “right or wrong,” or “desirable or undesirable.” Propositions of policy advocate that something “should or shouldn’t” be done. Since most persuasive speech topics can be approached as propositions of fact, value, or policy, it is a good idea to start thinking about what kind of proposition you want to make, as it will influence how you go about your research and writing. As you can see in the following example using the topic of global warming, the type of proposition changes the types of supporting materials you would need:

- **Proposition of fact.** Global warming **is caused** by increased greenhouse gases related to human activity.
- **Proposition of value.** America’s disproportionately large amount of pollution relative to other countries is **wrong**.
- **Proposition of policy.** There **should** be stricter emission restrictions on individual cars.

To support propositions of fact, you would want to present a logical argument based on objective facts that can then be used to build persuasive arguments. Propositions of value may require you to appeal more to your audience’s emotions and cite expert and lay testimony. Persuasive speeches about policy usually require you to research existing and previous laws or procedures and determine if any relevant legislation or propositions are currently being considered.

“Getting Critical”

Persuasion and Masculinity

The traditional view of rhetoric that started in ancient Greece and still informs much of our views on persuasion today has been critiqued for containing Western and masculine biases. Traditional persuasion has been linked to Western and masculine values of domination, competition, and change, which have been critiqued as coercive and violent (Gearhart, 1979).

Communication scholars proposed an alternative to traditional persuasive rhetoric in the form of invitational rhetoric. Invitational rhetoric differs from a traditional view of persuasive rhetoric that “attempts to win over an opponent, or to advocate the correctness of a single position in a very complex issue” (Bone et al., 2008). Instead, invitational rhetoric proposes a model of reaching consensus through dialogue. The goal is to create a climate in which growth and change can occur but isn’t required for one person to “win” an argument over another. Each person in a communication situation is acknowledged to have a standpoint that is valid but can still be influenced through the offering of alternative perspectives and the invitation to engage with and discuss these standpoints (Ryan & Natalle, 2001). Safety, value, and freedom are three important parts of invitational rhetoric. Safety involves a feeling of security in which audience members and speakers feel like their ideas and contributions will not be denigrated. Value refers to the notion that each person in a communication encounter is worthy of recognition and that people are willing to step outside their own perspectives to better understand others. Last, freedom is present in communication when communicators do not limit the thinking or decisions of others, allowing all participants to speak up (Bone et al., 2008).

Invitational rhetoric doesn’t claim that all persuasive rhetoric is violent. Instead, it acknowledges that some persuasion is violent and that the connection between persuasion and violence is worth exploring. Invitational rhetoric has the potential to

contribute to the civility of communication in our society. When we are civil, we are capable of engaging with and appreciating different perspectives while still understanding our own. People aren't attacked or reviled because their views diverge from ours. Rather than reducing the world to "us against them, black or white, and right or wrong," invitational rhetoric encourages us to acknowledge human perspectives in all their complexity (Bone et al., 2008).

1. What is your reaction to the claim that persuasion includes Western and masculine biases?
2. What are some strengths and weaknesses of the proposed alternatives to traditional persuasion?
3. In what situations might an invitational approach to persuasion be useful? In what situations might you want to rely on traditional models of persuasion?

Key Takeaways

- Arguments are formed by making claims that are supported by evidence. The underlying justification that connects the claim and evidence is the warrant. Arguments can have strong or weak warrants, which will make them more or less persuasive.
- Good persuasive speech topics are current, controversial (but not inflammatory), and important to the speaker and society.
- Speakers should adapt their persuasive approach based on audience members' orientation toward the proposal.
 - When audience members agree with the proposal, focus on intensifying their agreement and moving them to action.
 - When audience members are neutral in regards to the proposition, provide background information to better inform them about the issue and present information that demonstrates the relevance of the topic to the audience.
 - When audience members disagree with the proposal, focus on establishing your credibility, build common ground with the audience, and incorporate counterarguments and refute them.
- Persuasive speeches include the following propositions: fact, value, and policy.
 - Propositions of fact focus on establishing that something "is or isn't" or is "true or false."
 - Propositions of value focus on persuading an audience that something is "good or bad," "right or wrong," or "desirable or undesirable."
 - Propositions of policy advocate that something "should or shouldn't" be done.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: Give an example of persuasive messages that you might need to create in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic. Then do the same thing for persuasive messages you may receive.
2. To help ensure that your persuasive speech topic is persuasive and not informative, identify the claims, evidence, and warrants you may use in your argument. In addition, write a thesis statement that refutes your topic idea and identify evidence and warrants that could support that counterargument.
3. Determine if your speech is primarily a proposition of fact, value, or policy. How can you tell?

References

- Bone, J. E., Cindy L. Griffin, and T. M. Linda Scholz, "Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations of Rhetoric: Invitational Rhetoric and a Move toward Civility," *Western Journal of Communication* 72 (2008): 436.
- Gearhart, S. M., "The Womanization of Rhetoric," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979): 195–201.
- Ryan, K. J., and Elizabeth J. Natalle, "Fusing Horizons: Standpoint Hermenutics and Invitational Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31 (2001): 69–90.

This page titled [2.1: Persuasive Thinking](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

- [11.2: Persuasive Speaking](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Persuasive Strategies

Persuasive Strategies



brett jordan - [Rhetorical](#) - CC BY 2.0.

There are a lot of tools that speakers have in their toolboxes to persuade people. Some of the most famous of these tools are Aristotle's three forms of rhetorical proof: ethos, pathos, and logos. We will explore each of these theories of persuasion in turn. In this chapter, we will start with ethos, or the credibility of the speaker. We will explore three dimensions of ethos, including competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism/goodwill.

[3.1: Ethos](#)

[3.2: Logos](#)

[3.3: Pathos](#)

3: Persuasive Strategies is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

3.1: Ethos

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common persuasive strategies.
2. Explain how speakers develop ethos.

Persuasive Strategies

Do you think you are easily persuaded? If you are like most people, you aren't swayed easily to change your mind about something. Persuasion is difficult because changing views often makes people feel like they were either not informed or ill-informed, which also means they have to admit they were wrong about something. We will learn about nine persuasive strategies that you can use to more effectively influence audience members' beliefs, attitudes, and values. They are ethos, logos, pathos, positive motivation, negative motivation, cognitive dissonance, appeal to safety needs, appeal to social needs, and appeal to self-esteem needs. In this excerpt, we will learn about ethos.

Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

Ethos, logos, and pathos were Aristotle's three forms of rhetorical proof, meaning they were primary to his theories of persuasion. Ethos refers to the credibility of a speaker and includes three dimensions: competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism. The two most researched dimensions of credibility are competence and trustworthiness (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003).

Competence refers to the perception of a speaker's expertise in relation to the topic being discussed. A speaker can enhance their perceived competence by presenting a speech based in solid research and that is well organized and practiced. Competent speakers must know the content of their speech and be able to effectively deliver that content. Trustworthiness refers to the degree that audience members perceive a speaker to be presenting accurate, credible information in a nonmanipulative way. Perceptions of trustworthiness come from the content of the speech and the personality of the speaker. In terms of content, trustworthy speakers consider the audience throughout the speech-making process, present information in a balanced way, do not coerce the audience, cite credible sources, and follow the general principles of communication ethics. In terms of personality, trustworthy speakers are also friendly and warm (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003).

Dynamism refers to the degree to which audience members perceive a speaker to be outgoing and animated (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). Two components of dynamism are charisma and energy. Charisma refers to a mixture of abstract and concrete qualities that make a speaker attractive to an audience. Charismatic people usually know they are charismatic because they've been told that in their lives, and people have been attracted to them. The dynamism of the speaker can also be seen through their demonstration of goodwill toward the audience, or whether they have the audience's best interests at heart.



Figure 3.1.1: City Temple SDA Church, Dallas, Texas – February 2, 2013, Oakwood University, Dynamic Priase – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Unfortunately, charisma is difficult to intentionally develop, and some people seem to have a naturally charismatic personality, while others do not. Even though everyone can't embody the charismatic aspect of dynamism, the other component of dynamism, energy, is something that everyone can tap into. Communicating enthusiasm for your topic and audience by presenting relevant content and using engaging delivery strategies such as vocal variety and eye contact can increase your dynamism.

Speakers should strive to appeal to ethos, logos, and pathos within a speech. A speech built primarily on ethos might lead an audience to think that a speaker is full of himself or herself.

Review of Ethos

1. Ethos relates to the credibility of a speaker. Speakers develop ethos by
 - appearing competent, trustworthy, and dynamic;
 - sharing their credentials and/or relevant personal experience;
 - presenting a balanced and noncoercive argument;
 - citing credible sources;
 - using appropriate language and grammar;
 - being perceived as likable; and
 - appearing engaged with the topic and audience through effective delivery.

Review of Persuasive Strategies

- **Ethos.** Develops a speaker's credibility.

"Getting Competent"

Identifying Persuasive Strategies in Mary Fisher's "Whisper of AIDS" Speech

Mary Fisher's speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention, "A Whisper of AIDS," is one of the most moving and powerful speeches of the past few decades. She uses, more than once, all the persuasive strategies discussed in this chapter. The video and transcript of her speech can be found on the [American Rhetoric website](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/maryfisher1992rnc.html) (www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/maryfisher1992rnc.html). As you watch the speech, answer the following questions:

1. **Ethos.** List specific examples of how the speaker develops the following dimensions of credibility: competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism.

Key Takeaways

- Ethos refers to the credibility of a speaker and is composed of three dimensions: competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism. Speakers develop ethos by being prepared, citing credible research, presenting information in a nonmanipulative way, and using engaging delivery techniques.

Exercises

1. Ethos, or credibility, is composed of three dimensions: competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism. Of those dimensions, which is most important for you when judging someone's credibility and why?

References

- Cooper, M. D., and William L. Nothstine, *Power Persuasion: Moving an Ancient Art into the Media Age* (Greenwood, IN: Educational Video Group, 1996), 48.
- Fletcher, L., *How to Design and Deliver Speeches*, 7th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001), 342.
- Maslow, A. H., "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370–96.
- Stiff, J. B., and Paul A. Mongeau, *Persuasive Communication*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 105.

This page titled [3.1: Ethos](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

- **11.4: Persuasive Strategies** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

3.2: Logos

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common persuasive strategies.
2. Explain how speakers appeal to logos.

Persuasive Strategies

Do you think you are easily persuaded? If you are like most people, you aren't swayed easily to change your mind about something. Persuasion is difficult because changing views often makes people feel like they were either not informed or ill-informed, which also means they have to admit they were wrong about something. We will learn about nine persuasive strategies that you can use to more effectively influence audience members' beliefs, attitudes, and values. They are ethos, logos, pathos, positive motivation, negative motivation, cognitive dissonance, appeal to safety needs, appeal to social needs, and appeal to self-esteem needs. In this excerpt, we will learn about logos.

Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

Ethos, logos, and pathos were Aristotle's three forms of rhetorical proof, meaning they were primary to his theories of persuasion.

Logos refers to the reasoning or logic of an argument. The presence of fallacies would obviously undermine a speaker's appeal to logos. Speakers employ logos by presenting credible information as supporting material and verbally citing their sources during their speech. Using the guidelines from our earlier discussion of reasoning will also help a speaker create a rational appeal. Research shows that messages are more persuasive when arguments and their warrants are made explicit (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). Carefully choosing supporting material that is verifiable, specific, and unbiased can help a speaker appeal to logos. Speakers can also appeal to logos by citing personal experience and providing the credentials and/or qualifications of sources of information (Cooper & Nothstine, 1996). Presenting a rational and logical argument is important, but speakers can be more effective persuaders if they bring in and refute counterarguments. The most effective persuasive messages are those that present two sides of an argument and refute the opposing side, followed by single argument messages, followed by messages that present counterarguments but do not refute them (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). In short, by clearly showing an audience why one position is superior to another, speakers do not leave an audience to fill in the blanks of an argument, which could diminish the persuasive opportunity.

Speakers should strive to appeal to ethos, logos, and pathos within a speech. A speech full of facts and statistics appealing to logos would result in information overload.

Review of Logos

1. Logos relates to the reasoning and logic of an argument. Speakers appeal to logos by
 - presenting factual, objective information that serves as reasons to support the argument;
 - presenting a sufficient amount of relevant examples to support a proposition;
 - deriving conclusions from known information; and
 - using credible supporting material like expert testimony, definitions, statistics, and literal or historical analogies.

Review of Persuasive Strategies

- **Logos.** Evokes a rational, cognitive response from the audience.

"Getting Competent"

Identifying Persuasive Strategies in Mary Fisher's "Whisper of AIDS" Speech

Mary Fisher's speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention, "A Whisper of AIDS," is one of the most moving and powerful speeches of the past few decades. She uses, more than once, all the persuasive strategies discussed in this chapter. The video and transcript of her speech can be found on the [American Rhetoric website](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/maryfisher1992rnc.html) (www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/maryfisher1992rnc.html). As you watch the speech, answer the following questions:

1. **Logos.** List specific examples of how the speaker uses logic to persuade her audience.

Key Takeaways

- Logos refers to the reasoning or logic of an argument. Speakers appeal to logos by presenting factual objective information, using sound reasoning, and avoiding logical fallacies.

References

Cooper, M. D., and William L. Nothstine, *Power Persuasion: Moving an Ancient Art into the Media Age* (Greenwood, IN: Educational Video Group, 1996), 48.

Fletcher, L., *How to Design and Deliver Speeches*, 7th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001), 342.

Maslow, A. H., "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370–96.

Stiff, J. B., and Paul A. Mongeau, *Persuasive Communication*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 105.

This page titled [3.2: Logos](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

- [11.4: Persuasive Strategies](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

3.3: Pathos

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common persuasive strategies.
2. Explain how speakers appeal to pathos.

Persuasive Strategies

Do you think you are easily persuaded? If you are like most people, you aren't swayed easily to change your mind about something. Persuasion is difficult because changing views often makes people feel like they were either not informed or ill-informed, which also means they have to admit they were wrong about something. We will learn about nine persuasive strategies that you can use to more effectively influence audience members' beliefs, attitudes, and values. They are ethos, logos, pathos, positive motivation, negative motivation, cognitive dissonance, appeal to safety needs, appeal to social needs, and appeal to self-esteem needs. In this excerpt, we will learn about pathos, motivation, and appeals to needs.

Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

Ethos, logos, and pathos were Aristotle's three forms of rhetorical proof, meaning they were primary to his theories of persuasion.

Pathos refers to emotional appeals. Aristotle was suspicious of too much emotional appeal, yet this appears to have become more acceptable in public speaking. Stirring emotions in an audience is a way to get them involved in the speech, and involvement can create more opportunities for persuasion and action. Reading in the paper that a house was burglarized may get your attention, but think about how different your reaction would be if you found out it was your own home. Intentionally stirring someone's emotions to get them involved in a message that has little substance would be unethical. Yet such spellbinding speakers have taken advantage of people's emotions to get them to support causes, buy products, or engage in behaviors that they might not otherwise, if given the chance to see the faulty logic of a message.

Effective speakers should use emotional appeals that are also logically convincing, since audiences may be suspicious of a speech that is solely based on emotion. Emotional appeals are effective when you are trying to influence a behavior or you want your audience to take immediate action (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). Emotions lose their persuasive effect more quickly than other types of persuasive appeals. Since emotions are often reactionary, they fade relatively quickly when a person is removed from the provoking situation (Fletcher, 2001).

Emotional appeals are also difficult for some because they require honed delivery skills and the ability to use words powerfully and dramatically. The ability to use vocal variety, cadence, and repetition to rouse an audience's emotion is not easily attained. Think of how stirring Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech was due to his ability to evoke the emotions of the audience. Dr. King used powerful and creative language in conjunction with his vocalics to deliver one of the most famous speeches in our history. Using concrete and descriptive examples can paint a picture in your audience member's minds. Speakers can also use literal images, displayed using visual aids, to appeal to pathos.

Speakers should strive to appeal to ethos, logos, and pathos within a speech. Speakers who rely primarily on appeals to pathos may be seen as overly passionate, biased, or unable to see other viewpoints.

Review of Pathos

1. Pathos relates to the arousal of emotion through speech. Speakers appeal to pathos by
 - using vivid language to paint word pictures for audience members;
 - providing lay testimony (personal stories from self or others);
 - using figurative language such as metaphor, similes, and personification; and
 - using vocal variety, cadence, and repetition.

Motivation and Needs

Aristotle's three rhetorical proofs—ethos, logos, and pathos—have been employed as persuasive strategies for thousands of years. More recently, persuasive strategies have been identified based on theories and evidence related to human psychology. Although based in psychology, such persuasive strategies are regularly employed and researched in communication due to their role in advertising, marketing, politics, and interpersonal relationships. The psychologically based persuasive appeals we will discuss are positive and negative motivation and appeals to needs.

Positive and Negative Motivation

Positive and negative motivation are common persuasive strategies used by teachers, parents, and public speakers. Rewards can be used for positive motivation, and the threat of punishment or negative consequences can be used for negative motivation. We've already learned the importance of motivating an audience to listen to your message by making your content relevant and showing how it relates to their lives. We also learned an organizational pattern based on theories of motivation: Monroe's Motivated Sequence. When using positive motivation, speakers implicitly or explicitly convey to the audience that listening to their message or following their advice will lead to positive results. Conversely, negative motivation implies or states that failure to follow a speaker's advice will result in negative consequences. Positive and negative motivation as persuasive strategies match well with appeals to needs and will be discussed more next.

Appeals to Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that there are several layers of needs that human beings pursue. They include physiological, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943). Since these needs are fundamental to human survival and happiness, tapping into needs is a common persuasive strategy. Appeals to needs are often paired with positive or negative motivation, which can increase the persuasiveness of the message.

Figure 11.3 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Physiological needs form the base of the hierarchy of needs. The closer the needs are to the base, the more important they are for human survival. Speakers do not appeal to physiological needs. After all, a person who doesn't have food, air, or water isn't very likely to want to engage in persuasion, and it wouldn't be ethical to deny or promise these things to someone for persuasive gain. Some speakers attempt to appeal to self-actualization needs, but I argue that this is difficult to do ethically. Self-actualization refers to our need to achieve our highest potential, and these needs are much more intrapersonal than the others. We achieve our highest potential through things that are individual to us, and these are often things that we protect from outsiders. Some examples include pursuing higher education and intellectual fulfillment, pursuing art or music, or pursuing religious or spiritual fulfillment. These are often things we do by ourselves and for ourselves, so I like to think of this as sacred ground that should be left alone. Speakers are more likely to be successful at focusing on safety, social, and self-esteem needs.

We satisfy our safety needs when we work to preserve our safety and the safety of our loved ones. Speakers can combine appeals to safety with positive motivation by presenting information that will result in increased safety and security. Combining safety needs and negative motivation, a speaker may convey that audience members' safety and security will be put at risk if the speaker's message isn't followed. Combining negative motivation and safety needs depends on using some degree of fear as a motivator. Think of how the insurance industry relies on appeals to safety needs for their business. While this is not necessarily a bad strategy, it can be done more or less ethically.

Ethics of Using Fear Appeals

- Do not overuse fear appeals.
- The threat must be credible and supported by evidence.

- Empower the audience to address the threat.

I saw a perfect example of a persuasive appeal to safety while waiting at the shop for my car to be fixed. A pamphlet cover with a yellow and black message reading, “Warning,” and a stark black and white picture of a little boy picking up a ball with the back fender of a car a few feet from his head beckoned to me from across the room. The brochure was produced by an organization called Kids and Cars, whose tagline is “Love them, protect them.” While the cover of the brochure was designed to provoke the receiver and compel them to open the brochure, the information inside met the ethical guidelines for using fear appeals. The first statistic noted that at least two children a week are killed when they are backed over in a driveway or parking lot. The statistic is followed by safety tips to empower the audience to address the threat. You can see a video example of how this organization effectively uses fear appeals in this [Kids and Cars: Bye-Bye Syndrome](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tiuf6yd6Nis) video ([youtube.com/watch?v=Tiuf6yd6Nis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tiuf6yd6Nis)).

This video illustrates how a fear appeal aimed at safety needs can be persuasive. The goal is to get the attention of audience members and compel them to check out the information the organization provides. Since the information provided by the organization supports the credibility of the threat, empowers the audience to address the threat, and is free, this is an example of an ethical fear appeal.

Our social needs relate to our desire to belong to supportive and caring groups. We meet social needs through interpersonal relationships ranging from acquaintances to intimate partnerships. We also become part of interest groups or social or political groups that help create our sense of identity. The existence and power of peer pressure is a testament to the motivating power of social needs. People go to great lengths and sometimes make poor decisions they later regret to be a part of the “in-group.” Advertisers often rely on creating a sense of exclusivity to appeal to people’s social needs. Positive and negative motivation can be combined with social appeals. Positive motivation is present in messages that promise the receiver “in-group” status or belonging, and negative motivation can be seen in messages that persuade by saying, “Don’t be left out.” Although these arguments may rely on the bandwagon fallacy to varying degrees, they draw out insecurities people have about being in the “out-group.”

We all have a need to think well of ourselves and have others think well of us, which ties to our self-esteem needs. Messages that combine appeals to self-esteem needs and positive motivation often promise increases in respect and status. A financial planner may persuade by inviting a receiver to imagine prosperity that will result from accepting his or her message. A publicly supported radio station may persuade listeners to donate money to the station by highlighting a potential contribution to society. The health and beauty industries may persuade consumers to buy their products by promising increased attractiveness. While it may seem shallow to entertain such ego needs, they are an important part of our psychological makeup. Unfortunately, some sources of persuasive messages are more concerned with their own gain than the well-being of others and may take advantage of people’s insecurities in order to advance their persuasive message. Instead, ethical speakers should use appeals to self-esteem that focus on prosperity, contribution, and attractiveness in ways that empower listeners.

Review of Persuasive Strategies

- **Pathos.** Evokes an emotional response from the audience.
- **Positive motivation.** Promises rewards if the speaker’s message is accepted.
- **Negative motivation.** Promises negative consequences if a speaker’s message is rejected.
- **Appeals to safety needs.** Evokes an audience’s concern for their safety and the safety of their loved ones.
- **Appeals to social needs.** Evokes an audience’s need for belonging and inclusion.
- **Appeals to self-esteem needs.** Evokes an audience’s need to think well of themselves and have others think well of them, too.

“Getting Competent”

Identifying Persuasive Strategies in Mary Fisher’s “Whisper of AIDS” Speech

Mary Fisher’s speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention, “A Whisper of AIDS,” is one of the most moving and powerful speeches of the past few decades. She uses, more than once, all the persuasive strategies discussed in this chapter. The video and transcript of her speech can be found on the [American Rhetoric website](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/maryfisher1992rnc.html) (www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/maryfisher1992rnc.html). As you watch the speech, answer the following questions:

1. **Pathos.** How did the speaker appeal to emotion? What metaphors did she use? What other communicative strategies (wording, imagery, etc.) appealed to your emotions?
2. List at least one example of how the speaker uses positive motivation.
3. List at least one example of how the speaker uses negative motivation.

4. List at least one example of how the speaker appeals to safety needs.
5. List at least one example of how the speaker appeals to social needs.

Key Takeaways

- Pathos refers to emotional appeals. Speakers appeal to pathos by using vivid language, including personal stories, and using figurative language.
- Speakers can combine positive and negative motivation with appeals to safety, social, or self-esteem needs in order to persuade.

Exercises

1. How ethical do you think it is for a speaker to rely on fear appeals? When do fear appeals cross the line?
2. Imagine that you will be delivering a persuasive speech to a group of prospective students considering attending your school. What could you say that would appeal to their safety needs? Their social needs? Their self-esteem needs?

References

Cooper, M. D., and William L. Nothstine, *Power Persuasion: Moving an Ancient Art into the Media Age* (Greenwood, IN: Educational Video Group, 1996), 48.

Fletcher, L., *How to Design and Deliver Speeches*, 7th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001), 342.

Maslow, A. H., "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370–96.

Stiff, J. B., and Paul A. Mongeau, *Persuasive Communication*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 105.

This page titled [3.3: Pathos](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

- [11.4: Persuasive Strategies](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Preparing a Speech

- [4.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic](#)
- [4.2: Researching and Supporting Your Speech](#)
- [4.3: Organizing](#)
- [4.4: Outlining](#)

This page titled [4: Preparing a Speech](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic

Learning Objectives

1. Employ audience analysis.
2. Determine the general purpose of a speech.
3. List strategies for narrowing a speech topic.
4. Compose an audience-centered, specific purpose statement for a speech.
5. Compose a thesis statement that summarizes the central idea of a speech.

There are many steps that go into the speech-making process. Many people do not approach speech preparation in an informed and systematic way, which results in many poorly planned or executed speeches that are not pleasant to sit through as an audience member and don't reflect well on the speaker. Good speaking skills can help you stand out from the crowd in increasingly competitive environments. While a polished delivery is important and will be discussed more in the chapter titled "Delivering a Speech", good speaking skills must be practiced much earlier in the speech-making process.

Analyze Your Audience

Audience analysis is key for a speaker to achieve his or her speech goal. One of the first questions you should ask yourself is "Who is my audience?" While there are some generalizations you can make about an audience, a competent speaker always assumes there is a diversity of opinion and background among his or her listeners. You can't assume from looking that everyone in your audience is the same age, race, sexual orientation, religion, or many other factors. Even if you did have a fairly homogenous audience, with only one or two people who don't match up, you should still consider those one or two people. When I have a class with one or two older students, I still consider the different age demographics even though twenty other students are eighteen to twenty-two years old. In short, a good speaker shouldn't intentionally alienate even one audience member. Of course, a speaker could still unintentionally alienate certain audience members, especially in persuasive speaking situations. While this may be unavoidable, speakers can still think critically about what content they include in the speech and the effects it may have.



Good speakers should always assume a diversity of backgrounds and opinions among their audience members. TEDx University of Tulsa – [Audience](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Even though you should remain conscious of the differences among audience members, you can also focus on commonalities. When delivering a speech in a college classroom, you can rightfully assume that everyone in your audience is currently living in the general area of the school, is enrolled at the school, and is currently taking the same speech class. In professional speeches, you can often assume that everyone is part of the same professional organization if you present at a conference, employed at the same place or in the same field if you are giving a sales presentation, or experiencing the nervousness of starting a new job if you are leading an orientation or training. You may not be able to assume much more, but that's enough to add some tailored points to your speech that will make the content more relevant.

Demographic Audience Analysis

Demographics are broad sociocultural categories, such as age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, education level, religion, ethnicity, and nationality that are used to segment a larger population. Since you are always going to have diverse demographics among your audience members, it would be unwise to focus solely on one group over another. As a speaker, being aware of diverse demographics is useful in that you can tailor and vary examples to appeal to different groups of people. As you can read in the “Getting Real” feature in this chapter, engaging in audience segmentation based on demographics is much more targeted in some careers.

Psychological Audience Analysis

Psychological audience analysis considers your audience’s psychological dispositions toward the topic, speaker, and occasion and how their attitudes, beliefs, and values inform those dispositions. When considering your audience’s disposition toward your topic, you want to assess your audience’s knowledge of the subject. You wouldn’t include a lesson on calculus in an introductory math course. You also wouldn’t go into the intricacies of a heart transplant to an audience with no medical training. A speech on how to give a speech would be redundant in a public speaking class, but it could be useful for high school students or older adults who are going through a career transition. Students in my class recently had to theme their informative speeches around the topic of renewable energy. They were able to tie their various topics to a new renewable energy production plant that opened that semester on our campus. They had to be careful not to overrun their speech with scientific jargon. One student compared the concept of biogasification to the natural gas production that comes from living creatures like humans and cows. This comparison got a laugh from the audience and also made the seemingly complex concept more understandable.

The audience may or may not have preconceptions about you as a speaker. One way to positively engage your audience is to make sure you establish your credibility. In terms of credibility, you want the audience to see you as competent, trustworthy, and engaging. If the audience is already familiar with you, they may already see you as a credible speaker because they’ve seen you speak before, have heard other people evaluate you positively, or know that you have credentials and/or experience that make you competent. If you know you have a reputation that isn’t as positive, you will want to work hard to overcome those perceptions. To establish your trustworthiness, you want to incorporate good supporting material into your speech, verbally cite sources, and present information and arguments in a balanced, noncoercive, and nonmanipulative way. To establish yourself as engaging, you want to have a well-delivered speech, which requires you to practice, get feedback, and practice some more. Your verbal and nonverbal delivery should be fluent and appropriate to the audience and occasion. We will discuss speech delivery more in the chapter titled “Delivering a Speech”.

The circumstances that led your audience to attend your speech will affect their view of the occasion. A captive audience includes people who are required to attend your presentation. Mandatory meetings are common in workplace settings. Whether you are presenting for a group of your employees, coworkers, classmates, or even residents in your dorm if you are a resident advisor, you shouldn’t let the fact that the meeting is required give you license to give a half-hearted speech. In fact, you may want to build common ground with your audience to overcome any potential resentment for the required gathering. In your speech class, your classmates are captive audience members.



When you speak in a classroom or at a business meeting, you may have a captive audience. Presbyterian Women – [Business Meeting](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

View having a captive classroom audience as a challenge, and use this space as a public speaking testing laboratory. You can try new things and push your boundaries more, because this audience is very forgiving and understanding since they have to go through the same things you do. In general, you may have to work harder to maintain the attention of a captive audience. Since coworkers may expect to hear the same content they hear every time this particular meeting comes around, and classmates have to sit through dozens and dozens of speeches, use your speech as an opportunity to stand out from the crowd or from what's been done before.

A voluntary audience includes people who have decided to come hear your speech. This is perhaps one of the best compliments a speaker can receive, even before they've delivered the speech. Speaking for a voluntary audience often makes me have more speaking anxiety than I do when speaking in front of my class or my colleagues, because I know the audience may have preconceived notions or expectations that I must live up to. This is something to be aware of if you are used to speaking in front of captive audiences. To help adapt to a voluntary audience, ask yourself what the audience members expect. Why are they here? If they've decided to come and see you, they must be interested in your topic or you as a speaker. Perhaps you have a reputation for being humorous, being able to translate complicated information into more digestible parts, or being interactive with the audience and responding to questions. Whatever the reason or reasons, it's important to make sure you deliver on those aspects. If people are voluntarily giving up their time to hear you, you want to make sure they get what they expected.

A final aspect of psychological audience analysis involves considering the audience's attitudes, beliefs, and values, as they will influence all the perceptions mentioned previously. As you can see in Figure 9.1, we can think of our attitudes, beliefs, and values as layers that make up our perception and knowledge.

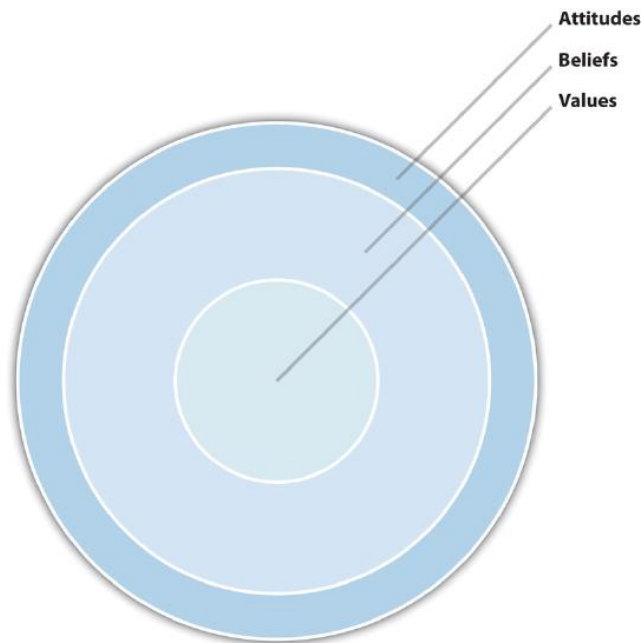


Figure 9.1 Psychological Analysis: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values

At the outermost level, attitudes are our likes and dislikes, and they are easier to influence than beliefs or values because they are often reactionary. If you've ever followed the approval rating of a politician, you know that people's likes and dislikes change frequently and can change dramatically based on recent developments. This is also true interpersonally. For those of you who have siblings, think about how you can go from liking your sisters or brothers, maybe because they did something nice for you, to disliking them because they upset you. This seesaw of attitudes can go up and down over the course of a day or even a few minutes, but it can still be useful for a speaker to consider. If there is something going on in popular culture or current events that has captured people's attention and favor or disfavor, then you can tap into that as a speaker to better relate to your audience.

When considering beliefs, we are dealing with what we believe "is or isn't" or "true or false." We come to hold our beliefs based on what we are taught, experience for ourselves, or have faith in. Our beliefs change if we encounter new information or experiences that counter previous ones. As people age and experience more, their beliefs are likely to change, which is natural.

Our values deal with what we view as right or wrong, good or bad. Our values do change over time but usually as a result of a life transition or life-changing event such as a birth, death, or trauma. For example, when many people leave their parents' control for the first time and move away from home, they have a shift in values that occurs as they make this important and challenging life transition. In summary, audiences enter a speaking situation with various psychological dispositions, and considering what those may be can help speakers adapt their messages and better meet their speech goals.

Situational Audience Analysis

Situational audience analysis considers the physical surroundings and setting of a speech. It's always a good idea to visit the place you will be speaking ahead of time so you will know what to expect. If you expect to have a lectern and arrive to find only a table at the front of the room, that little difference could end up increasing your anxiety and diminishing your speaking effectiveness. I have traveled to many different universities, conference facilities, and organizations to speak, and I always ask my host to show me the room I will be speaking in. I take note of the seating arrangement, the presence of technology and its compatibility with what I plan on using, the layout of the room including windows and doors, and anything else that's relevant to my speech. Knowing your physical setting ahead of time allows you to alter the physical setting, when possible, or alter your message or speaking strategies if needed. Sometimes I open or close blinds, move seats around, plug my computer in to make sure it works, or even practice some or all of my presentation. I have also revised a speech to be more interactive and informal when I realized I would speak in a lounge rather than a classroom or lecture hall.

📌 “Getting Real”: Marketing Careers and Audience Segmentation

Advertisers and marketers use sophisticated people and programs to ensure that their message is targeted to particular audiences. These people are often called marketing specialists (Career Cruising, 2012). They research products and trends in markets and consumer behaviors and may work for advertising agencies, marketing firms, consulting firms, or other types of agencies or businesses. The pay range is varied, from \$35,000 to \$166,000 a year for most, and good communication, creativity, and analytic thinking skills are a must. If you stop to think about it, we are all targeted based on our demographics, psychographics, and life situations. Whereas advertisers used to engage in more mass marketing, to undifferentiated receivers, the categories are now much more refined and the target audiences more defined. We only need to look at the recent increase in marketing toward “tweens” or the eight-to-twelve age group. Although this group was once lumped in with younger kids or older teens, they are now targeted because they have “more of their own money to spend and more influence over familial decisions than ever before” (Siegel et al., 2004).

Whether it’s Red Bull aggressively marketing to the college-aged group or gyms marketing to single, working, young adults, much thought and effort goes into crafting a message with a particular receiver in mind. Some companies even create an “ideal customer,” going as far as to name the person, create a psychological and behavioral profile for them, and talk about them as if they were real during message development (Solomon, 2006).

Facebook has also revolutionized targeted marketing, which has led to some controversy and backlash (Greenwell, 2012). The “Like” button on Facebook that was introduced in 2010 is now popping up on news sites, company pages, and other websites. When you click the “Like” button, you are providing important information about your consumer behaviors that can then be fed into complicated algorithms that also incorporate demographic and psychographic data pulled from your Facebook profile and even information from your friends. All this is in an effort to more directly market to you, which became easier in January of 2012 when Facebook started allowing targeted advertisements to go directly into users’ “newsfeeds.”

Markets are obviously segmented based on demographics like gender and age, but here are some other categories and examples of market segments: geography (region, city size, climate), lifestyle (couch potato, economical/frugal, outdoorsy, status seeker), family life cycle (bachelors, newlyweds, full nesters, empty nesters), and perceived benefit of use (convenience, durability, value for the money, social acceptance), just to name a few (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).

1. Make a list of the various segments you think marketers might put you in. Have you ever thought about these before? Why or why not?
2. Take note of the advertisements that catch your eye over a couple days. Do they match up with any of the segments you listed in the first question?
3. Are there any groups that you think it would be unethical to segment and target for marketing? Explain your answer.

Determine Your Purpose, Topic, and Thesis

General Purpose

Your speeches will usually fall into one of three categories. In some cases we speak to inform, meaning we attempt to teach our audience using factual objective evidence. In other cases, we speak to persuade, as we try to influence an audience’s beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors. Last, we may speak to entertain or amuse our audience. In summary, the general purpose of your speech will be to inform, to persuade, or to entertain.

You can see various topics that may fit into the three general purposes for speaking in Table 9.1. Some of the topics listed could fall into another general purpose category depending on how the speaker approached the topic, or they could contain elements of more than one general purpose. For example, you may have to inform your audience about your topic in one main point before you can persuade them, or you may include some entertaining elements in an informative or persuasive speech to help make the content more engaging for the audience. There should not be elements of persuasion included in an informative speech, however, since persuading is contrary to the objective approach that defines an informative general purpose. In any case, while there may be some overlap between general purposes, most speeches can be placed into one of the categories based on the overall content of the speech.

Table 9.1 General Purposes and Speech Topics

To Inform	To Persuade	To Entertain

To Inform	To Persuade	To Entertain
Civil rights movement	Gun control	Comedic monologue
Renewable energy	Privacy rights	My craziest adventure
Reality television	Prison reform	A “roast”

Choosing a Topic

Once you have determined (or been assigned) your general purpose, you can begin the process of choosing a topic. In this class, you may be given the option to choose any topic for your informative or persuasive speech, but in most academic, professional, and personal settings, there will be some parameters set that will help guide your topic selection. Speeches in future classes will likely be organized around the content being covered in the class. Speeches delivered at work will usually be directed toward a specific goal such as welcoming new employees, informing about changes in workplace policies, or presenting quarterly sales figures. We are also usually compelled to speak about specific things in our personal lives, like addressing a problem at our child’s school by speaking out at a school board meeting. In short, it’s not often that you’ll be starting from scratch when you begin to choose a topic.

Whether you’ve received parameters that narrow your topic range or not, the first step in choosing a topic is brainstorming. Brainstorming involves generating many potential topic ideas in a fast-paced and nonjudgmental manner. Brainstorming can take place multiple times as you narrow your topic. For example, you may begin by brainstorming a list of your personal interests that can then be narrowed down to a speech topic. It makes sense that you will enjoy speaking about something that you care about or find interesting. The research and writing will be more interesting, and the delivery will be easier since you won’t have to fake enthusiasm for your topic. Speaking about something you’re familiar with and interested in can also help you manage speaking anxiety. While it’s good to start with your personal interests, some speakers may get stuck here if they don’t feel like they can make their interests relevant to the audience. In that case, you can look around for ideas. If your topic is something that’s being discussed in newspapers, on television, in the lounge of your dorm, or around your family’s dinner table, then it’s likely to be of interest and be relevant since it’s current. Figure 9.1 shows how brainstorming works in stages. A list of topics that interest the speaker are on the top row. The speaker can brainstorm subtopics for each idea to see which one may work the best. In this case, the speaker could decide to focus his or her informative speech on three common ways people come to own dogs: through breeders, pet stores, or shelters.

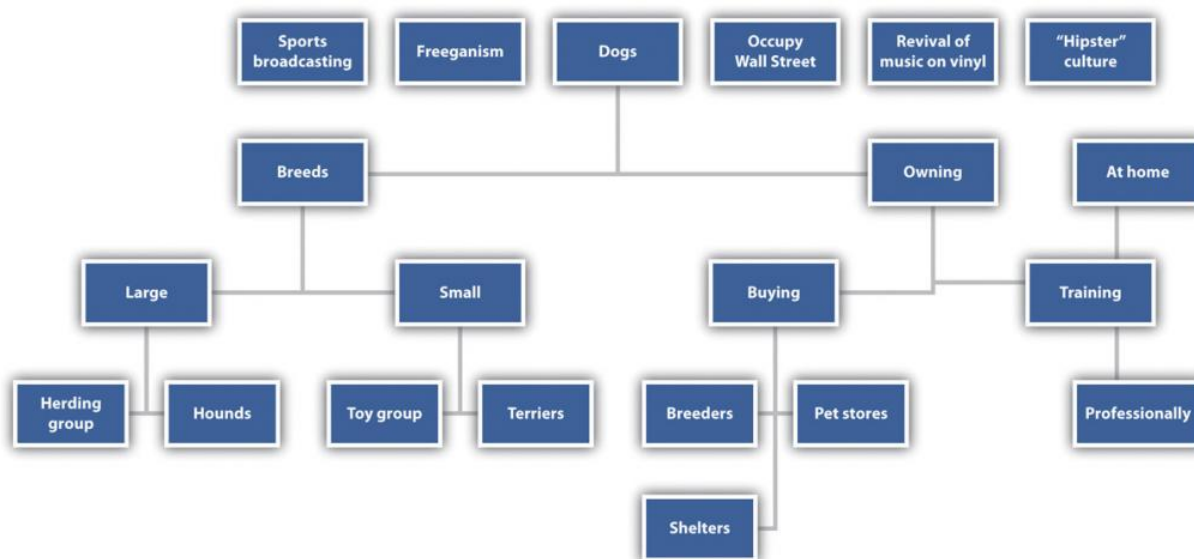


Figure 9.2 Brainstorming and Narrowing a Topic

Overall you can follow these tips as you select and narrow your topic:

1. Brainstorm topics that you are familiar with, interest you, and/or are currently topics of discussion.
2. Choose a topic appropriate for the assignment/occasion.
3. Choose a topic that you can make relevant to your audience.

4. Choose a topic that you have the resources to research (access to information, people to interview, etc.).

Specific Purpose

Once you have brainstormed, narrowed, and chosen your topic, you can begin to draft your specific purpose statement. Your specific purpose is a one-sentence statement that includes the objective you want to accomplish in your speech. You do not speak aloud your specific purpose during your speech; you use it to guide your researching, organizing, and writing. A good specific purpose statement is audience centered, agrees with the general purpose, addresses one main idea, and is realistic.

An audience-centered specific purpose statement usually contains an explicit reference to the audience—for example, “my audience” or “the audience.” Since a speaker may want to see if he or she effectively met his or her specific purpose, the objective should be written in such a way that it could be measured or assessed, and since a speaker actually wants to achieve his or her speech goal, the specific purpose should also be realistic. You won’t be able to teach the audience a foreign language or persuade an atheist to Christianity in a six- to nine-minute speech. The following is a good example of a good specific purpose statement for an informative speech: “By the end of my speech, the audience will be better informed about the effects the green movement has had on schools.” The statement is audience centered and matches with the general purpose by stating, “the audience will be better informed.” The speaker could also test this specific purpose by asking the audience to write down, at the end of the speech, three effects the green movement has had on schools.

Thesis Statement

Your thesis statement is a one-sentence summary of the central idea of your speech that you either explain or defend. You would explain the thesis statement for an informative speech, since these speeches are based on factual, objective material. You would defend your thesis statement for a persuasive speech, because these speeches are argumentative and your thesis should clearly indicate a stance on a particular issue. In order to make sure your thesis is argumentative and your stance clear, it is helpful to start your thesis with the words “I believe.” When starting to work on a persuasive speech, it can also be beneficial to write out a counterargument to your thesis to ensure that it is arguable.

The thesis statement is different from the specific purpose in two main ways. First, the thesis statement is content centered, while the specific purpose statement is audience centered. Second, the thesis statement is incorporated into the spoken portion of your speech, while the specific purpose serves as a guide for your research and writing and an objective that you can measure. A good thesis statement is declarative, agrees with the general and specific purposes, and focuses and narrows your topic. Although you will likely end up revising and refining your thesis as you research and write, it is good to draft a thesis statement soon after drafting a specific purpose to help guide your progress. As with the specific purpose statement, your thesis helps ensure that your research, organizing, and writing are focused so you don’t end up wasting time with irrelevant materials. Keep your specific purpose and thesis statement handy (drafting them at the top of your working outline is a good idea) so you can reference them often. The following examples show how a general purpose, specific purpose, and thesis statement match up with a topic area:

1. Topic: My Craziest Adventure

General purpose: To Entertain

Specific purpose: By the end of my speech, the audience will appreciate the lasting memories that result from an eighteen-year-old visiting New Orleans for the first time.

Thesis statement: New Orleans offers young tourists many opportunities for fun and excitement.

2. Topic: Renewable Energy

General purpose: To Inform

Specific purpose: By the end of my speech, the audience will be able to explain the basics of using biomass as fuel.

Thesis statement: Biomass is a renewable resource that releases gases that can be used for fuel.

3. Topic: Privacy Rights

General purpose: To Persuade

Specific purpose: By the end of my speech, my audience will believe that parents should not be able to use tracking devices to monitor their teenage child’s activities.

Thesis statement: I believe that it is a violation of a child’s privacy to be electronically monitored by his or her parents.

Key Takeaways

- Getting integrated: Public speaking training builds transferrable skills that are useful in your college classes, career, personal relationships, and civic life.
- Demographic, psychographic, and situational audience analysis help tailor your speech content to your audience.
- The general and specific purposes of your speech are based on the speaking occasion and include the objective you would like to accomplish by the end of your speech. Determining these early in the speech-making process will help focus your research and writing.
- Brainstorm to identify topics that fit within your interests, and then narrow your topic based on audience analysis and the guidelines provided.
- A thesis statement summarizes the central idea of your speech and will be explained or defended using supporting material. Referencing your thesis statement often will help ensure that your speech is coherent.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: Why do some people dread public speaking or just want to avoid it? Identify some potential benefits of public speaking in academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts that might make people see public speaking in a different light.
2. Conduct some preliminary audience analysis of your class and your classroom. What are some demographics that might be useful for you to consider? What might be some attitudes, beliefs, and values people have that might be relevant to your speech topics? What situational factors might you want to consider before giving your speech?
3. Pay attention to the news (in the paper, on the Internet, television, or radio). Identify two informative and two persuasive speech topics that are based in current events.

References

- Career Cruising, “Marketing Specialist,” *Career Cruising: Explore Careers*, accessed January 24, 2012, <http://www.careercruising.com>.
- Greenwell, D., “You Might Not ‘Like’ Facebook So Much after Reading This...” *The Times (London)*, sec. T2, January 13, 2012, 4–5.
- Siegel, D. L., Timothy J. Coffey, and Gregory Livingston, *The Great Tween Buying Machine* (Chicago, IL: Dearborn Trade, 2004).
- Solomon, M. R., *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2006), 10–11.

This page titled [4.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- **9.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

4.2: Researching and Supporting Your Speech

Learning Objectives

1. Identify appropriate methods for conducting college-level research.
2. Distinguish among various types of sources.
3. Evaluate the credibility of sources.
4. Identify various types of supporting material.
5. Employ visual aids that enhance a speaker's message.

We live in an age where access to information is more convenient than ever before. The days of photocopying journal articles in the stacks of the library or looking up newspaper articles on microfilm are over for most. Yet, even though we have all this information at our fingertips, research skills are more important than ever. Our challenge now is not accessing information but discerning what information is credible and relevant. Even though it may sound inconvenient to have to physically go to the library, students who did research before the digital revolution did not have to worry as much about discerning. If you found a source in the library, you could be assured of its credibility because a librarian had subscribed to or purchased that content. When you use Internet resources like Google or Wikipedia, you have no guarantees about some of the content that comes up.

Finding Supporting Material

As was noted in Section 9.1, it's good to speak about something you are already familiar with. So existing knowledge forms the first step of your research process. Depending on how familiar you are with a topic, you will need to do more or less background research before you actually start incorporating sources to support your speech. Background research is just a review of summaries available for your topic that helps refresh or create your knowledge about the subject. It is not the more focused and academic research that you will actually use to support and verbally cite in your speech. Figure 9.3 illustrates the research process. Note that you may go through some of these steps more than once.

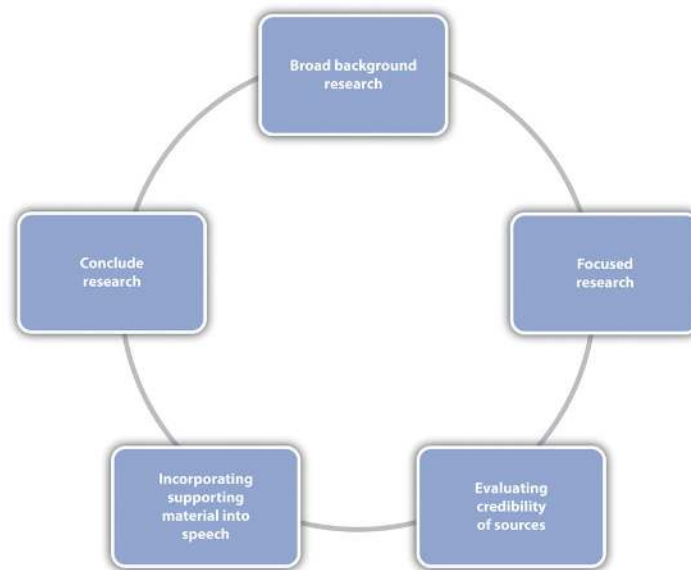


Figure 9.3 Research Process

I will reiterate several times in this chapter that your first step for research in college should be library resources, not Google or Bing or other general search engines. In most cases, you can still do your library research from the comfort of a computer, which makes it as accessible as Google but gives you much better results. Excellent and underutilized resources at college and university libraries are reference librarians. Reference librarians are not like the people who likely staffed your high school library. They are information-retrieval experts. At most colleges and universities, you can find a reference librarian who has at least a master's degree in library and information sciences, and at some larger or specialized schools, reference librarians have doctoral degrees. I liken research to a maze, and reference librarians can help you navigate the maze. There may be dead ends, but there's always another way around to reach the end goal. Unfortunately, many students hit their first dead end and give up or assume that there's

not enough research out there to support their speech. Trust me, if you've thought of a topic to do your speech on, someone else has thought of it, too, and people have written and published about it. Reference librarians can help you find that information. I recommend that you meet with a reference librarian face-to-face and take your assignment sheet and topic idea with you. In most cases, students report that they came away with more information than they needed, which is good because you can then narrow that down to the best information. If you can't meet with a reference librarian face-to-face, many schools now offer the option to do a live chat with a reference librarian, and you can also contact them by e-mail or phone.



College and university libraries are often at the cutting edge of information retrieval for academic research. Andre Vandal – The Morrin College Library – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Aside from the human resources available in the library, you can also use electronic resources such as library databases. Library databases help you access more credible and scholarly information than what you will find using general Internet searches. These databases are quite expensive, and you can't access them as a regular citizen without paying for them. Luckily, some of your tuition dollars go to pay for subscriptions to these databases that you can then access as a student. Through these databases, you can access newspapers, magazines, journals, and books from around the world. Of course, libraries also house stores of physical resources like DVDs, books, academic journals, newspapers, and popular magazines. You can usually browse your library's physical collection through an online catalog search. A trip to the library to browse is especially useful for books. Since most university libraries use the Library of Congress classification system, books are organized by topic. That means if you find a good book using the online catalog and go to the library to get it, you should take a moment to look around that book, because the other books in that area will be topically related. On many occasions, I have used this tip and gone to the library for one book but left with several.

Although Google is not usually the best first stop for conducting college-level research, Google Scholar is a separate search engine that narrows results down to scholarly materials. This version of Google has improved much over the past few years and has served as a good resource for my research, even for this book. A strength of Google Scholar is that you can easily search for and find articles that aren't confined to a particular library database. Basically, the pool of resources you are searching is much larger than what you would have using a library database. The challenge is that you have no way of knowing if the articles that come up are available to you in full-text format. As noted earlier, most academic journal articles are found in databases that require users to pay subscription fees. So you are often only able to access the abstracts of articles or excerpts from books that come up in a Google Scholar search. You can use that information to check your library to see if the article is available in full-text format, but if it isn't, you have to go back to the search results. When you access Google Scholar on a campus network that subscribes to academic databases, however, you can sometimes click through directly to full-text articles. Although this resource is still being improved, it may be a useful alternative or backup when other search strategies are leading to dead ends.

Types of Sources

There are several different types of sources that may be relevant for your speech topic. Those include periodicals, newspapers, books, reference tools, interviews, and websites. It is important that you know how to evaluate the credibility of each type of source material.

Periodicals

Periodicals include magazines and journals, as they are published periodically. There are many library databases that can access periodicals from around the world and from years past. A common database is Academic Search Premiere (a similar version is Academic Search Complete). Many databases, like this one, allow you to narrow your search terms, which can be very helpful as

you try to find good sources that are relevant to your topic. You may start by typing a key word into the first box and searching. Sometimes a general search like this can yield thousands of results, which you obviously wouldn't have time to look through. In this case you may limit your search to results that have your keyword in the abstract, which is the author-supplied summary of the source. If there are still too many results, you may limit your search to results that have your keyword in the title. At this point, you may have reduced those ten thousand results down to a handful, which is much more manageable.

Within your search results, you will need to distinguish between magazines and academic journals. In general, academic journals are considered more scholarly and credible than magazines because most of the content in them is peer reviewed. The peer-review process is the most rigorous form of review, which takes several months to years and ensures that the information that is published has been vetted and approved by numerous experts on the subject. Academic journals are usually affiliated with professional organizations rather than for-profit corporations, and neither authors nor editors are paid for their contributions. For example, the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* is one of the oldest journals in communication studies and is published by the National Communication Association.



The National Communication Association publishes several peer-reviewed academic journals. The National Communication Association's office in Washington D.C., courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#) – CC BY-SA 3.0.

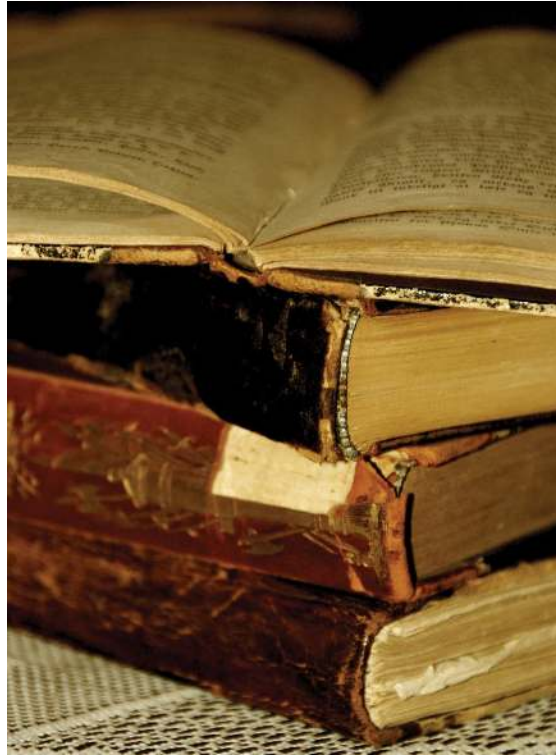
If your instructor wants you to have sources from academic journals, you can often click a box to limit your search results to those that are “peer reviewed.” There are also subject-specific databases you can use to find periodicals. For example, *Communication and Mass Media Complete* is a database that includes articles from hundreds of journals related to communication studies. It may be acceptable for you to include magazine sources in your speech, but you should still consider the credibility of the source. Magazines like *Scientific American* and *Time* are generally more credible and reliable than sources like *People* or *Entertainment Weekly*.

Newspapers and Books

Newspapers and books can be excellent sources but must still be evaluated for relevance and credibility. Newspapers are good for topics that are developing quickly, as they are updated daily. While there are well-known newspapers of record like the *New York Times*, smaller local papers can also be credible and relevant if your speech topic doesn't have national or international reach. You can access local, national, and international newspapers through electronic databases like LexisNexis. If a search result comes up that doesn't have a byline with an author's name or an organization like the Associated Press or Reuters cited, then it might be an editorial. Editorials may also have bylines, which make them look like traditional newspaper articles even though they are opinion based. It is important to distinguish between news articles and editorials because editorials are usually not objective and do not go

through the same review process that a news story does before it's published. It's also important to know the background of your paper. Some newspapers are more tabloid focused or may be published by a specific interest group that has an agenda and biases. So it's usually better to go with a newspaper that is recognized as the newspaper of record for a particular area.

Books are good for a variety of subjects and are useful for in-depth research that you can't get as regularly from newspapers or magazines. Edited books with multiple chapters by different authors can be especially good to get a variety of perspectives on a topic.



Don't assume that you can't find a book relevant to a topic that is fairly recent, since books may be published within a year of a major event. [Wikimedia Commons](#) – CC BY 2.0.

To evaluate the credibility of a book, you'll want to know some things about the author. You can usually find this information at the front or back of the book. If an author is a credentialed and recognized expert in his or her area, the book will be more credible. But just because someone wrote a book on a subject doesn't mean he or she is the most credible source. For example, a quick search online brings up many books related to public speaking that are written by people who have no formal training in communication or speech. While they may have public speaking experience that can help them get a book deal with a certain publisher, that alone wouldn't qualify them to write a textbook, as textbook authors are expected to be credentialed experts—that is, people with experience and advanced training/degrees in their area. The publisher of a book can also be an indicator of credibility. Books published by university/academic presses (University of Chicago Press, Duke University Press) are considered more credible than books published by trade presses (Penguin, Random House), because they are often peer reviewed and they are not primarily profit driven.

Reference Tools

The transition to college-level research means turning more toward primary sources and away from general reference materials. Primary sources are written by people with firsthand experiences with an event or researchers/scholars who conducted original research. Unfortunately, many college students are reluctant to give up their reliance on reference tools like dictionaries and encyclopedias. While reference tools like dictionaries and encyclopedias are excellent for providing a speaker with a background on a topic, they should not be the foundation of your research unless they are academic and/or specialized.

Dictionaries are handy tools when we aren't familiar with a particular word. However, citing a dictionary like *Webster's* as a source in your speech is often unnecessary. I tell my students that *Webster's Dictionary* is useful when you need to challenge a Scrabble word, but it isn't the best source for college-level research. You will inevitably come upon a word that you don't know while doing

research. Most good authors define the terms they use within the content of their writing. In that case, it's better to use the author's definition than a dictionary definition. Also, citing a dictionary doesn't show deep research skills; it only shows an understanding of alphabetical order. So ideally you would quote or paraphrase the author's definition rather than turning to a general dictionary like *Webster's*. If you must turn to a dictionary, I recommend an academic dictionary like *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, which is the most comprehensive dictionary in the English language, with more than twenty volumes. You can't access the *OED* for free online, but most libraries pay for a subscription that you can access as a student or patron. While the *OED* is an academic dictionary, it is not specialized, and you may need a specialized dictionary when dealing with very specific or technical terms. *The Dictionary of Business and Economics* is an example of an academic and specialized dictionary.

Many students have relied on encyclopedias for research in high school, but most encyclopedias, like *World Book*, *Encarta*, or *Britannica*, are not primary sources. Instead, they are examples of secondary sources that aggregate, or compile, research done by others in a condensed summary. As I noted earlier, reference sources like encyclopedias are excellent resources to get you informed about the basics of a topic, but at the college level, primary sources are expected. Many encyclopedias are Internet based, which makes them convenient, but they are still not primary sources, and their credibility should be even more scrutinized.



Wikipedia's open format also means it doesn't generally meet the expectations for credible, scholarly research. [Wikipedia](#) – CC BY-SA 3.0.

Wikipedia revolutionized how many people retrieve information and pioneered an open-publishing format that allowed a community of people to post, edit, and debate content. While this is an important contribution to society, Wikipedia is not considered a scholarly or credible source. Like other encyclopedias, Wikipedia should not be used in college-level research, because it is not a primary source. In addition, since its content can be posted and edited by anyone, we cannot be sure of the credibility of the content. Even though there are self-appointed "experts" who monitor and edit some of the information on Wikipedia, we cannot verify their credentials or the review process that information goes through before it's posted. I'm not one of the college professors who completely dismisses Wikipedia, however. Wikipedia can be a great source for personal research, developing news stories, or trivia. Sometimes you can access primary sources through Wikipedia if you review the footnote citations included in an entry. Moving beyond Wikipedia, as with dictionaries, there are some encyclopedias that are better suited for college research. The *Encyclopedia of Black America* and the *Encyclopedia of Disaster Relief* are examples of specialized academic reference sources that will often include, in each entry, an author's name and credentials and more primary source information.

Interviews

When conducting an interview for a speech, you should access a person who has expertise in or direct experience with your speech topic. If you follow the suggestions for choosing a topic that were mentioned earlier, you may already know something about your speech topic and may have connections to people who would be good interview subjects. Previous employers, internship supervisors, teachers, community leaders, or even relatives may be appropriate interviewees, given your topic. If you do not have a connection to someone you can interview, you can often find someone via the Internet who would be willing to answer some questions. Many informative and persuasive speech topics relate to current issues, and most current issues have organizations that represent their needs. For an informative speech on ageism or a persuasive speech on lowering the voting age, a quick Internet search for "youth rights" leads you to the webpage for the National Youth Rights Association. Like most organization web pages, you can click on the "Contact Us" link to get information for leaders in the organization. You could also connect to members of the group through Facebook and interview young people who are active in the organization.

Once you have identified a good interviewee, you will want to begin researching and preparing your questions. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no" and can provide descriptions and details that will add to your speech. Quotes and paraphrases from your interview can add a personal side to a topic or at least convey potentially complicated information in a more conversational and interpersonal way.



Even if you record an interview, take some handwritten notes and make regular eye contact with the interviewee to show that you are paying attention. David Davies – [Interviews](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

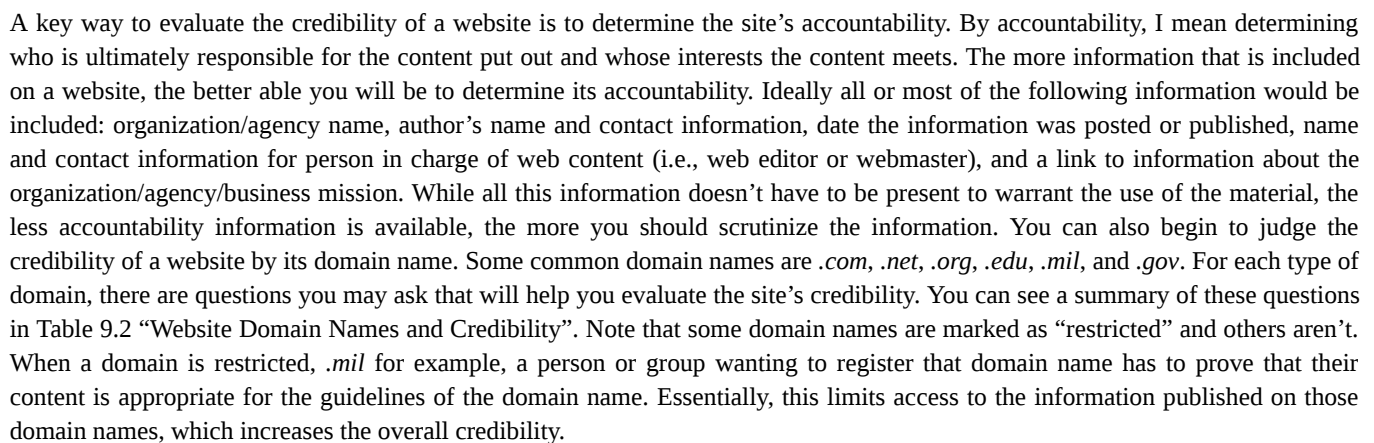
Closed questions can be answered with one or two words and can provide a starting point to get to more detailed information if the interviewer has prepared follow-up questions. Unless the guidelines or occasion for your speech suggest otherwise, you should balance your interview data with the other sources in your speech. Don't let your references to the interview take over your speech.

Tips for Conducting Interviews

1. Do preliminary research to answer basic questions. Many people and organizations have information available publicly. Don't waste interview time asking questions like "What year did your organization start?" when you can find that on the website.
2. Plan questions ahead of time. Even if you know the person, treat it as a formal interview so you can be efficient.
3. Ask open-ended questions that can't be answered with only a yes or no. Questions that begin with *how* and *why* are generally more open-ended than *do* and *did* questions. Make sure you have follow-up questions ready.
4. Use the interview to ask for the personal side of an issue that you may not be able to find in other resources. Personal narratives about experiences can resonate with an audience.
5. Make sure you are prepared. If interviewing in person, have paper, pens, and a recording device if you're using one. Test your recording device ahead of time. If interviewing over the phone, make sure you have good service so you don't drop the call and that you have enough battery power on your phone. When interviewing on the phone or via video chat, make sure distractions (e.g., barking dogs) are minimized.
6. Whether the interview is conducted face-to-face, over the phone, or via video (e.g., Skype), you must get permission to record. Recording can be useful, as it increases accuracy and the level of detail taken away from the interview. Most smartphones have free apps now that allow you to record face-to-face or phone conversations.
7. Whether you record or not, take written notes during the interview. Aside from writing the interviewee's responses, you can also take note of follow-up questions that come to mind or notes on the nonverbal communication of the interviewee.
8. Mention ahead of time if you think you'll have follow-up questions, so the interviewee can expect further contact.
9. Reflect and expand on your notes soon after the interview. It's impossible to transcribe everything during the interview, but you will remember much of what you didn't have time to write down and can add it in.
10. Follow up with a thank-you note. People are busy, and thanking them for their time and the information they provided will be appreciated.

Websites

We already know that utilizing library resources can help you automatically filter out content that may not be scholarly or credible, since the content in research databases is selected and restricted. However, some information may be better retrieved from websites. Even though both research databases and websites are electronic sources, there are two key differences between them that may impact their credibility. First, most of the content in research databases is or was printed but has been converted to digital formats for easier and broader access. In contrast, most of the content on websites has not been printed. Although not always the case, an exception to this is documents in PDF form found on web pages. You may want to do additional research or consult with your instructor to determine if that can count as a printed source. Second, most of the content on research databases has gone through editorial review, which means a professional editor or a peer editor has reviewed the material to make sure it is credible and worthy of publication. Most content on websites is not subjected to the same review process, as just about anyone with Internet



<https://socialsci.libretexts.org/@go/page/196446>

Domain Name	Purpose	Restricted?	Questions to Ask
.com, .net	Commercial	No	Is the information posted for profit? Is the information posted influenced by advertisers?
.org	Mostly noncommercial organizations	No	What is the mission of the organization? Who is responsible for the content? Is the information published to enhance public knowledge or to solicit donations?
.edu	Higher education	Yes	Who published the information? (the institution or an administrator, faculty member, staff member, or student)
.mil	US military	Yes	Most information on .mil sites will be credible, since it is not published for profit and only limited people have access to post information.
.gov	US government	Yes	Most information on .gov sites will be credible, since it is not published for profit and only limited people have access to post information.

Types of Supporting Material

There are several types of supporting material that you can pull from the sources you find during the research process to add to your speech. They include examples, explanations, statistics, analogies, testimony, and visual aids. You will want to have a balance of information, and you will want to include the material that is most relevant to your audience and is most likely to engage them. When determining relevance, utilize some of the strategies mentioned in Section 9.1 “Selecting and Narrowing a Topic”. Thinking about who your audience is and what they know and would like to know will help you tailor your information. Also try to incorporate proxemic information, meaning information that is geographically relevant to your audience. For example, if delivering a speech about prison reform to an audience made up of Californians, citing statistics from North Carolina prisons would not be as proxemic as citing information from California prisons. The closer you can get the information to the audience, the better. I tell my students to make the information so relevant and proxemic that it is in our backyards, in the car with us on the way to school or work, and in the bed with us while we sleep.

Examples

An example is a cited case that is representative of a larger whole. Examples are especially beneficial when presenting information that an audience may not be familiar with. They are also useful for repackaging or reviewing information that has already been presented. Examples can be used in many different ways, so you should let your audience, purpose and thesis, and research materials guide your use. You may pull examples directly from your research materials, making sure to cite the source. The following is an example used in a speech about the negative effects of standardized testing: “Standardized testing makes many students anxious, and even ill. On March 14, 2002, the *Sacramento Bee* reported that some standardized tests now come with instructions indicating what teachers should do with a test booklet if a student throws up on it.” You may also cite examples from your personal experience, if appropriate: “I remember being sick to my stomach while waiting for my SAT to begin.”

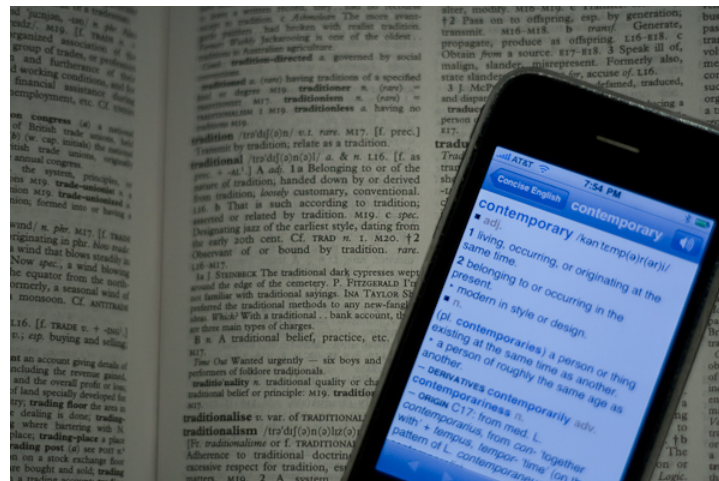
You may also use hypothetical examples, which can be useful when you need to provide an example that is extraordinary or goes beyond most people’s direct experience. Capitalize on this opportunity by incorporating vivid description into the example that appeals to the audience’s senses. Always make sure to indicate when you are using a hypothetical example, as it would be unethical

to present an example as real when it is not. Including the word *imagine* or something similar in the first sentence of the example can easily do this.

Whether real or hypothetical, examples used as supporting material can be brief or extended. Brief examples are usually one or two sentences, as you can see in the following hypothetical example: “Imagine that your child, little sister, or nephew has earned good grades for the past few years of elementary school, loves art class, and also plays on the soccer team. You hear the unmistakable sounds of crying when he or she comes home from school and you find out that art and soccer have been eliminated because students did not meet the federal guidelines for performance on standardized tests.” Brief examples are useful when the audience is already familiar with a concept or during a review. Extended examples, sometimes called illustrations, are several sentences long and can be effective in introductions or conclusions to get the audience’s attention or leave a lasting impression. It is important to think about relevance and time limits when considering using an extended illustration. Since most speeches are given within time constraints, you want to make sure the extended illustration is relevant to your speech purpose and thesis and that it doesn’t take up a disproportionate amount of the speech. If a brief example or series of brief examples would convey the same content and create the same tone as the extended example, I suggest you go with brevity.

Explanations

Explanations clarify ideas by providing information about what something is, why something is the way it is, or how something works or came to be. One of the most common types of explanation is a definition. Definitions do not have to come from the dictionary. Many times, authors will define concepts as they use them in their writing, which is a good alternative to a dictionary definition.



Since quoting a dictionary definition during a speech is difficult, it’s better to put a definition into your own words based on how it is defined in the original source in which it appeared. Julian Bucknall – [Dictionaries](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

As you do your research, think about how much your audience likely knows about a given subject. You do not need to provide definitions when information is common knowledge. Anticipate audience confusion and define legal, medical, or other forms of jargon as well as slang and foreign words. Definitions like the following are also useful for words that we are familiar with but may not know specifics: “According to the 2011 book *Prohibition: 13 Years That Changed America*, what we now know as Prohibition started in 1920 with the passage of the Volstead Act and the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment.” Keep in mind that repeating a definition verbatim from a dictionary often leads to fluency hiccups, because definitions are not written to be read aloud. It’s a good idea to put the definition into your own words (still remembering to cite the original source) to make it easier for you to deliver.

Other explanations focus on the “why” and “how” of a concept. Continuing to inform about Prohibition, a speaker could explain why the movement toward Prohibition began: “The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution gained support because of the strong political influence of the Anti-Saloon League.” The speaker could go on to explain how the Constitution is amended: “According to the same book, a proposed amendment to the Constitution needs three-fourths of all the states to approve it in order to be ratified.” We use explanations as verbal clarifications to support our claims in daily conversations, perhaps without even noticing it. Consciously incorporating clear explanations into your speech can help you achieve your speech goals.

Statistics

Statistics are numerical representations of information. They are very credible in our society, as evidenced by their frequent use by news agencies, government offices, politicians, and academics. As a speaker, you can capitalize on the power of statistics if you use them appropriately. Unfortunately, statistics are often misused by speakers who intentionally or unintentionally misconstrue the numbers to support their argument without examining the context from which the statistic emerged. All statistics are contextual, so plucking a number out of a news article or a research study and including it in your speech without taking the time to understand the statistic is unethical.

Although statistics are popular as supporting evidence, they can also be boring. There will inevitably be people in your audience who are not good at processing numbers. Even people who are good with numbers have difficulty processing through a series of statistics presented orally. Remember that we have to adapt our information to listeners who don't have the luxury of pressing a pause or rewind button. For these reasons, it's a good idea to avoid using too many statistics and to use startling examples when you do use them. Startling statistics should defy our expectations. When you give the audience a large number that they would expect to be smaller, or vice versa, you will be more likely to engage them, as the following example shows: "Did you know that 1.3 billion people in the world do not have access to electricity? That's about 20 percent of the world's population according to a 2009 study on the International Energy Agency's official website."

You should also repeat key statistics at least once for emphasis. In the previous example, the first time we hear the statistic 1.3 billion, we don't have any context for the number. Translating that number into a percentage in the next sentence repeats the key statistic, which the audience now has context for, and repackages the information into a percentage, which some people may better understand. It is important to cite the source of the statistics in your speech so they can assess its credibility. Simply saying that you found this information online or vaguely saying, "Research shows..." does not provide sufficient information about that statistic to your audience. You should also round long numbers up or down to make them easier to speak. Make sure that rounding the number doesn't distort its significance. Rounding 1,298,791,943 to 1.3 billion, for example, makes the statistic more manageable and doesn't alter the basic meaning. It is also beneficial to translate numbers into something more concrete for visual or experiential learners by saying, for example, "That's equal to the population of four United States of Americas." While it may seem easy to throw some numbers in your speech to add to your credibility, it takes more work to make them impactful, memorable, and effective.

Tips for Using Statistics

1. Make sure you understand the context from which a statistic emerges.
2. Don't overuse statistics.
3. Use startling statistics that defy the audience's expectations.
4. Repeat key statistics at least once for emphasis.
5. Use a variety of numerical representations (whole numbers, percentages, ratios) to convey information.
6. Round long numbers to make them easier to speak.
7. Translate numbers into concrete ideas for more impact.

Analogies

Analogies involve a comparison of ideas, items, or circumstances. When you compare two things that actually exist, you are using a literal analogy—for example, "Germany and Sweden are both European countries that have had nationalized health care for decades." Another type of literal comparison is a historical analogy. In Mary Fisher's now famous 1992 speech to the Republican National Convention, she compared the silence of many US political leaders regarding the HIV/AIDS crisis to that of many European leaders in the years before the Holocaust.

My father has devoted much of his lifetime to guarding against another holocaust. He is part of the generation who heard Pastor Niemöller come out of the Nazi death camps to say, "They came after the Jews and I was not a Jew, so I did not protest. They came after the Trade Unionists, and I was not a Trade Unionist, so I did not protest. They came after the Roman Catholics, and I was not a Roman Catholic, so I did not protest. Then they came after me, and there was no one left to protest." The lesson history teaches is this: If you believe you are safe, you are at risk.

A figurative analogy compares things that are not normally related, often relying on metaphor, simile, or other figurative language devices. In the following example, wind and revolution are compared: "Just as the wind brings changes in the weather, so does revolution bring change to countries."

When you compare differences, you are highlighting contrast—for example, “Although the United States is often thought of as the most medically advanced country in the world, other Western countries with nationalized health care have lower infant mortality rates and higher life expectancies.” To use analogies effectively and ethically, you must choose ideas, items, or circumstances to compare that are similar enough to warrant the analogy. The more similar the two things you’re comparing, the stronger your support. If an entire speech on nationalized health care was based on comparing the United States and Sweden, then the analogy isn’t too strong, since Sweden has approximately the same population as the state of North Carolina. Using the analogy without noting this large difference would be misrepresenting your supporting material. You could disclose the discrepancy and use other forms of supporting evidence to show that despite the population difference the two countries are similar in other areas to strengthen your speech.

Testimony

Testimony is quoted information from people with direct knowledge about a subject or situation. Expert testimony is from people who are credentialed or recognized experts in a given subject. Lay testimony is often a recounting of a person’s experiences, which is more subjective. Both types of testimony are valuable as supporting material. We can see this in the testimonies of people in courtrooms and other types of hearings. Lawyers know that juries want to hear testimony from experts, eyewitnesses, and friends and family. Congressional hearings are similar.



Congressional hearings often draw on expert and lay testimony to provide a detailed understanding of an event or issue. [Wikimedia Commons](#) – public domain.

When Toyota cars were malfunctioning and being recalled in 2010, mechanics and engineers were called to testify about the technical specifications of the car (expert testimony), and car drivers like the soccer mom who recounted the brakes on her Prius suddenly failing while she was driving her kids to practice were also called (lay testimony). When using testimony, make sure you indicate whether it is expert or lay by sharing with the audience the context of the quote. Share the credentials of experts (education background, job title, years of experience, etc.) to add to your credibility or give some personal context for the lay testimony (eyewitness, personal knowledge, etc.).

“Getting Competent”: Choosing the Right Supporting Material

As you sift through your research materials to find supporting material to incorporate into your speech, you will want to include a variety of information types. Choosing supporting material that is relevant to your audience will help make your speech more engaging. As was noted earlier, a speaker should consider the audience throughout the speech-making process. Imagine you were asked to deliver a speech about your college or university. To get some practice adapting supporting material to various audiences, provide an example of each type of supporting material that is tailored to the following specific audiences. Include an example, an explanation, a statistic, an analogy, some testimony, and a visual aid.

1. Incoming first-year students
2. Parents of incoming first-year students
3. Alumni of the college or university
4. Community members that live close to the school

Visual Aids

Visual aids help a speaker reinforce speech content visually, which helps amplify the speaker's message. They can be used to present any of the types of supporting materials discussed previously. Speakers rely heavily on an audience's ability to learn by listening, which may not always be successful if audience members are visual or experiential learners. Even if audience members are good listeners, information overload or external or internal noise can be barriers to a speaker achieving his or her speech goals. Therefore skillfully incorporating visual aids into a speech has many potential benefits:

- Helping your audience remember information because it is presented orally and visually
- Helping your audience understand information because it is made more digestible through diagrams, charts, and so on
- Helping your audience see something in action by demonstrating with an object, showing a video, and so on
- Engaging your audience by making your delivery more dynamic through demonstration, gesturing, and so on

There are several types of visual aids, and each has its strengths in terms of the type of information it lends itself to presenting. The types of visual aids we will discuss are objects; chalkboards, whiteboards, and flip charts; posters and handouts; pictures; diagrams; charts; graphs; videos; and presentation software. It's important to remember that supporting materials presented on visual aids should be properly cited. We will discuss proper incorporation of supporting materials into a speech in Section 9.3 "Organizing". While visual aids can help bring your supporting material to life, they can also add more opportunities for things to go wrong during your speech. Therefore we'll discuss some tips for effective creation and delivery as we discuss the various types of visual aids.

Objects

Three-dimensional objects that represent an idea can be useful as a visual aid for a speech. They offer the audience a direct, concrete way to understand what you are saying. I often have my students do an introductory speech where they bring in three objects that represent their past, present, and future. Students have brought in a drawer from a chest that they were small enough to sleep in as a baby, a package of Ramen noodles to represent their life as a college student, and a stethoscope or other object to represent their career goals, among other things. Models also fall into this category, as they are scaled versions of objects that may be too big (the International Space Station) or too small (a molecule) to actually show to your audience.

Tips for Using Objects Effectively

1. Make sure your objects are large enough for the audience to see.
2. Do not pass objects around, as it will be distracting.
3. Hold your objects up long enough for the audience to see them.
4. Do not talk to your object, wiggle or wave it around, tap on it, or obstruct the audience's view of your face with it.
5. Practice with your objects so your delivery will be fluent and there won't be any surprises.

Chalkboards, Whiteboards, and Flip Charts

Chalkboards, whiteboards, and flip charts can be useful for interactive speeches. If you are polling the audience or brainstorming you can write down audience responses easily for everyone to see and for later reference. They can also be helpful for unexpected clarification. If audience members look confused, you can take a moment to expand on a point or concept using the board or flip chart. Since many people are uncomfortable writing on these things due to handwriting or spelling issues, it's good to anticipate things that you may have to expand on and have prepared extra visual aids or slides that you can include if needed. You can also have audience members write things on boards or flip charts themselves, which helps get them engaged and takes some of the pressure off you as a speaker.

Posters and Handouts

Posters generally include text and graphics and often summarize an entire presentation or select main points. Posters are frequently used to present original research, as they can be broken down into the various steps to show how a process worked. Posters can be useful if you are going to have audience members circulating around the room before or after your presentation, so they can take the time to review the poster and ask questions. Posters are not often good visual aids during a speech, because it's difficult to make the text and graphics large enough for a room full of people to adequately see. The best posters are those created using computer software and professionally printed on large laminated paper.



Figure: Printing/copying businesses are now good at helping produce professional-looking posters. Although they can be costly, they add to the speaker's credibility. University of Fraser Valley – UFV – Student Research Day – CC BY 2.0.

These professional posters come at a price, often costing between forty and sixty dollars. If you opt to make your own poster, take care to make it look professional. Use a computer and printer to print out your text; do not handwrite on a poster. Make sure anything you cut by hand has neat, uniform edges. You can then affix the text, photos, and any accent backing to the poster board. Double-sided tape works well for this, as it doesn't leave humps like those left by rolled tape or the bubbles, smearing, or sticky mess left by glue.

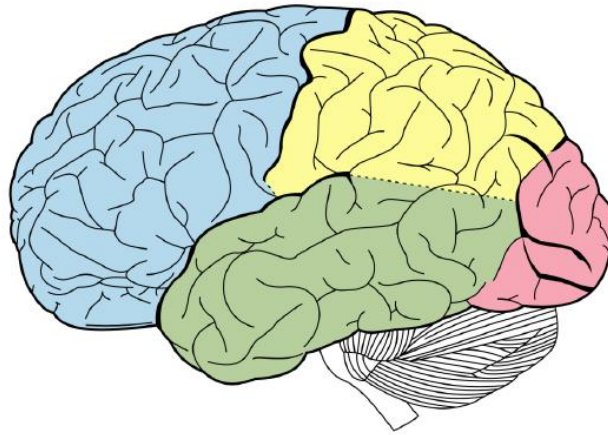
Handouts can be a useful alternative to posters. Think of them as miniposters that audience members can reference and take with them. Audience members will likely appreciate a handout that is limited to one page, is neatly laid out, and includes the speaker's contact information. It can be appropriate to give handouts to an audience before a long presentation where note taking is expected, complicated information is presented, or the audience will be tested on or have to respond to the information presented. In most regular speeches less than fifteen minutes long, it would not be wise to distribute handouts ahead of time, as they will distract the audience from the speaker. It's better to distribute the handouts after your speech or at the end of the program if there are others speaking after you.

Pictures

Photographs, paintings, drawings, and sketches fall into the pictures category of visual aids. Pictures can be useful when you need to show an exact replication of what you're speaking about. Pictures can also connect to your audience on a personal level, especially if they evoke audience emotions. Think about the use of pictures in television commercials asking for donations or sponsorships. Organizations like Save the Children and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals successfully use pictures of malnourished children or abused animals to pull at the heartstrings of viewers. A series of well-chosen and themed pictures can have a meaningful impact on an audience. Although some pictures can be effectively presented when printed out on standard 8 1/2" x 11" printer paper using a black and white printer, others will need to be enlarged and/or printed in color, which will cost some money. You can often avoid this by incorporating a picture into a PowerPoint presentation, as the picture will be projected large enough for people to see. We will discuss PowerPoint in more detail later.

Diagrams and Drawings

Diagrams are good for showing the inner workings of an object or pointing out the most important or relevant parts of something. Think about diagrams as blueprints that show the inside of something—for example, key bones in the human body in a speech about common skateboarding injuries. Diagrams are good alternatives to pictures when you only need to point out certain things that may be difficult to see in a photograph.



[Wikimedia Commons](#) – public domain.

You may even be able to draw a simple diagram yourself if you find it would be useful during your speech. Although not all maps are simple enough to be created by the speaker, many maps can be hand drawn during a speech or ahead of time to indicate different locations or patterns. While I would recommend that you anticipate this ahead of time so you can incorporate a more professional version of the diagram created with computer software or more precise drawing, drawing a diagram on an overhead projector, whiteboard, or smart board can be useful.

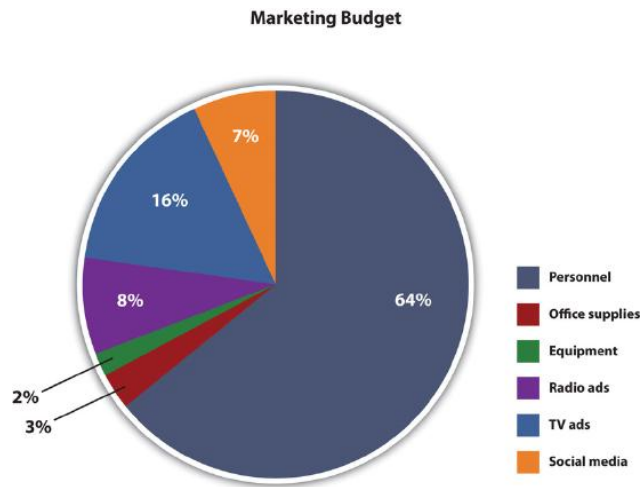
Charts and Tables

Charts and tables are useful for compiling and cross-referencing larger amounts of information. The combination of rows and columns allows you to create headers and then divide them up into units, categories, dates, and so on. Medical information is put into charts so that periods of recorded information, such as vital signs, can be updated and scanned by doctors and nurses. Charts and tables are also good for combining text and numbers, and they are easy to make with word processing software like Microsoft Word or spreadsheet software like Excel. Think of presenting your department's budget and spending at the end of a business quarter. You could have headers in the columns with the various categories and itemized deductions in the rows ending with a final total for each column.

Marketing Department Quarterly Budget

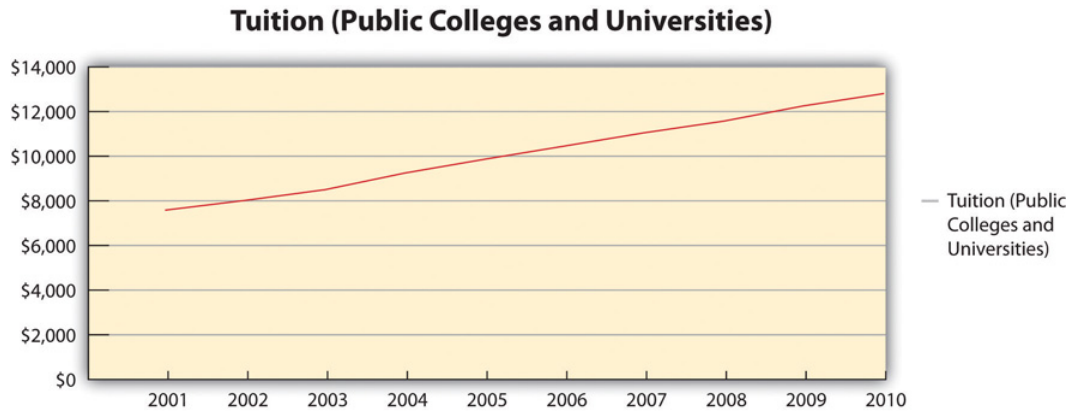
Category	Budgeted	Used	Quarter
Personnel	36,000	37,062	-1,062
Office supplies	2,000	1,890	110
Equipment/ Computers	1,500	1,338	162
Radio ad buy	5,000	4,500	500
TV ad buy	9,000	9,000	0
Social media ad buy	4,000	4,140	-140
Total	57,500	57,930	-430

A pie chart is an alternative representation of textual and numerical data that offers audience members a visual representation of the relative proportions of a whole. In a pie chart, each piece of the pie corresponds to a percentage of the whole, and the size of the pie varies with the size of the percentage. As with other charts and tables, most office software programs now easily make pie charts.

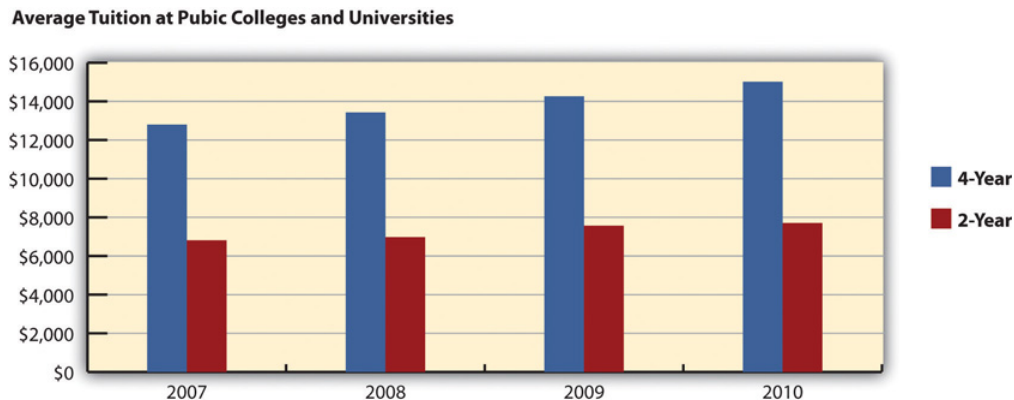


Graphs

Graphs are representations that point out numerical relationships or trends and include line graphs and bar graphs. Line graphs are useful for showing trends over time. For example, you could track the rising cost of tuition for colleges and universities in a persuasive speech about the need for more merit-based financial aid.



Bar graphs are good for comparing amounts. In the same speech, you could compare the tuition of two-year institutions to that of four-year institutions. Graphs help make numerical data more digestible for your audience and allow you to convey an important numerical trend visually and quickly without having to go into lengthy explanations. Remember to always clearly label your *x*-axis and *y*-axis and to explain the basics of your graph to your audience before you go into the specific data. If you use a graph that was created by someone else, make sure it is large and clear enough for the audience to read and that you cite the original source.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Facts, www.nces.ed.gov

National Center for Education Statistics.

Video

Video clips as visual aids can be powerful and engaging for an audience, but they can also be troublesome for speakers. Whether embedded in a PowerPoint presentation, accessed through YouTube, or played from a laptop or DVD player, video clips are notorious for tripping up speakers. They require more than one piece of electronics when they are hooked to a projector and speaker and sometimes also require an Internet connection. The more electronic connection points, the more chances for something to go wrong. Therefore it is very important to test your technology before your speech, have a backup method of delivery if possible, and be prepared to go on without the video if all else fails. Although sometimes tempting, you should not let the video take over your speech. I recommend that my students not have more than 10 percent of their speech be filled with video, meaning there should be no more than one minute of video in a ten-minute speech. Make sure your video is relevant and that it is cued to where it needs to be. One useful strategy for incorporating video is to play a video without audio and speak along with the video, acting as a narrator. This allows the speaker to have more control over the visual aid and to adapt it and make it more relevant to a specific topic and audience. Additionally, video editing software like Final Cut and iMovie are readily available to college students and relatively easy to use. Some simple editing to cut together various clips that are meaningful or adding an introductory title or transitions can go a long way toward making your video look professional.

Presentation Software

The prevalence of computers and projectors in most schools, offices, and other presentation facilities has made using computer-generated visual aids more convenient. PowerPoint is the most commonly used presentation software and has functionality ranging from the most simple text-based slide to complicated transitions, timing features, video/sound imbedding, and even functionality with audience response systems like Turning Point that allow data to be collected live from audience members and incorporated quickly into the slideshow. Despite the fact that most college students have viewed and created numerous PowerPoint presentations, I have still seen many poorly executed slideshows that detracted from the speaker's message. PowerPoint should be viewed as a speech amplifier. Like an amplifier for a guitar, it doesn't do much without a musician there to play the instrument. The speaker is the musician, the speech is the instrument, and PowerPoint is the amplifier. Just as the amplifier doesn't dictate what the guitar player does, neither should PowerPoint take over the speaker.

I like to distinguish between using PowerPoint as a presentation aid and as a visual aid. PowerPoint, with all its bells and whistles, is designed as a presentation aid. Presentations are generally longer than speeches, at least fifteen minutes long, and are content heavy. College lectures and many professional conference presentations fall into this category. In these cases, PowerPoint generally runs along with the speaker throughout the presentation, reviewing key points and presenting visual aids such as pictures and graphs. The constant running of the slideshow also facilitates audience note taking, which is also common during presentations.

Speeches, on the other hand, are usually fifteen minutes or less, have repetition and redundancy built in (as they are adapted to a listening audience), and carry less expectation that the audience will take detailed notes. In this case, I believe PowerPoint should be used more as a visual aid, meaning that it should be simpler and amplify particular components of the speech rather than run along with the speaker throughout the speech.

Tips for Using PowerPoint as a Visual Aid

1. Do not have more than two slides per main point.
2. Use a consistent theme with limited variation in font style and font size.
3. Incorporate text and relevant graphics into each slide.
4. Limit content to no more than six lines of text or six bullet points per slide.
5. Do not use complete sentences; be concise.
6. Avoid unnecessary animation or distracting slide transitions.
7. Only have a slide displayed when it is relevant to what you're discussing. Insert completely black slides to display when you are not explicitly referencing content in the speech so the audience doesn't get distracted.

"Getting Plugged In"

Alternatives to PowerPoint

Although PowerPoint is the most frequently used presentation software, there are alternatives that can also be engaging and effective if the speaker is willing to invest the time in learning something new. Keynote is Apple's alternative to Microsoft's PowerPoint and offers some themes and style choices that can set your presentation apart from the familiar look of PowerPoint.

Keep in mind that you will need to make sure you have access to Mac-compatible presentation tools, since Keynote won't run or open on most PCs. Prezi is a new web-based presentation tool that uses Flash animation, zooming, and motion to make a very different-looking computer-generated visual aid. If you have the time to play with Prezi and create a visual aid for your presentation, you will stand out. You can see Prezi in action in Note 9.31 "Video Clip 9.1". You can also see sample presentations on Prezi's website: <http://prezi.com/explore>.

1. What are some positives and negatives of using PowerPoint as a visual aid?
2. What are some other alternatives to using PowerPoint as a visual aid? Why?



James Geary, Metaphorically Speaking. In this video, James Geary presents on metaphor using Prezi as his visual aid.
youtu.be/2cU56SWXHFw

Key Takeaways

- Library resources like databases and reference librarians are more suitable for college-level research than general search engines.
- Research sources include periodicals, newspapers and books, reference tools, interviews, and websites. The credibility of each type of supporting material should be evaluated.
- Speakers should include a variety of supporting material from their research sources in their speeches. The types of supporting material include examples, explanations, statistics, analogies, testimony, and visual aids.
- Visual aids help a speaker reinforce their content visually and have many potential benefits. Visual aids can also detract from a speech if not used properly. Visual aids include objects; chalkboards, whiteboards, and flip charts; posters and handouts; pictures; diagrams; charts; graphs; video; and presentation software.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: Identify some ways that research skills are helpful in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic.
2. Go to the library webpage for your school. What are some resources that will be helpful for your research? Identify at least two library databases and at least one reference librarian. If you need help with research, what resources are available?
3. What are some websites that you think are credible for doing college-level research? Why? What are some website that are not credible? Why?

This page titled [4.2: Researching and Supporting Your Speech](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [9.2: Researching and Supporting Your Speech](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

4.3: Organizing

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the process of organizing a speech.
2. Identify common organizational patterns.
3. Incorporate supporting materials into a speech.
4. Employ verbal citations for various types of supporting material.
5. List key organizing signposts.
6. Identify the objectives of a speech introduction.
7. Identify the objectives of a speech conclusion.

When organizing your speech, you want to start with the body. Even though most students want to start with the introduction, I explain that it's difficult to introduce and preview something that you haven't yet developed. A well-structured speech includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Think of this structure as a human body. This type of comparison dates back to Plato, who noted, "every speech ought to be put together like a living creature" (Winans, 1917). The introduction is the head, the body is the torso and legs, and the conclusion is the feet. The information you add to this structure from your research and personal experience is the organs and muscle. The transitions you add are the connecting tissues that hold the parts together, and a well-practiced delivery is the skin and clothing that makes everything presentable.

Organizing the Body of Your Speech

Writing the body of your speech takes the most time in the speech-writing process. Your specific purpose and thesis statements should guide the initial development of the body, which will then be more informed by your research process. You will determine main points that help achieve your purpose and match your thesis. You will then fill information into your main points by incorporating the various types of supporting material discussed previously. Before you move on to your introduction and conclusion, you will connect the main points together with transitions and other signposts.

Determining Your Main Points

Think of each main point as a miniature speech within your larger speech. Each main point will have a central idea, meet some part of your specific purpose, and include supporting material from your research that relates to your thesis. Reviewing the draft of your thesis and specific purpose statements can lead you to research materials. As you review your research, take notes on and/or highlight key ideas that stick out to you as useful, effective, relevant, and interesting. It is likely that these key ideas will become the central ideas of your main points, or at least subpoints. Once you've researched your speech enough to achieve your specific purpose, support your thesis, and meet the research guidelines set forth by your instructor, boss, or project guidelines, you can distill the research down to a series of central ideas. As you draft these central ideas, use parallel wording, which is similar wording among key organizing signposts and main points that helps structure a speech. Using parallel wording in your central idea statement for each main point will also help you write parallel key signposts like the preview statement in the introduction, transitions between main points, and the review statement in the conclusion. The following example shows parallel wording in the central ideas of each main point in a speech about the green movement and schools:

1. The green movement in schools positively affects school buildings and facilities.
2. The green movement in schools positively affects students.
3. The green movement in schools positively affects teachers.

While writing each central idea using parallel wording is useful for organizing information at this stage in the speech-making process, you should feel free to vary the wording a little more in your actual speech delivery. You will still want some parallel key words that are woven throughout the speech, but sticking too close to parallel wording can make your content sound forced or artificial.

After distilling your research materials down, you may have several central idea statements. You will likely have two to five main points, depending on what your instructor prefers, time constraints, or the organizational pattern you choose. All the central ideas may not get converted into main points; some may end up becoming subpoints and some may be discarded. Once you get your series of central ideas drafted, you will then want to consider how you might organize them, which will help you narrow your list down to what may actually end up becoming the body of your speech.

Organizing Your Main Points

There are several ways you can organize your main points, and some patterns correspond well to a particular subject area or speech type. Determining which pattern you will use helps filter through your list of central ideas generated from your research and allows you to move on to the next step of inserting supporting material into your speech. We will be discussing one of these patterns here. Other organizational patterns may be useful in informative or entertaining speeches, including chronological pattern and spatial pattern. If you are writing a policy-based persuasive speech, patterns such as problem-cause-solution, cause-effect-solution, or Monroe's motivated sequence may be appropriate. We will discuss these organizational patterns later in this book.

Topical Pattern

When you use the topical pattern, you are breaking a large idea or category into smaller ideas or subcategories. In short you are finding logical divisions to a whole. While you may break something down into smaller topics that will make two, three, or more main points, people tend to like groups of three. In a speech about the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, for example, you could break the main points down to (1) the musicians who performed, (2) the musicians who declined to perform, and (3) the audience. You could also break it down into three specific performances—(1) Santana, (2) The Grateful Dead, and (3) Creedence Clearwater Revival—or three genres of music—(1) folk, (2) funk, and (3) rock.

The topical pattern breaks a topic down into logical divisions but doesn't necessarily offer any guidance in ordering them. To help determine the order of topical main points, you may consider the primacy or recency effect. You prime an engine before you attempt to start it and prime a surface before you paint it. The primacy effect is similar in that you present your best information first in order to make a positive impression and engage your audience early in your speech. The recency effect is based on the idea that an audience will best remember the information they heard most recently. Therefore you would include your best information last in your speech to leave a strong final impression. Both primacy and recency can be effective. Consider your topic and your audience to help determine which would work best for your speech.

Incorporating Supporting Material

So far, you have learned several key steps in the speech creation process, which are reviewed in Figure 9.4. Now you will begin to incorporate more specific information from your supporting materials into the body of your speech. You can place the central ideas that fit your organizational pattern at the beginning of each main point and then plug supporting material in as subpoints.

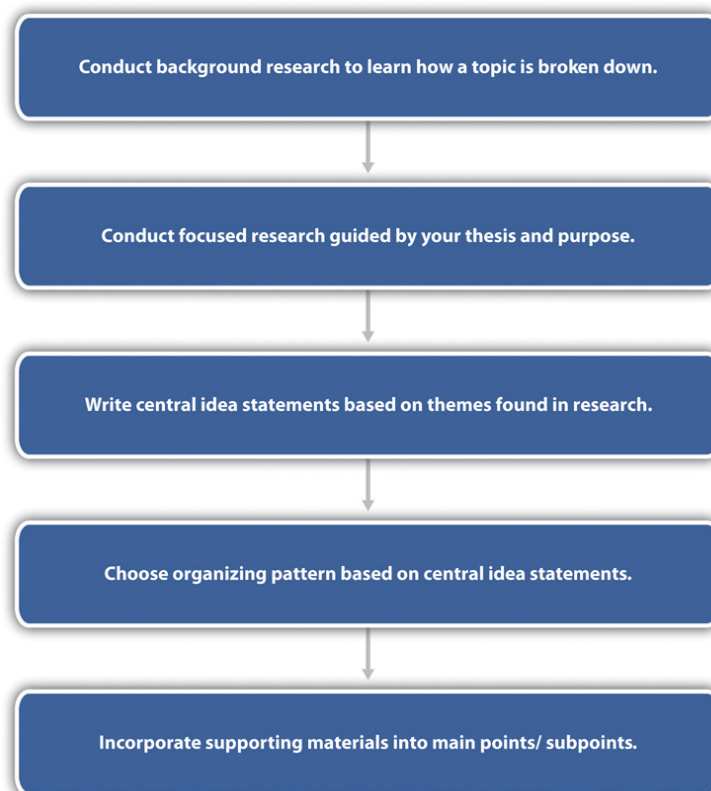


Figure 9.4 From Research to Main Points

This information will also make up the content of your formal and speaking outlines, which we will discuss more in Section 9.4 “Outlining”. Remember that you want to include a variety of supporting material (examples, analogies, statistics, explanations, etc.) within your speech. The information that you include as subpoints helps back up the central idea that started the main point. Depending on the length of your speech and the depth of your research, you may also have sub-subpoints that back up the claim you are making in the subpoint. Each piece of supporting material you include eventually links back to the specific purpose and thesis statement. This approach to supporting your speech is systematic and organized and helps ensure that your content fits together logically and that your main points are clearly supported and balanced.

One of the key elements of academic and professional public speaking is verbally citing your supporting materials so your audience can evaluate your credibility and the credibility of your sources. You should include citation information in three places: verbally in your speech, on any paper or electronic information (outline, PowerPoint), and on a separate reference sheet. Since much of the supporting material you incorporate into your speech comes directly from your research, it’s important that you include relevant citation information as you plug this information into your main points. Don’t wait to include citation information once you’ve drafted the body of your speech. At that point it may be difficult to retrace your steps to locate the source of a specific sentence or statistic. As you paraphrase or quote your supporting material, work the citation information into the sentences; do not clump the information together at the end of a sentence, or try to cite more than one source at the end of a paragraph or main point. It’s important that the audience hear the citations as you use the respective information so it’s clear which supporting material matches up with which source.

Writing key bibliographic information into your speech will help ensure that you remember to verbally cite your sources and that your citations will be more natural and flowing and less likely to result in fluency hiccups. At minimum, you should include the author, date, and source in a verbal citation. Sometimes more information is necessary. When citing a magazine, newspaper, or journal article, it is more important to include the source name than the title of the article, since the source name—for example, *Newsweek*—is what the audience needs to evaluate the speaker’s credibility. For a book, make sure to cite the title and indicate that the source is a book. When verbally citing information retrieved from a website, you do not want to try to recite a long and cumbersome URL in your speech. Most people don’t even make it past the “www.” before they mess up. It is more relevant to audiences for speakers to report the sponsor/author of the site and the title of the web page, or section of the website, where they obtained their information. When getting information from a website, it is best to use “official” organization websites or

government websites. When you get information from an official site, make sure you state that in your citation to add to your credibility. For an interview, state the interviewee's name, their credentials, and when the interview took place. Advice for verbally citing sources and examples from specific types of sources follow:

1. Magazine article

- "According to an article by Niall Ferguson in the January 23, 2012, issue of *Newsweek*, we can expect much discussion about 'class warfare' in the upcoming presidential and national election cycle. Ferguson reports that..."
- "As reported by Niall Ferguson, in the January 23, 2012, issue of *Newsweek*, many candidates denounce talking points about economic inequality..."

2. Newspaper article

- "On November 26, 2011, Eithne Farry of *The Daily Telegraph* of London reported that..."
- "An article about the renewed popularity of selling products in people's own homes appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on November 26, 2011. Eithne Farry explored a few of these 'blast-from-the-past' styled parties..."

3. Website

- "According to information I found at ready.gov, the website of the US Department of Homeland Security, US businesses and citizens..."
- "According to information posted on the US Department of Homeland Security's official website..."
- "Helpful information about business continuity planning can be found on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's official website, located at ready.gov..."

4. Journal article

- "An article written by Dr. Nakamura and Dr. Kikuchi, at Meiji University in Tokyo, found that the Fukushima disaster was complicated by Japan's high nuclear consciousness. Their 2011 article published in the journal *Public Administration Today* reported that..."
- "In a 2012 article published in *Public Administration Review*, Professors Nakamura and Kikuchi reported that the Fukushima disaster was embarrassing for a country with a long nuclear history..."
- "Nakamura and Kikuchi, scholars in crisis management and public policy, authored a 2011 article about the failed crisis preparation at the now infamous Fukushima nuclear plant. Their *Public Administration Review* article reports that..."
- **Bad example** (doesn't say where the information came from). "A 2011 study by Meiji University scholars found the crisis preparations at a Japanese nuclear plant to be inadequate..."

5. Book

- "In their 2008 book *At War with Metaphor*, Steuter and Wills describe how we use metaphor to justify military conflict. They report..."
- "Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills, experts in sociology and media studies, describe the connections between metaphor and warfare in their 2008 book *At War with Metaphor*. They both contend that..."
- "In their 2008 book *At War with Metaphor*, Steuter and Wills reveal..."

6. Interview

- "On February 20 I conducted a personal interview with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor at Eastern Illinois University, to learn more about Latina/o Heritage Month. Dr. Scholz told me that..."
- "I conducted an interview with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor here at Eastern, and learned that there are more than a dozen events planned for Latina/o Heritage Month."
- "In a telephone interview I conducted with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor, I learned..."

"Getting Critical": Plagiarism

During the process of locating and incorporating supporting material into your speech, it's important to practice good research skills to avoid intentional or unintentional plagiarism. Plagiarism, as we have already learned, is the uncredited use of someone else's words or ideas. It's important to note that most colleges and universities have strict and detailed policies related to academic honesty. You should be familiar with your school's policy and your instructor's policy. At many schools, there are consequences for academic dishonesty whether it is intentional or unintentional. Although many schools try to make a learning opportunity out of an initial violation, multiple violations could lead to suspension or expulsion. At the class level, plagiarism may result in an automatic "F" for the assignment or the course.

Over my years of teaching, I have encountered more than a dozen cases of plagiarism. While that is not a large percentage in relation to the large number of students I have taught, I have noticed that the instances have steadily increased over the past few years. I don't think this is because students are becoming more dishonest; I think it's become easier to locate and copy information and easier to catch those who do. I always remind my students that they do not have access to a secret version of the Internet that faculty can't access. If it takes a student five seconds to find a speech to plagiarize online, it will take me the same amount of time. Software programs like Turnitin.com also aid instructors in detecting plagiarism.

Being organized and thorough in your research can help avoid a situation where you feel backed into a corner and fake some sources or leave out some citations because you're out of time. One key to avoiding this type of situation is to keep good records as you research and write. First, as you locate sources, always record all the key bibliographic information. I know from experience how frustrating it can be to try to locate a source after you've already worked it into your speech or paper, and you have the quote or paraphrase but can't retrace your steps to find where you took it from. Printing the source, downloading the PDF, or copying and pasting the URL as soon as you locate the source can help you retrace your steps if needed.

Save drafts of your writing as you progress. Each day I work on a chapter for this book, I go to the "File" menu, choose "Save As," and amend the file name to include that day's date. That way I have a record that shows my work. The various style guides for writing also offer specific advice on how to cite sources and how to conduct research. You are probably familiar with MLA (Modern Language Association), used mostly in English and the humanities, and APA (American Psychological Association), which is used mostly in the social sciences. There's also the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), used in history and also the style this book is in, and CBE (developed by the Council of Science Editors), which is used in biological and earth sciences. Since each manual is geared toward a different academic area, it's a good source for specific research-related questions. When in doubt about how to conduct or cite research, you can also ask your instructor for guidance.

1. Why do you think instances of academic dishonesty have been steadily increasing over the past few years?
2. What is your school's policy in academic honesty? What is your instructor's policy? What are the potential consequences for violating this policy at the school and classroom levels?
3. Based on what you learned here, what are some strategies you can employ to make your research process more organized?

Signposts

Signposts on highways help drivers and passengers navigate places they are not familiar with and give us reminders and warnings about what to expect down the road. Signposts in speeches are statements that help audience members navigate the turns of your speech. There are several key signposts in your speech. In the order you will likely use them, they are preview statement, transition between introduction and body, transitions between main points, transition from body to conclusion, and review statement (see Table 9.3 for a review of the key signposts with examples). While the preview and review statements are in the introduction and conclusion, respectively, the other signposts are all transitions that help move between sections of your speech.

Table 9.3: Organizing Signposts

Signpost	Example
Preview statement	"Today, I'd like to inform you about the history of Habitat for Humanity, the work they have done in our area, and my experiences as a volunteer."
Transition from introduction to body	"Let's begin with the history of Habitat for Humanity."
Transition from main point one to main point two	"Now that you know more about the history of Habitat for Humanity, let's look at the work they have done in our area."
Transition from main point two to main point three	"Habitat for Humanity has done a lot of good work in our area, and I was fortunate to be able to experience this as a volunteer."
Transition from body to conclusion	"In closing, I hope you now have a better idea of the impact this well-known group has had."
Review statement	"Habitat for Humanity is an organization with an inspiring history that has done much for our area while also providing an opportunity for volunteers, like myself, to learn and grow."

There are also signposts that can be useful within sections of your speech. Words and phrases like *Aside from* and *While* are good ways to transition between thoughts within a main point or subpoint. Organizing signposts like *First*, *Second*, and *Third* can be used within a main point to help speaker and audience move through information. The preview in the introduction and review in the conclusion need not be the only such signposts in your speech. You can also include internal previews and internal reviews in your main points to help make the content more digestible or memorable.

In terms of writing, compose transitions that are easy for you to remember and speak. Pioneer speech teacher James A. Winans wrote in 1917 that “it is at a transition, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, that the speaker who staggers or breaks down, meets his [or her] difficulty” (Winans, 1917). His observation still holds true today. Key signposts like the ones in Table 9.3 should be concise, parallel, and obviously worded. Going back to the connection between speech signposts and signposts that guide our driving, we can see many connections. Speech signposts should be one concise sentence. Stop signs, for example, just say, “STOP.” They do not say, “Your vehicle is now approaching an intersection. Please bring it to a stop.”



Signposts in your speech guide the way for your audience members like signposts on the highway guide drivers. Doug Kerr – Minnesota State Highway 5 – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Try to remove unnecessary words from key signposts to make them more effective and easier to remember and deliver. Speech signposts should also be parallel. All stop signs are octagonal with a red background and white lettering, which makes them easily recognizable to drivers. If the wording in your preview statement matches with key wording in your main points, transitions between main points, and review statement, then your audience will be better able to follow your speech. Last, traffic signposts are obvious. They are bright colors, sometimes reflective, and may even have flashing lights on them. A “Road Closed” sign painted in camouflage isn’t a good idea and could lead to disaster.

Being too vague or getting too creative with your speech signposts can also make them disappear into the background of your speech. My students have expressed concern that using parallel and obvious wording in speech signposts would make their speech boring or insult the intelligence of their audience. This is not the case. As we learned in the chapter titled “Listening”, most people struggle to be active listeners, so making a speech more listenable is usually appreciated. In addition, these are just six sentences in a much larger speech, so they are spaced out enough to not sound repetitive, and they can serve as anchor points to secure the attention of the audience.

In addition to well-written signposts, you want to have well-delivered signposts. Nonverbal signposts include pauses and changes in rate, pitch, or volume that help emphasize transitions within a speech. I have missed students’ signposts before, even though they were well written, because they did not stand out in the delivery. Here are some ways you can use nonverbal signposting: pause before and after your preview and review statements so they stand out, pause before and after your transitions between main points so they stand out, and slow your rate and lower your pitch on the closing line of your speech to provide closure.

Introduction

We all know that first impressions matter. Research shows that students’ impressions of instructors on the first day of class persist throughout the semester (Laws et al., 2010). First impressions are quickly formed, sometimes spontaneous, and involve little to no

cognitive effort. Despite the fact that first impressions aren't formed with much conscious effort, they form the basis of inferences and judgments about a person's personality (Lass-Hennemann, et al., 2011). For example, the student who approaches the front of the class before their speech wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt, looks around blankly, and lets out a sigh before starting hasn't made a very good first impression. Even if the student is prepared for the speech and delivers it well, the audience has likely already associated what they observed with personality traits of the student (i.e., lazy, indifferent), and those associations now have staying power in the face of contrary evidence that comes later.



Because of the power of first impressions, a speaker who seems unprepared in his or her introduction will likely be negatively evaluated even if the speech improves. Nadine Dereza – ‘[Insider Secrets of Public Speaking](#)’. – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Your introduction is only a fraction of your speech, but in that first minute or so, your audience decides whether or not they are interested in listening to the rest of the speech. There are four objectives that you should accomplish in your introduction. They include getting your audience's attention, introducing your topic, establishing credibility and relevance, and previewing your main points.

Getting Your Audience's Attention

There are several strategies you can use to get your audience's attention. Although each can be effective on its own, combining these strategies is also an option. A speaker can get their audience's attention negatively, so think carefully about your choice. The student who began his speech on Habitat for Humanity by banging on the table with a hammer definitely got his audience's attention during his 8:00 a.m. class, but he also lost credibility in that moment because many in the audience probably saw him as a joker rather than a serious speaker. The student who started her persuasive speech against animal testing with a little tap dance number ended up stumbling through the first half of her speech when she was thrown off by the confused looks the audience gave her when she finished her “attention getter.” These cautionary tales point out the importance of choosing an attention getter that is appropriate, meaning that it's unusual enough to get people interested—but not over the top—and relevant to your speech topic.

Use Humor

In one of my favorite episodes of the television show *The Office*, titled “Dwight's Speech,” the boss, Michael Scott, takes the stage at a regional sales meeting for a very nervous Dwight, who has been called up to accept an award. In typical Michael Scott style, he attempts to win the crowd over with humor and fails miserably. I begin this section on using humor to start a speech with this example because I think erring on the side of caution when it comes to humor tends to be the best option, especially for new speakers. I have had students who think that cracking a joke will help lighten the mood and reduce their anxiety. If well executed, this is a likely result and can boost the confidence of the speaker and get the audience hooked. But even successful comedians still bomb, and many recount stories of excruciating instances in which they failed to connect with an audience. So the danger lies in the poorly executed joke, which has the reverse effect, heightening the speaker's anxiety and leading the audience to question the speaker's competence and credibility. In general, when a speech is supposed to be professional or formal, as many in-class speeches are, humor is more likely to be seen as incongruous with the occasion. But there are other situations where a humorous opening might fit perfectly. For example, a farewell speech to a longtime colleague could start with an inside joke. When considering humor, it's good to get feedback on your idea from a trusted source.

Cite a Startling Fact or Statistic

As you research your topic, take note of any information that defies your expectations or surprises you. If you have a strong reaction to something you learn, your audience may, too. When using a startling fact or statistic as an attention getter, it's important to get the most bang for your buck. You can do this by sharing more than one fact or statistic that builds up the audience's interest. When using numbers, it's also good to repeat and/or repackage the statistics so they stick in the audience's mind, which you can see in the following example:

In 1994, sixteen states reported that 15–19 percent of their population was considered obese. Every other state reported obesity rates less than that. In 2010, no states reported obesity rates in that same category of 15–19 percent, because every single state had at least a 20 percent obesity rate. In just six years, we went from no states with an obesity rate higher than 19 percent, to fifty. Currently, the national obesity rate for adults is nearly 34 percent. This dramatic rise in obesity is charted on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website, and these rates are expected to continue to rise.

The speaker could have just started by stating that nearly 34 percent of the US adult population was obese in 2011. But statistics aren't meaningful without context. So sharing how that number rose dramatically over six years helps the audience members see the trend and understand what the current number means. The fourth sentence repackages and summarizes the statistics mentioned in the first three sentences, which again sets up an interesting and informative contrast. Last, the speaker provides a verbal citation for the source of the statistic.

Use a Quotation

Some quotations are attention getting and some are boring. Some quotations are relevant and moving and some are abstract and stale. If you choose to open your speech with a quotation, choose one that is attention getting, relevant, and moving. The following example illustrates some tips for using a quote to start a speech: “‘The most important question in the world is ‘Why is the child crying?’” This quote from author Alice Walker is at the heart of my speech today. Too often, people see children suffering at the hands of bullies and do nothing about it until it's too late. That's why I believe that all public schools should adopt a zero-tolerance policy on bullying.”

Notice that the quote is delivered first in the speech, then the source of the quote is cited. Since the quote, like a startling fact or statistic just discussed, is the attention-getting part, it's better to start with that than the citation. Next, the speaker explains why the quote is relevant to the speech. Just because a quote seems relevant to you doesn't mean the audience will also pick up on that relevance, so it's best to make that explicit right after you use and cite the quote. Also evaluate the credibility of the source on which you found the quote. Many websites that make quotations available care more about selling pop-up ads than the accuracy of their information. Students who don't double-check the accuracy of the quote may end up attributing the quote to the wrong person or citing a made-up quote.

Ask a Question

Starting a speech with a question is a common attention getter, but in reality many of the questions that I have heard start a speech are not very attention getting. It's important to note that just because you use one of these strategies, that doesn't make it automatically appealing to an audience. A question can be mundane and boring just like a statistic, quotation, or story can.

A rhetorical question is different from a direct question. When a speaker asks a direct question, they actually want a response from their audience. A rhetorical question is designed to elicit a mental response from the audience, not a verbal or nonverbal one. In short, a rhetorical question makes an audience think. Asking a direct question of your audience is warranted only if the speaker plans on doing something with the information they get from the audience. I can't recall a time in which a student asked a direct question to start their speech and did anything with that information. Let's say a student starts the speech with the direct question “By a show of hands, how many people have taken public transportation in the past week?” and sixteen out of twenty students raise their hands. If the speaker is arguing that more students should use public transportation and she expected fewer students to raise their hands, is she going to change her speech angle on the spot? Since most speakers move on from their direct question without addressing the response they got from the audience, they have not made their attention getter relevant to their topic. So, if you use a direct question, make sure you have a point to it and some way to incorporate the responses into the speech.

A safer bet is to ask a rhetorical question that elicits only a mental response. A good rhetorical question can get the audience primed to think about the content of the speech. When asked as a series of questions and combined with startling statistics or facts, this strategy can create suspense and hook an audience. The following is a series of rhetorical questions used in a speech against the testing of cosmetics on animals: “Was the toxicity of the shampoo you used this morning tested on the eyes of rabbits? Would you

let someone put a cosmetic in your dog's eye to test its toxicity level? Have you ever thought about how many products that you use every day are tested on animals?" Make sure you pause after your rhetorical question to give the audience time to think. Don't pause for too long, though, or an audience member may get restless and think that you're waiting for an actual response and blurt out what he or she was thinking.

Tell a Story

When you tell a story, whether in the introduction to your speech or not, you should aim to paint word pictures in the minds of your audience members. You might tell a story from your own life or recount a story you found in your research. You may also use a hypothetical story, which has the advantage of allowing you to use your creativity and help place your audience in unusual situations that neither you nor they have actually experienced. When using a hypothetical story, you should let your audience know it's not real, and you should present a story that the audience can relate to. Speakers often let the audience know a story is not real by starting with the word *imagine*. As I noted, a hypothetical example can allow you to speak beyond the experience of you and your audience members by having them imagine themselves in unusual circumstances. These circumstances should not be so unusual that the audience can't relate to them. I once had a student start her speech by saying, "Imagine being held as a prisoner of war for seven years." While that's definitely a dramatic opener, I don't think students in our class were able to really get themselves into that imagined space in the second or two that we had before the speaker moved on. It may have been better for the speaker to say, "Think of someone you really care about. Visualize that person in your mind. Now, imagine that days and weeks go by and you haven't heard from that person. Weeks turn into months and years, and you have no idea if they are alive or dead." The speaker could go on to compare that scenario to the experiences of friends and family of prisoners of war. While we may not be able to imagine being held captive for years, we all know what it's like to experience uncertainty regarding the safety of a loved one.

Introducing the Topic

Introducing the topic of your speech is the most obvious objective of an introduction, but speakers sometimes forget to do this or do not do it clearly. As the author of your speech, you may think that what you're talking about is obvious. Sometimes a speech topic doesn't become obvious until the middle of a speech. By that time, however, it's easy to lose an audience that didn't get clearly told the topic of the speech in the introduction. Introducing the topic is done before the preview of main points and serves as an introduction to the overall topic. The following are two ways a speaker could introduce the topic of childhood obesity: "Childhood obesity is a serious problem facing our country," or "Today I'll persuade you that childhood obesity is a problem that can no longer be ignored."

Establishing Credibility and Relevance

The way you write and deliver your introduction makes an important first impression on your audience. But you can also take a moment in your introduction to explicitly set up your credibility in relation to your speech topic. If you have training, expertise, or credentials (e.g., a degree, certificate, etc.) relevant to your topic, you can share that with your audience. It may also be appropriate to mention firsthand experience, previous classes you have taken, or even a personal interest related to your topic. For example, I had a student deliver a speech persuading the audience that the penalties for texting and driving should be stricter. In his introduction, he mentioned that his brother's girlfriend was killed when she was hit by a car driven by someone who was texting. His personal story shared in the introduction added credibility to the overall speech.

I ask my students to imagine that when they finish their speech, everyone in the audience will raise their hands and ask the question "Why should I care about what you just said?"



Figure: Imagine that your audience members will all ask, “Why should I care about your topic?” and work to proactively address relevance throughout your speech. [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) – CC BY 2.0.

This would no doubt be a nerve-racking experience. However, you can address this concern by preemptively answering this question in your speech. A good speaker will strive to make his or her content relevant to the audience throughout the speech, and starting this in the introduction appeals to an audience because the speaker is already answering the “so what?” question. When you establish relevance, you want to use immediate words like *I*, *you*, *we*, *our*, or *your*. You also want to address the audience sitting directly in front of you. While many students are good at making a topic relevant to humanity in general, it takes more effort to make the content relevant to a specific audience.

Previewing Your Main Points

The preview of main points is usually the last sentence of your introduction and serves as a map of what’s to come in the speech. The preview narrows your introduction of the topic down to the main ideas you will focus on in the speech. Your preview should be one sentence, should include wording that is parallel to the key wording of your main points in the body of your speech, and should preview your main points in the same order you discuss them in your speech. Make sure your wording is concise so your audience doesn’t think there will be four points when there are only three. The following example previews the main points for a speech on childhood obesity: “Today I’ll convey the seriousness of the obesity epidemic among children by reviewing some of the causes of obesity, common health problems associated with it, and steps we can take to help ensure our children maintain a healthy weight.”

Conclusion

How you conclude a speech leaves an impression on your audience. There are three important objectives to accomplish in your conclusion. They include summarizing the importance of your topic, reviewing your main points, and closing your speech.

Summarizing the Importance of Your Topic

After you transition from the body of your speech to the conclusion, you will summarize the importance of your topic. This is the “take-away” message, or another place where you can answer the “so what?” question. This can often be a rewording of your thesis statement. The speech about childhood obesity could be summarized by saying, “Whether you have children or not, childhood obesity is a national problem that needs to be addressed.”

Reviewing Your Main Points

Once you have summarized the overall importance of your speech, you review the main points. The review statement in the conclusion is very similar to the preview statement in your introduction. You don’t have to use the exact same wording, but you still want to have recognizable parallelism that connects the key idea of each main point to the preview, review, and transitions. The review statement for the childhood obesity speech could be “In an effort to convince you of this, I cited statistics showing the rise of obesity, explained common health problems associated with obesity, and proposed steps that parents should take to ensure their children maintain a healthy weight.”

Closing Your Speech

Like the attention getter, your closing statement is an opportunity for you to exercise your creativity as a speaker. Many students have difficulty wrapping up the speech with a sense of closure and completeness. In terms of closure, a well-written and well-delivered closing line signals to your audience that your speech is over, which cues their applause. You should not have to put an artificial end to your speech by saying “thank you” or “that’s it” or “that’s all I have.” In terms of completeness, the closing line should relate to the overall speech and should provide some “take-away” message that may leave an audience thinking or propel them to action. A sample closing line could be “For your health, for our children’s health, and for our country’s health, we must take steps to address childhood obesity today.” You can also create what I call the “ribbon and bow” for your speech by referring back to the introduction in the closing of your speech. For example, you may finish an illustration or answer a rhetorical question you started in the introduction.

Although the conclusion is likely the shortest part of the speech, I suggest that students practice it often. Even a well-written conclusion can be ineffective if the delivery is not good. Conclusions often turn out bad because they weren’t practiced enough. If you only practice your speech starting from the beginning, you may not get to your conclusion very often because you stop to fix something in one of the main points, get interrupted, or run out of time. Once you’ve started your speech, anxiety may increase as you near the end and your brain becomes filled with thoughts of returning to your seat, so even a well-practiced conclusion can fall short. Practicing your conclusion by itself several times can help prevent this.

Key Takeaways

- The speech consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. When organizing a speech, start with the body.
- Determine the main points of a speech based on your research and supporting materials. The main points should support the thesis statement and help achieve the general and specific purposes.
- The organizational patterns that can help arrange the main points of a speech are topical, chronological, spatial, problem-solution, cause-effect, and Monroe’s Motivated Sequence.
- Incorporating supporting material helps fill in the main points by creating subpoints. As supporting material is added to the speech, citation information should be included so you will have the information necessary to verbally cite your sources.
- Organizing signposts help connect the introduction, body, and conclusion of a speech. Organizing signposts should be written using parallel wording to the central idea of each main point.
- A speaker should do the following in the introduction of a speech: get the audience’s attention, introduce the topic, establish credibility and relevance, and preview the main points.
- A speaker should do the following in the conclusion of a speech: summarize the importance of the topic, review the main points, and provide closure.

Exercises

1. Identifying the main points of reference material you plan to use in your speech can help you determine your main points/subpoints. Take one of your sources for your speech and list the main points and any subpoints from the article. Are any of them suitable main points for your speech? Why or why not?
2. Which organizational pattern listed do you think you will use for your speech, and why?
3. Write out verbal citations for some of the sources you plan to use in your speech, using the examples cited in the chapter as a guide.
4. Draft the opening and closing lines of your speech. Remember to tap into your creativity to try to engage the audience. Is there any way you can tie the introduction and conclusion together to create a “ribbon and bow” for your speech?

References

- Lass-Hennemann, J., Linn K. Kuehl, André Schulz, Melly S. Oitzl, and Hartmut Schachinger, “Stress Strengthens Memory of First Impressions of Others’ Positive Personality Traits,” *PLoS ONE* 6, no. 1 (2011): 1.
- Laws, E. L., Jennifer M. Apperson, Stephanie Buchert, and Norman J. Bregman, “Student Evaluations of Instruction: When Are Enduring First Impressions Formed?” *North American Journal of Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2010): 81.
- Monroe, A. H., and Douglas Ehninger, *Principles of Speech*, 5th brief ed. (Chicago, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1964).
- Winans, J. A., *Public Speaking* (New York: Century, 1917), 411.

This page titled [4.3: Organizing](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- **9.3: Organizing** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

4.4: Outlining

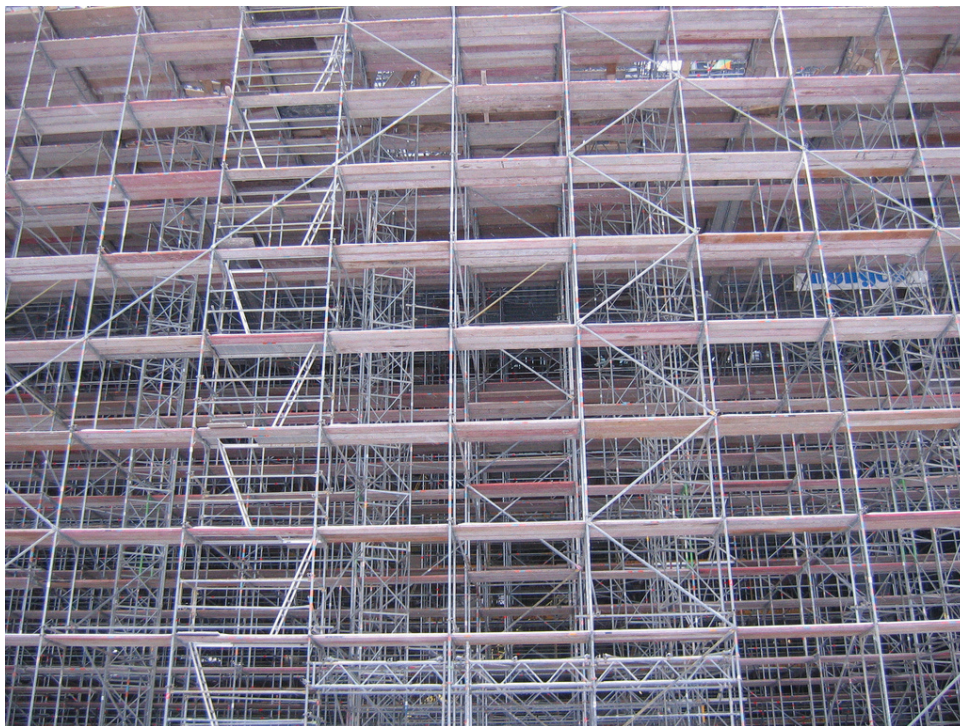
Learning Objectives

1. Explain the principles of outlining.
2. Create a formal outline.
3. Explain the importance of writing for speaking.
4. Create a speaking outline.

Think of your outline as a living document that grows and takes form throughout your speech-making process. When you first draft your general purpose, specific purpose, and thesis statement, you could create a new document on your computer and plug those in, essentially starting your outline. As you review your research and distill the information down into separate central ideas that support your specific purpose and thesis, type those statements into the document. Once you've chosen your organizational pattern and are ready to incorporate supporting material, you can quote and paraphrase your supporting material along with the bibliographic information needed for your verbal citations into the document. By this point, you have a good working outline, and you can easily cut and paste information to move it around and see how it fits into the main points, subpoints, and sub-subpoints. As your outline continues to take shape, you will want to follow established principles of outlining to ensure a quality speech.

The Formal Outline

The formal outline is a full-sentence outline that helps you prepare for your speech. It includes the introduction and conclusion, the main content of the body, key supporting materials, citation information written into the sentences in the outline, and a references page for your speech. The formal outline also includes a title, the general purpose, specific purpose, and thesis statement. It's important to note that an outline is different from a script. While a script contains everything that will be said, an outline includes the main content. Therefore you shouldn't include every word you're going to say on your outline. This allows you more freedom as a speaker to adapt to your audience during your speech. Students sometimes complain about having to outline speeches or papers, but it is a skill that will help you in other contexts. Being able to break a topic down into logical divisions and then connect the information together will help ensure that you can prepare for complicated tasks or that you're prepared for meetings or interviews. I use outlines regularly to help me organize my thoughts and prepare for upcoming projects.



Outlining provides a scaffolding, or structure, that will help ensure your speech is logical, coherent, and organized. [Wikimedia Commons](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Principles of Outlining

There are principles of outlining you can follow to make your outlining process more efficient and effective. Four principles of outlining are consistency, unity, coherence, and emphasis (DuBois, 1929). In terms of consistency, you should follow standard outlining format. In standard outlining format, main points are indicated by capital roman numerals, subpoints are indicated by capital letters, and sub-subpoints are indicated by Arabic numerals. Further divisions are indicated by either lowercase letters or lowercase roman numerals.

The principle of unity means that each letter or number represents one idea. One concrete way to help reduce the amount of ideas you include per item is to limit each letter or number to one complete sentence. If you find that one subpoint has more than one idea, you can divide it into two subpoints. Limiting each component of your outline to one idea makes it easier to then plug in supporting material and helps ensure that your speech is coherent. In the following example from a speech arguing that downloading music from peer-to-peer sites should be legal, two ideas are presented as part of a main point.

- Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs helps market new music and doesn't hurt record sales.

The main point could be broken up into two distinct ideas that can be more fully supported.

1. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs helps market new music.
2. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs doesn't hurt record sales.

Following the principle of unity should help your outline adhere to the principle of coherence, which states that there should be a logical and natural flow of ideas, with main points, subpoints, and sub-subpoints connecting to each other (Winans, 1917). Shorter phrases and keywords can make up the speaking outline, but you should write complete sentences throughout your formal outline to ensure coherence. The principle of coherence can also be met by making sure that when dividing a main point or subpoint, you include at least two subdivisions. After all, it defies logic that you could divide anything into just one part. Therefore if you have an A, you must have a B, and if you have a 1, you must have a 2. If you can easily think of one subpoint but are having difficulty identifying another one, that subpoint may not be robust enough to stand on its own. Determining which ideas are coordinate with each other and which are subordinate to each other will help divide supporting information into the outline (Winans, 1917). Coordinate points are on the same level of importance in relation to the thesis of the speech or the central idea of a main point. In the following example, the two main points (I, II) are coordinate with each other. The two subpoints (A, B) are also coordinate with each other. Subordinate points provide evidence or support for a main idea or thesis. In the following example, subpoint A and subpoint B are subordinate to main point II. You can look for specific words to help you determine any errors in distinguishing coordinate and subordinate points. Your points/subpoints are likely coordinate when you would connect the two statements using any of the following: *and*, *but*, *yet*, *or*, or *also*. In the example, the word *also* appears in B, which connects it, as a coordinate point, to A. The points/subpoints are likely subordinate if you would connect them using the following: *since*, *because*, *in order that*, *to explain*, or *to illustrate*. In the example, 1 and 2 are subordinate to A because they support that sentence.

1. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs helps market new music.
2. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs doesn't hurt record sales.
 1. John Borland, writing for CNET.com in 2004, cited research conducted by professors from Harvard and the University of North Carolina that observed 1.75 million downloads from two file-sharing programs.
 1. They conclude that the rapid increase in music downloading over the past few years does not significantly contribute to declining record sales.
 2. Their research even suggests that the practice of downloading music may even have a "slight positive effect on the sales of the top albums."
 2. A 2010 Government Accountability Office Report also states that sampling "pirated" goods could lead consumers to buy the "legitimate" goods.

The principle of emphasis states that the material included in your outline should be engaging and balanced. As you place supporting material into your outline, choose the information that will have the most impact on your audience. Choose information that is proxemic and relevant, meaning that it can be easily related to the audience's lives because it matches their interests or ties into current events or the local area. Remember primacy and recency discussed earlier and place the most engaging information first or last in a main point depending on what kind of effect you want to have. Also make sure your information is balanced. The outline serves as a useful visual representation of the proportions of your speech. You can tell by the amount of space a main point, subpoint, or sub-subpoint takes up in relation to other points of the same level whether or not your speech is balanced. If one subpoint is a half a page, but a main point is only a quarter of a page, then you may want to consider making the subpoint a main

point. Each part of your speech doesn't have to be equal. The first or last point may be more substantial than a middle point if you are following primacy or recency, but overall the speech should be relatively balanced.

Sample Formal Outline

The following outline shows the standards for formatting and content and can serve as an example as you construct your own outline. Check with your instructor to see if he or she has specific requirements for speech outlines that may differ from what is shown here.

Title: The USA's Neglected Sport: Soccer

General purpose: To persuade

Specific purpose: By the end of my speech, the audience will believe that soccer should be more popular in the United States.

Thesis statement: Soccer isn't as popular in the United States as it is in the rest of the world because people do not know enough about the game; however, there are actions we can take to increase its popularity.

Introduction

Attention getter: GOOOOOOOOOOOOAL! GOAL! GOAL! GOOOOOOOAL!

Introduction of topic: If you've ever heard this excited yell coming from your television, then you probably already know that my speech today is about soccer.

Credibility and relevance: Like many of you, I played soccer on and off as a kid, but I was never really exposed to the culture of the sport. It wasn't until recently, when I started to watch some of the World Cup games with international students in my dorm, that I realized what I'd been missing out on. Soccer is the most popular sport in the world, but I bet that, like most US Americans, it only comes on your radar every few years during the World Cup or the Olympics. If, however, you lived anywhere else in the world, soccer (or football, as it is more often called) would likely be a much larger part of your life.

Preview: In order to persuade you that soccer should be more popular in the United States, I'll explain why soccer isn't as popular in the United States and describe some of the actions we should take to change our beliefs and attitudes about the game.

Transition: Let us begin with the problem of soccer's unpopularity in America.

Body

1. Although soccer has a long history as a sport, it hasn't taken hold in the United States to the extent that it has in other countries.
 1. Soccer has been around in one form or another for thousands of years.
 1. The president of FIFA, which is the international governing body for soccer, was quoted in David Goldblatt's 2008 book, *The Ball is Round*, as saying, "Football is as old as the world...People have always played some form of football, from its very basic form of kicking a ball around to the game it is today."
 2. Basil Kane, author of the book *Soccer for American Spectators*, reiterates this fact when he states, "Nearly every society at one time or another claimed its own form of kicking game."
 2. Despite this history, the United States hasn't caught "soccer fever" for several different reasons.
 1. Sports fans in the United States already have lots of options when it comes to playing and watching sports.
 1. Our own "national sports" such as football, basketball, and baseball take up much of our time and attention, which may prevent people from engaging in an additional sport.
 2. Statistics unmistakably show that soccer viewership is low as indicated by the much-respected Pew Research group, which reported in 2006 that only 4 percent of adult US Americans they surveyed said that soccer was their favorite sport to watch.
 1. Comparatively, 34 percent of those surveyed said that football was their favorite sport to watch.
 2. In fact, soccer just barely beat out ice skating, with 3 percent of the adults surveyed indicating that as their favorite sport to watch.
 2. The attitudes and expectations of sports fans in the United States also prevent soccer's expansion into the national sports consciousness.
 1. One reason Americans don't enjoy soccer as much as other sports is due to our shortened attention span, which has been created by the increasingly fast pace of our more revered sports like football and basketball.

1. According to the 2009 article from BleacherReport.com, “An American Tragedy: Two Reasons Why We Don’t Like Soccer,” the average length of a play in the NFL is six seconds, and there is a scoring chance in the NBA every twenty-four seconds.
2. This stands in stark comparison to soccer matches, which are played in two forty-five-minute periods with only periodic breaks in play.
2. Our lack of attention span isn’t the only obstacle that limits our appreciation for soccer; we are also set in our expectations.
 1. The BleacherReport article also points out that unlike with football, basketball, and baseball—all sports in which the United States has most if not all the best teams in the world—we know that the best soccer teams in the world aren’t based in the United States.
 2. We also expect that sports will offer the same chances to compare player stats and obsess over data that we get from other sports, but as Chad Nielsen of ESPN.com states, “There is no quantitative method to compare players from different leagues and continents.”
 3. Last, as legendary sports writer Frank Deford wrote in a 2012 article on *Sports Illustrated*’s website, Americans don’t like ties in sports, and 30 percent of all soccer games end tied, as a draw, deadlocked, or nil-nil.

Transition: Although soccer has many problems that it would need to overcome to be more popular in the United States, I think there are actions we can take now to change our beliefs and attitudes about soccer in order to give it a better chance.

2. Soccer is the most popular sport in the world, and there have to be some good reasons that account for this status.
 1. As US Americans, we can start to enjoy soccer more if we better understand why the rest of the world loves it so much.
 1. As was mentioned earlier, Chad Nielsen of ESPN.com notes that American sports fans can’t have the same stats obsession with soccer that they do with baseball or football, but fans all over the world obsess about their favorite teams and players.
 1. Fans argue every day, in bars and cafés from Baghdad to Bogotá, about statistics for goals and assists, but as Nielsen points out, with the game of soccer, such stats still fail to account for varieties of style and competition.
 2. So even though the statistics may be different, bonding over or arguing about a favorite team or player creates communities of fans that are just as involved and invested as even the most loyal team fans in the United States.
 2. Additionally, Americans can start to realize that some of the things we might initially find off putting about the sport of soccer are actually some of its strengths.
 1. The fact that soccer statistics aren’t poured over and used to make predictions makes the game more interesting.
 2. The fact that the segments of play in soccer are longer and the scoring lower allows for the game to have a longer arc, meaning that anticipation can build and that a game might be won or lost by only one goal after a long and even-matched game.
 2. We can also begin to enjoy soccer more if we view it as an additional form of entertainment.
 1. As Americans who like to be entertained, we can seek out soccer games in many different places.
 1. There is most likely a minor or even a major league soccer stadium team within driving distance of where you live.
 2. You can also go to soccer games at your local high school, college, or university.
 2. We can also join the rest of the world in following some of the major soccer celebrities—David Beckham is just the tip of the iceberg.
 3. Getting involved in soccer can also help make our society more fit and healthy.
 1. Soccer can easily be the most athletic sport available to Americans.
 2. In just one game, the popular soccer player Gennaro Gattuso was calculated to have run about 6.2 miles, says Carl Bialik, a numbers expert who writes for *The Wall Street Journal*.
 3. With the growing trend of obesity in America, getting involved in soccer promotes more running and athletic ability than baseball, for instance, could ever provide.
 1. A press release on FIFA’s official website notes that one hour of soccer three times a week has been shown in research to provide significant physical benefits.
 2. If that’s not convincing enough, the website ScienceDaily.com reports that the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports* published a whole special issue titled *Football for Health* that contained fourteen articles supporting the health benefits of soccer.

4. Last, soccer has been praised for its ability to transcend language, culture, class, and country.
 1. The nongovernmental organization Soccer for Peace seeks to use the worldwide popularity of soccer as a peacemaking strategy to bridge the divides of race, religion, and socioeconomic class.
 2. According to their official website, the organization just celebrated its ten-year anniversary in 2012.
 1. Over those ten years the organization has focused on using soccer to bring together people of different religious faiths, particularly people who are Jewish and Muslim.
 2. In 2012, three first-year college students, one Christian, one Jew, and one Muslim, dribbled soccer balls for 450 miles across the state of North Carolina to help raise money for Soccer for Peace.
5. A press release on the World Association of Nongovernmental Organizations's official website states that from the dusty refugee camps of Lebanon to the upscale new neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, "soccer turns heads, stops conversations, causes breath to catch, and stirs hearts like virtually no other activity."

Conclusion

Transition to conclusion and summary of importance: In conclusion, soccer is a sport that has a long history, can help you get healthy, and can bring people together.

Review of main points: Now that you know some of the obstacles that prevent soccer from becoming more popular in the United States and several actions we can take to change our beliefs and attitudes about soccer, I hope you agree with me that it's time for the United States to join the rest of the world in welcoming soccer into our society.

Closing statement: The article from BleacherReport.com that I cited earlier closes with the following words that I would like you to take as you leave here today: "We need to learn that just because there is no scoring chance that doesn't mean it is boring. We need to see that soccer is not for a select few, but for all. We only need two feet and a ball. We need to stand up and appreciate the beautiful game."

References

- Araos, C. (2009, December 10). An American tragedy: Two reasons why we don't like soccer. *Bleacher Report: World Football*. Retrieved from <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/306338-an-american-tragedy-the-two-reasons-why-we-dont-like-soccer>
- Bialik, C. (2007, May 23). Tracking how far soccer players run. *WSJ Blogs: The Numbers Guy*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.wsj.com/numbersguy/tracking-how-far-soccer-players-run-112>
- Deford, F. (2012, May 16). Americans don't like ties in sports. *SI.com: Viewpoint*. Retrieved from sportsillustrated.cnn.com/201.ies/index.html
- FIFA.com (2007, September 6). Study: Playing football provides health benefits for all. Retrieved from <http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/footballdevelopment/medical/news/newsid=589317/index.html>
- Goldblatt, D. (2008). *The ball is round: A global history of soccer*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Kane, B. (1970). *Soccer for American spectators: A fundamental guide to modern soccer*. South Brunswick, NJ: A. S. Barnes.
- Nielsen, C. (2009, May 27). "What I do is play soccer." *ESPN*. Retrieved from <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/news/story?id=4205057>
- Pew Research Center. (2006, June 14). Americans to rest of world: Soccer not really our thing. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/315/americans-to-rest-of-world-soccer-not-really-our-thing>
- ScienceDaily.com. (2010, April 7). Soccer improves health, fitness, and social abilities. *ScienceDaily.com: Science news*. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/04/100406093524.htm>
- Selle, R. R. (n.d.). Soccer for peace. *Wango.org: News*. Retrieved from <http://www.wango.org/news/news/psmp.htm>
- Soccer For Peace. (2012). Kicking across Carolina. *SFP news*. Retrieved from <http://www.soccerforpeace.com/2012-10-03-17-18-08/sfp-news/44-kicking-across-carolina.html>

Examples of APA Formatting for References

The citation style of the American Psychological Association (APA) is most often used in communication studies when formatting research papers and references. The following examples are formatted according to the sixth edition of the APA Style Manual.

Links are included to the OWL Purdue website, which is one of the most credible online sources for APA format. Of course, to get the most accurate information, it is always best to consult the style manual directly, which can be found in your college or university's library.

Books

For more information on citing books in APA style on your references page, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08>.

Single Author

Two Authors

Warren, J. T., & Fassett, D. L. (2011). *Communication: A critical/cultural introduction*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Chapter from Edited Book

Mumby, D. K. (2011). Power and ethics. In G. Cheney, S. May, & D. Munshi (Eds.), *The handbook of communication ethics* (pp. 84–98). New York, NY: Routledge.

Periodicals

For more information on citing articles from periodicals in APA style on your references page, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/07>.

Magazine

Huang, L. (2011, August 1). The death of English (LOL). *Newsweek*, 152(6), 8.

Newspaper

Kornblum, J. (2007, October 23). Privacy? That's old-school: Internet generation views openness in a different way. *USA Today*, 1D–2D.

Journal Article

Bodie, G. D. (2012). A racing heart, rattling knees, and ruminative thoughts: Defining, explaining, and treating public speaking anxiety. *Communication Education*, 59(1), 70–105.

Online Sources

For more information on citing articles from online sources in APA style on your references page, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10>.

Online Newspaper Article

Perman, C. (2011, September 8). Bad economy? A good time for a steamy affair. *USA Today*. Retrieved from www.usatoday.com/money/economy/story/2011-09-10/economy-affairs-divorce-marriage/50340948/1

Online News Website

Fraser, C. (2011, September 22). The women defying France's full-face veil ban. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15023308>

Online Magazine

Cullen, L. T. (2007, April 26). Employee diversity training doesn't work. *Time*. Retrieved from www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1615183,00.html

Government Document or Report Retrieved Online

Pew Research Center. (2010, November 18). The decline of marriage and rise of new families. Retrieved from pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010-families.pdf

Website

Kwintessential. (n.d.). Cross cultural business blunders. Retrieved from www.kwintessential.co.uk/cult.-blunders.html

The Speaking Outline

The formal outline is a full-sentence outline that helps as you prepare for your speech, and the speaking outline is a keyword and phrase outline that helps you deliver your speech. While the formal outline is important to ensure that your content is coherent and your ideas are balanced and expressed clearly, the speaking outline helps you get that information out to the audience. Make sure you budget time in your speech preparation to work on the speaking outline. Skimping on the speaking outline will show in your delivery.

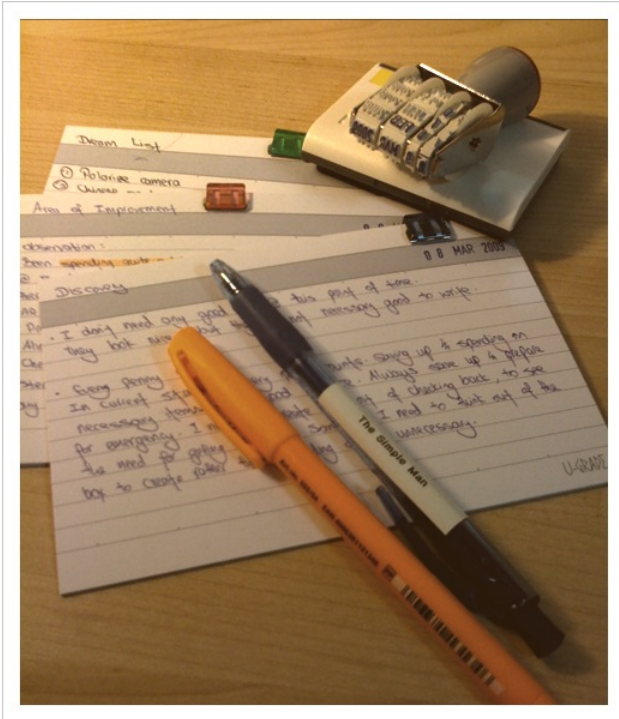


Figure: Using note cards for your speaking outline will help you be able to move around and gesture more freely than using full sheets of paper. Justin See (coming back) – [My Pile of Index Card](#) – CC BY 2.0.

You may convert your formal outline into a speaking outline using a computer program. I often resave a file and then reformat the text so it's more conducive to referencing while actually speaking to an audience. You may also choose, or be asked to, create a speaking outline on note cards. Note cards are a good option when you want to have more freedom to gesture or know you won't have a lectern on which to place notes printed on full sheets of paper. In either case, this entails converting the full-sentence outline to a keyword or key-phrase outline. Speakers will need to find a balance between having too much or too little content on their speaking outlines. You want to have enough information to prevent fluency hiccups as you stop to mentally retrieve information, but you don't want to have so much information that you read your speech, which lessens your eye contact and engagement with the audience. Budgeting sufficient time to work on your speaking outline will allow you to practice your speech with different amounts of notes to find what works best for you. Since the introduction and conclusion are so important, it may be useful to include notes to ensure that you remember to accomplish all the objectives of each.

Aside from including important content on your speaking outline, you may want to include speaking cues. Speaking cues are reminders designed to help your delivery. You may write "(PAUSE)" before and after your preview statement to help you remember that important nonverbal signpost. You might also write "(MAKE EYE CONTACT)" as a reminder not to read unnecessarily from your cards. Overall, my advice is to make your speaking outline work for you. It's your last line of defense when you're in front of an audience, so you want it to help you, not hurt you.

Writing for Speaking

As you compose your outlines, write in a way that is natural for you to speak but also appropriate for the expectations of the occasion. Since we naturally speak with contractions, write them into your formal and speaking outlines. You should begin to read your speech aloud as you are writing the formal outline. As you read each section aloud, take note of places where you had difficulty saying a word or phrase or had a fluency hiccup, then go back to those places and edit them to make them easier for you

to say. This will make you more comfortable with the words in front of you while you are speaking, which will improve your verbal and nonverbal delivery.

Tips for Note Cards

1. The 4 × 6 inch index cards provide more space and are easier to hold and move than 3.5 × 5 inch cards.
2. Find a balance between having so much information on your cards that you are tempted to read from them and so little information that you have fluency hiccups and verbal fillers while trying to remember what to say.
3. Use bullet points on the left-hand side rather than writing in paragraph form, so your eye can easily catch where you need to pick back up after you've made eye contact with the audience. Skipping a line between bullet points may also help.
4. Include all parts of the introduction/conclusion and signposts for backup.
5. Include key supporting material and wording for verbal citations.
6. Only write on the front of your cards.
7. Do not have a sentence that carries over from one card to the next (can lead to fluency hiccups).
8. If you have difficult-to-read handwriting, you may type your speech and tape or glue it to your cards. Use a font that's large enough for you to see and be neat with the glue or tape so your cards don't get stuck together.
9. Include cues that will help with your delivery. Highlight transitions, verbal citations, or other important information. Include reminders to pause, slow down, breathe, or make eye contact.
10. Your cards should be an extension of your body, not something to play with. Don't wiggle, wring, flip through, or slap your note cards.

Key Takeaways

- The formal outline is a full-sentence outline that helps you prepare for your speech and includes the introduction and conclusion, the main content of the body, citation information written into the sentences of the outline, and a references page.
- The principles of outlining include consistency, unity, coherence, and emphasis.
- Coordinate points in an outline are on the same level of importance in relation to the thesis of the speech or the central idea of a main point. Subordinate points provide evidence for a main idea or thesis.
- The speaking outline is a keyword and phrase outline that helps you deliver your speech and can include speaking cues like "pause," "make eye contact," and so on.
- Write your speech in a manner conducive to speaking. Use contractions, familiar words, and phrases that are easy for you to articulate. Reading your speech aloud as you write it can help you identify places that may need revision to help you more effectively deliver your speech.

Exercises

1. What are some practical uses for outlining outside of this class? Which of the principles of outlining do you think would be most important in the workplace and why?
2. Identify which pieces of information you may use in your speech are coordinate with each other and subordinate.
3. Read aloud what you've written of your speech and identify places that can be reworded to make it easier for you to deliver.

References

DuBois, W. C., *Essentials of Public Speaking* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1929), 104.

Winans, J. A., *Public Speaking* (New York: Century, 1917), 407.

This page titled [4.4: Outlining](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [9.4: Outlining](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Speaking Confidently

Battling Nerves and the Unexpected



Ron Bulovs – [Speech!](#) – CC BY 2.0

One of your biggest concerns about public speaking might be how to deal with nervousness or unexpected events. If that's the case, you're not alone—fear of speaking in public consistently ranks at the top of lists of people's common fears. Some people are not joking when they say they would rather die than stand up and speak in front of a live audience. The fear of public speaking ranks right up there with the fear of flying, death, and spiders (Wallechinsky, Wallace, & Wallace, 1977). Even if you are one of the fortunate few who don't typically get nervous when speaking in public, it's important to recognize things that can go wrong and be mentally prepared for them. On occasion, everyone misplaces speaking notes, has technical difficulties with a presentation aid, or gets distracted by an audience member. Speaking confidently involves knowing how to deal with these and other unexpected events while speaking.

In this chapter, we will help you gain knowledge about speaking confidently by exploring what communication apprehension is, examining the different types and causes of communication apprehension, suggesting strategies you can use to manage your fears of public speaking, and providing tactics you can use to deal with a variety of unexpected events you might encounter while speaking.

References

Wallechinsky, D., Wallace, I., & Wallace, A. (1977). *The people's almanac presents the book of lists*. New York, NY: Morrow. See also Boyd, J. H., Rae, D. S., Thompson, J. W., Burns, B. J., Bourdon, K., Locke, B. Z., & Regier, D. A. (1990). Phobia: Prevalence and risk factors. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 25(6), 314–323.

[5.1: What Is Communication Apprehension?](#)

[5.2: All Anxiety Is Not the Same- Sources of Communication Apprehension](#)

[5.3: Reducing Communication Apprehension](#)

[5.4: Coping with the Unexpected](#)

This page titled [5: Speaking Confidently](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

5.1: What Is Communication Apprehension?

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the nature of communication apprehension.
2. List the physiological symptoms of communication apprehension.
3. Identify different misconceptions about communication anxiety.

What is Communication Apprehension?

“Speech is a mirror of the soul,” commented Publilius Syrus, a popular writer in 42 BCE (Bartlett, 1919). Other people come to know who we are through our words. Many different social situations, ranging from job interviews to dating to public speaking, can make us feel uncomfortable as we anticipate that we will be evaluated and judged by others. How well we communicate is intimately connected to our self-image, and the process of revealing ourselves to the evaluation of others can be threatening whether we are meeting new acquaintances, participating in group discussions, or speaking in front of an audience.

Definition of Communication Apprehension

According to James McCroskey, communication apprehension is the broad term that refers to an individual’s “fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 2001). At its heart, communication apprehension is a psychological response to evaluation. This psychological response, however, quickly becomes physical as our body responds to the threat the mind perceives. Our bodies cannot distinguish between psychological and physical threats, so we react as though we were facing a Mack truck barreling in our direction. The body’s circulatory and adrenal systems shift into overdrive, preparing us to function at maximum physical efficiency—the “flight or fight” response (Sapolsky, 2004). Yet instead of running away or fighting, all we need to do is stand and talk. When it comes to communication apprehension, our physical responses are often not well adapted to the nature of the threat we face, as the excess energy created by our body can make it harder for us to be effective public speakers. But because communication apprehension is rooted in our minds, if we understand more about the nature of the body’s responses to stress, we can better develop mechanisms for managing the body’s misguided attempts to help us cope with our fear of social judgment.

Physiological Symptoms of Communication Apprehension

There are a number of physical sensations associated with communication apprehension. We might notice our heart pounding or our hands feeling clammy. We may break out in a sweat. We may have “stomach butterflies” or even feel nauseated. Our hands and legs might start to shake, or we may begin to pace nervously. Our voices may quiver, and we may have a “dry mouth” sensation that makes it difficult to articulate even simple words. Breathing becomes more rapid and, in extreme cases, we might feel dizzy or light-headed. Anxiety about communicating is profoundly disconcerting because we feel powerless to control our bodies. Furthermore, we may become so anxious that we fear we will forget our name, much less remember the main points of the speech we are about to deliver.

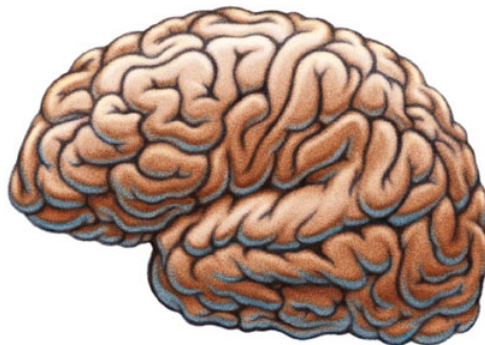


Figure 5.1.1: Isaac Mao – [Brain](#) – CC BY 2.0.

The physiological changes produced in the body at critical moments are designed to contribute to the efficient use of muscles and expand available energy. Circulation and breathing become more rapid so that additional oxygen can reach the muscles. Increased

circulation causes us to sweat. Adrenaline rushes through our body, instructing the body to speed up its movements. If we stay immobile behind a lectern, this hormonal urge to speed up may produce shaking and trembling. Additionally, digestive processes are inhibited so we will not lapse into the relaxed, sleepy state that is typical after eating. Instead of feeling sleepy, we feel butterflies in the pit of our stomach. By understanding what is happening to our bodies in response to the stress of public speaking, we can better cope with these reactions and channel them in constructive directions.

Any conscious emotional state such as anxiety or excitement consists of two components: a primary reaction of the central nervous system and an intellectual interpretation of these physiological responses. The physiological state we label as communication anxiety does not differ from ones we label rage or excitement. Even experienced, effective speakers and performers experience some communication apprehension. What differs is the mental label that we put on the experience. Effective speakers have learned to channel their body's reactions, using the energy released by these physiological reactions to create animation and stage presence.

Myths about Communication Apprehension

A wealth of conventional wisdom surrounds the discomfort of speaking anxiety, as it surrounds almost any phenomenon that makes us uncomfortable. Most of this “folk” knowledge misleads us, directing our attention away from effective strategies for thinking about and coping with anxiety reactions.



Figure 5.1.2: [Speaker at Podium](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Before we look in more detail at the types of communication apprehension, let's dispel some of the myths about it.

1. **People who suffer from speaking anxiety are neurotic.** As we have explained, speaking anxiety is a normal reaction. Good speakers can get nervous just as poor speakers do. Winston Churchill, for example, would get physically ill before major speeches in Parliament. Yet he rallied the British people in a time of crisis. Many people, even the most professional performers, experience anxiety about communicating. Such a widespread problem, Dr. Joyce Brothers contends, “cannot be attributed to deep-seated neuroses” (Brothers, 2008).
2. **Telling a joke or two is always a good way to begin a speech.** Humor is some of the toughest material to deliver effectively because it requires an exquisite sense of timing. Nothing is worse than waiting for a laugh that does not come. Moreover, one person's joke is another person's slander. It is extremely easy to offend when using humor. The same material can play very differently with different audiences. For these reasons, it is not a good idea to start with a joke, particularly if it is not well related to your topic. Humor is just too unpredictable and difficult for many novice speakers. If you insist on using humor, make sure the “joke” is on you, not on someone else. Another tip is never to pause and wait for a laugh that may not come. If the audience catches the joke, fine. If not, you're not left standing in awkward silence waiting for a reaction.
3. **Imagine the audience is naked.** This tip just plain doesn't work because imagining the audience naked will do nothing to calm your nerves. As Malcolm Kushner noted, “There are some folks in the audience I wouldn't want to see naked—especially if I'm trying *not* to be frightened” (Kushner, 1999). The audience is not some abstract image in your mind. It consists of real individuals who you can connect with through your material. To “imagine” the audience is to misdirect your focus from the real people in front of you to an “imagined” group. What we imagine is usually more threatening than the reality that we face.
4. **Any mistake means that you have “blown it.”** We all make mistakes. What matters is not whether we make a mistake but how well we recover. One of the authors of this book was giving a speech and wanted to thank a former student in the audience. Instead of saying “former student,” she said, “former friend.” After the audience stopped laughing, the speaker remarked, “Well, I guess she'll be a *former* friend now!”—which got more laughter from the audience. A speech does not have to be perfect. You just have to make an effort to relate to the audience naturally and be willing to accept your mistakes.

5. **Avoid speaking anxiety by writing your speech out word for word and memorizing it.** Memorizing your speech word for word will likely make your apprehension worse rather than better. Instead of remembering three to five main points and subpoints, you will try to commit to memory more than a thousand bits of data. If you forget a point, the only way to get back on track is to start from the beginning. You are inviting your mind to go blank by overloading it with details. In addition, audiences do not like to listen to “canned,” or memorized, material. Your delivery is likely to suffer if you memorize. Audiences appreciate speakers who talk naturally to them rather than recite a written script.
6. **Audiences are out to get you.** With only a few exceptions, which we will talk about in Section 3.2 “All Anxiety Is Not the Same: Sources of Communication Apprehension”, the natural state of audiences is empathy, not antipathy. Most face-to-face audiences are interested in your material, not in your image. Watching someone who is anxious tends to make audience members anxious themselves. Particularly in public speaking classes, audiences want to see you succeed. They know that they will soon be in your shoes and they identify with you, most likely hoping you’ll succeed and give them ideas for how to make their own speeches better. If you establish direct eye contact with real individuals in your audience, you will see them respond to what you are saying, and this response lets you know that you are succeeding.
7. **You will look to the audience as nervous as you feel.** Empirical research has shown that audiences do not perceive the level of nervousness that speakers report feeling (Clevenger, 1959). Most listeners judge speakers as less anxious than the speakers rate themselves. In other words, the audience is not likely to perceive accurately the level of anxiety you might be experiencing. Some of the most effective speakers will return to their seats after their speech and exclaim they were **so** nervous. Listeners will respond, “You didn’t look nervous.” Audiences do not necessarily perceive our fears. Consequently, don’t apologize for your nerves. There is a good chance the audience will not notice if you do not point it out to them.
8. **A little nervousness helps you give a better speech.** This “myth” is true! Professional speakers, actors, and other performers consistently rely on the heightened arousal of nervousness to channel extra energy into their performance. People would much rather listen to a speaker who is alert and enthusiastic than one who is relaxed to the point of boredom. Many professional speakers say that the day they stop feeling nervous is the day they should stop speaking in public. The goal is to control those nerves and channel them into your presentation.

Key Takeaways

- Communication apprehension refers to the fear or anxiety people experience at the thought of being evaluated by others. Some anxiety is a normal part of the communication process.
- The psychological threat individuals perceive in the communication situation prompts physiological changes designed to help the body respond. These physical reactions to stress create the uncomfortable feelings of unease called speech anxiety and may include sweaty palms, shaking, butterflies in the stomach, and dry mouth.
- A great deal of conventional advice for managing stage fright is misleading, including suggestions that speech anxiety is neurotic, that telling a joke is a good opening, that imagining the audience naked is helpful, that any mistake is fatal to an effective speech, that memorizing a script is useful, that audiences are out to get you, and that your audience sees how nervous you really are.

Exercises

1. Create an inventory of the physiological symptoms of communication apprehension you experience when engaged in public speaking. Which ones are you most interested in learning to manage?
2. With a partner or in a small group, discuss which myths create the biggest problems for public speakers. Why do people believe in these myths?

References

- Bartlett, J. (comp.). (1919). Familiar quotations (10th ed.). Rev. and enl. by Nathan Haskell Dole. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company. Retrieved from Bartleby.com website: <http://www.bartleby.com/100>.
- Clevenger, T. J. (1959). A synthesis of experimental research in stage fright. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 45, 135–159. See also Savitsky, K., & Gilovich, T. (2003). The illusion of transparency and the alleviation of speech anxiety. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 39, 601–625.
- Kushner, M. (1999). *Public speaking for dummies*. New York, NY: IDG Books Worldwide, p. 242.
- McCroskey, J. C. (2001). *An introduction to rhetorical communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, p. 40.
- Sapolsky, R. M. (2004). *Why zebras don’t get ulcers* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Henry Holt.

This page titled [5.1: What Is Communication Apprehension?](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

5.2: All Anxiety Is Not the Same- Sources of Communication Apprehension

Learning Objectives

1. Distinguish among the four different types of communication apprehension.
2. Identify various factors that cause communication apprehension.

All Anxiety is Not the Same: Sources of Communication Apprehension

We have said that experiencing some form of anxiety is a normal part of the communication process. Most people are anxious about being evaluated by an audience. Interestingly, many people assume that their nervousness is an experience unique to them. They assume that other people do not feel anxious when confronting the threat of public speaking (McCroskey, 2001). Although anxiety is a widely shared response to the stress of public speaking, not all anxiety is the same. Many researchers have investigated the differences between apprehension grounded in personality characteristics and anxiety prompted by a particular situation at a particular time (Witt, et. al., 2006). McCroskey argues there are four types of communication apprehension: anxiety related to trait, context, audience, and situation (McCroskey, 2001). If you understand these different types of apprehension, you can gain insight into the varied communication factors that contribute to speaking anxiety.

Trait Anxiety

Some people are just more disposed to communication apprehension than others. As Witt, Brown, Roberts, Weisel, Sawyer, and Behnke explain, “Trait anxiety measures how people *generally* feel across situations and time periods” (Witt, et. al., 2006). This means that some people feel more uncomfortable than the average person regardless of the context, audience, or situation. It doesn’t matter whether you are raising your hand in a group discussion, talking with people you meet at a party, or giving speeches in a class, you’re likely to be uncomfortable in all these settings if you experience trait anxiety. While trait anxiety is not the same as shyness, those with high trait anxiety are more likely to avoid exposure to public speaking situations, so their nervousness might be compounded by lack of experience or skill (Witt, et. al., 2006). People who experience trait anxiety may never like public speaking, but through preparation and practice, they can learn to give effective public speeches when they need to do so.

Context Anxiety

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



Figure 5.2.1: MTEA – Michelle Alexander at Podium – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Formality

Some individuals can be perfectly composed when talking at a meeting or in a small group; yet when faced with a more formal public speaking setting, they become intimidated and nervous. As the formality of the communication context increases, the stakes are raised, sometimes prompting more apprehension. Certain communication contexts, such as a press conference or a courtroom,

can make even the most confident individuals nervous. One reason is that these communication contexts presuppose an adversarial relationship between the speaker and some audience members.

Uncertainty

In addition, it is hard to predict and control the flow of information in such contexts, so the level of uncertainty is high. The feelings of context anxiety might be similar to those you experience on the first day of class with a new instructor: you don't know what to expect, so you are more nervous than you might be later in the semester when you know the instructor and the class routine better.

Novelty

Additionally, most of us are not experienced in high-tension communication settings. The novelty of the communication context we encounter is another factor contributing to apprehension. Anxiety becomes more of an issue in communication environments that are new to us, even for those who are normally comfortable with speaking in public.

Most people can learn through practice to cope with their anxiety prompted by formal, uncertain, and novel communication contexts. Fortunately, most public speaking classroom contexts are not adversarial. The opportunities you have to practice giving speeches reduces the novelty and uncertainty of the public speaking context, enabling most students to learn how to cope with anxiety prompted by the communication context.

Audience Anxiety

For some individuals, it is not the communication context that prompts anxiety; it is the people in the audience they face. **Audience anxiety** describes communication apprehension prompted by specific audience characteristics. These characteristics include similarity, subordinate status, audience size, and familiarity.

You might have no difficulty talking to an audience of your peers in student government meetings, but an audience composed of parents and students on a campus visit might make you nervous because of the presence of parents in the audience. The degree of perceived similarity between you and your audience can influence your level of speech anxiety. We all prefer to talk to an audience that we believe shares our values more than to one that does not. The more dissimilar we are compared to our audience members, the more likely we are to be nervous. Studies have shown that subordinate status can also contribute to speaking anxiety (Witt, et. al., 2006). Talking in front of your boss or teacher may be intimidating, especially if you are being evaluated. The size of the audience can also play a role: the larger the audience, the more threatening it may seem. Finally, familiarity can be a factor. Some of us prefer talking to strangers rather than to people we know well. Others feel more nervous in front of an audience of friends and family because there is more pressure to perform well.

Situational Anxiety

Situational anxiety, McCroskey explains, is the communication apprehension created by “the unique combination of influences generated by audience, time and context” (McCroskey, 2001). Each communication event involves several dimensions: physical, temporal, social-psychological, and cultural. These dimensions combine to create a unique communication situation that is different from any previous communication event. The situation created by a given audience, in a given time, and in a given context can coalesce into situational anxiety.

For example, I once had to give a presentation at a general faculty meeting on general education assessment. To my surprise, I found myself particularly nervous about this speech. The audience was familiar to me but was relatively large compared to most classroom settings. I knew the audience well enough to know that my topic was controversial for some faculty members who resented the mandate for assessment coming from top administration. The meeting occurred late on a Friday afternoon, and my presentation was scheduled more than an hour into the two-hour meeting. All these factors combined to produce situational anxiety for me. While I successfully applied the principles that we will discuss in Section 3.3 for managing stage fright, this speaking situation stands out in my mind as one of the most nerve-wracking speaking challenges I have ever faced.

Key Takeaways

- Communication apprehension stems from many sources, including the speaker's personality characteristics, communication context, nature of the audience, or situation.
- Many factors exaggerate communication apprehension. Formality, familiarity, novelty, perceived similarity, and subordinate status are a few of the factors that influence our tendency to feel anxious while speaking.

Exercise

1. Make a list of sources of your communication apprehension. What factors contribute most to your anxiety about public speaking?

References

McCroskey, J. C. (2001). *An introduction to rhetorical communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Witt, P. L., Brown, K. C., Roberts, J. B., Weisel, J., Sawyer, C., & Behnke, R. (2006, March). Somatic anxiety patterns before, during and after giving a public speech. *Southern Communication Journal*, 71, 87–100.

This page titled [5.2: All Anxiety Is Not the Same- Sources of Communication Apprehension](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

5.3: Reducing Communication Apprehension

Learning Objectives

1. Explain steps for managing anxiety in the speech preparation process.
2. Identify effective techniques for coping with anxiety during delivery.
3. Recognize the general options available for stress reduction and anxiety management.

Reducing Communication Apprehension



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

Experiencing some nervousness about public speaking is normal. The energy created by this physiological response can be functional if you harness it as a resource for more effective public speaking. In this section, we suggest a number of steps that you can take to channel your stage fright into excitement and animation. We will begin with specific speech-related considerations and then briefly examine some of the more general anxiety management options available.

Speech-Related Considerations

Communication apprehension does not necessarily remain constant throughout all the stages of speech preparation and delivery. One group of researchers studied the ebb and flow of anxiety levels at four stages in the delivery of a speech. They compared indicators of physiological stress at different milestones in the process:

- anticipation (the minute prior to starting the speech),
- confrontation (the first minute of the speech),
- adaptation (the last minute of the speech), and
- release (the minute immediately following the end of the speech) (Witt, et. al., 2006).

These researchers found that anxiety typically peaked at the anticipatory stage. In other words, we are likely to be most anxious right before we get up to speak. As we progress through our speech, our level of anxiety is likely to decline. Planning your speech to incorporate techniques for managing your nervousness at different times will help you decrease the overall level of stress you experience. We also offer a number of suggestions for managing your reactions while you are delivering your speech.

Think Positively

As we mentioned earlier, communication apprehension begins in the mind as a psychological response. This underscores the importance of a speaker's psychological attitude toward speaking. To prepare yourself mentally for a successful speaking experience, we recommend using a technique called **cognitive restructuring**. Cognitive restructuring is simply changing how you label the physiological responses you will experience. Rather than thinking of public speaking as a dreaded obligation, make a conscious decision to consider it an exciting opportunity. The first audience member that you have to convince is yourself, by

deliberately replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. If you say something to yourself often enough, you will gradually come to believe it.

We also suggest practicing what communication scholars Metcalfe, Beebe, and Beebe call **positive self-talk** rather than **negative self-talk** (Metcalfe, 1994; Beebe, 2000). If you find yourself thinking, “I’m going to forget everything when I get to the front of the room,” turn that negative message around to a positive one. Tell yourself, “I have notes to remind me what comes next, and the audience won’t know if I don’t cover everything in the order I planned.” The idea is to dispute your negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones, even if you think you are “conning” yourself. By monitoring how you talk about yourself, you can unlearn old patterns and change the ways you think about things that produce anxiety.

Reducing Anxiety through Preparation

As we have said earlier in this chapter, uncertainty makes for greater anxiety. Nothing is more frightening than facing the unknown. Although no one can see into the future and predict everything that will happen during a speech, every speaker can and should prepare so that the “unknowns” of the speech event are kept to a minimum. You can do this by gaining as much knowledge as possible about whom you will be addressing, what you will say, how you will say it, and where the speech will take place.

Analyze Your Audience

The audience that we imagine in our minds is almost always more threatening than the reality of the people sitting in front of us. The more information you have about the characteristics of your audience, the more you will be able to craft an effective message. Since your stage fright is likely to be at its highest in the beginning of your speech, it is helpful to open the speech with a technique to prompt an audience response. You might try posing a question, asking for a show of hands, or sharing a story that you know is relevant to your listeners’ experience. When you see the audience responding to you by nodding, smiling, or answering questions, you will have directed the focus of attention from yourself to the audience. Such responses indicate success; they are positively reinforcing, and thus reduce your nervousness.

Clearly Organize Your Ideas

Being prepared as a speaker means knowing the main points of your message so well that you can remember them even when you are feeling highly anxious, and the best way to learn those points is to create an outline for your speech. With a clear outline to follow, you will find it much easier to move from one point to the next without stumbling or getting lost.

A note of caution is in order: you do not want to react to the stress of speaking by writing and memorizing a manuscript. Your audience will usually be able to tell that you wrote your speech out verbatim, and they will tune out very quickly. You are setting yourself up for disaster if you try to memorize a written text because the pressure of having to remember all those particulars will be tremendous. Moreover, if you have a momentary memory lapse during a memorized speech, you may have a lot of trouble continuing without starting over at the beginning.

What you do want to prepare is a simple outline that reminds you of the progression of ideas in your speech. What is important is the order of your points, not the specifics of each sentence. It is perfectly fine if your speech varies in terms of specific language or examples each time you practice it.

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

Adapt Your Language to the Oral Mode

Another reason not to write out your speech as a manuscript is that to speak effectively you want your language to be adapted to the oral, not the written, mode. You will find your speaking anxiety more manageable if you speak in the oral mode because it will help you to feel like you are having a conversation with friends rather than delivering a formal proclamation.

Appropriate oral style is more concrete and vivid than written style. Effective speaking relies on verbs rather than nouns, and the language is less complex. Long sentences may work well for novelists such as William Faulkner or James Joyce, where readers can go back and reread passages two, three, or even seven or eight times. Your listeners, though, cannot “rewind” you in order to catch ideas they miss the first time through.

Don’t be afraid to use personal pronouns freely, frequently saying “I” and “me”—or better yet, “us” and “we.” Personal pronouns are much more effective in speaking than language constructions, such as the following “this author,” because they help you to build a connection with your audience. Another oral technique is to build audience questions into your speech. Rhetorical

questions, questions that do not require a verbal answer, invite the audience to participate with your material by thinking about the implications of the question and how it might be answered. If you are graphic and concrete in your language selection, your audience is more likely to listen attentively. You will be able to see the audience listening, and this feedback will help to reduce your anxiety.

Practice in Conditions Similar to Those You Will Face When Speaking

It is not enough to practice your speech silently in your head. To reduce anxiety and increase the likelihood of a successful performance, you need to practice out loud in a situation similar to the one you will face when actually performing your speech. Practice delivering your speech out loud while standing on your feet. If you make a mistake, do not stop to correct it but continue all the way through your speech; that is what you will have to do when you are in front of the audience.

If possible, practice in the actual room where you will be giving your speech. Not only will you have a better sense of what it will feel like to actually speak, but you may also have the chance to practice using presentation aids and potentially avoid distractions and glitches like incompatible computers, blown projector bulbs, or sunlight glaring in your eyes.

Two very useful tools for anxiety-reducing practice are a clock and a mirror. Use the clock to time your speech, being aware that most novice speakers speak too fast, not too slowly. By ensuring that you are within the time guidelines, you will eliminate the embarrassment of having to cut your remarks short because you've run out of time or of not having enough to say to fulfill the assignment. Use the mirror to gauge how well you are maintaining eye contact with your audience; it will allow you to check that you are looking up from your notes. It will also help you build the habit of using appropriate facial expressions to convey the emotions in your speech. While you might feel a little absurd practicing your speech out loud in front of a mirror, the practice that you do before your speech can make you much less anxious when it comes time to face the audience.

Watch What You Eat

A final tip about preparation is to watch what you eat immediately before speaking. The butterflies in your stomach are likely to be more noticeable if you skip normal meals. While you should eat normally, you should avoid caffeinated drinks because they can make your shaking hands worse. Carbohydrates operate as natural sedatives, so you may want to eat carbohydrates to help slow down your metabolism and to avoid fried or very spicy foods that may upset your stomach. Especially if you are speaking in the morning, be sure to have breakfast. If you haven't had anything to eat or drink since dinner the night before, dizziness and light-headedness are very real possibilities.

Reducing Nervousness during Delivery

Anticipate the Reactions of Your Body

There are a number of steps you can take to counteract the negative physiological effects of stress on the body. **Deep breathing** will help to counteract the effects of excess adrenaline. You can place symbols in your notes, like "slow down" or ☺, that remind you to pause and breathe during points in your speech. It is also a good idea to pause a moment before you get started to set an appropriate pace from the onset. Look at your audience and smile. It is a reflex for some of your audience members to smile back. Those smiles will reassure you that your audience members are friendly.

Physical movement helps to channel some of the excess energy that your body produces in response to anxiety. If at all possible, move around the front of the room rather than remaining imprisoned behind the lectern or gripping it for dear life (avoid pacing nervously from side to side, however). Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the lectern will reveal your shaking hands, use note cards rather than a sheet of paper for your outline. Note cards do not quiver like paper, and they provide you with something to do with your hands.

Vocal warm-ups are also important before speaking. Just as athletes warm up before practice or competition and musicians warm up before playing, speakers need to get their voices ready to speak. Talking with others before your speech or quietly humming to yourself can get your voice ready for your presentation. You can even sing or practice a bit of your speech out loud while you're in the shower (just don't wake the neighbors), where the warm, moist air is beneficial for your vocal mechanism. Gently yawning a few times is also an excellent way to stretch the key muscle groups involved in speaking.

Immediately before you speak, you can relax the muscles of your neck and shoulders, rolling your head gently from side to side. Allow your arms to hang down your sides and stretch out your shoulders. **Isometric exercises** that involve momentarily tensing and then relaxing specific muscle groups are an effective way to keep your muscles from becoming stiff.

Focus on the Audience, Not on Yourself

During your speech, make a point of establishing direct eye contact with your audience members. By looking at individuals, you establish a series of one-to-one contacts similar to interpersonal communication. An audience becomes much less threatening when you think of them not as an anonymous mass but as a collection of individuals.

A colleague once shared his worst speaking experience when he reached the front of the room and forgot everything he was supposed to say. When I asked what he saw when he was in the front of the room, he looked at me like I was crazy. He responded, “I didn’t see anything. All I remember is a mental image of me up there in the front of the room blowing it.” Speaking anxiety becomes more intense if you focus on yourself rather than concentrating on your audience and your material.

Maintain Your Sense of Humor

No matter how well we plan, unexpected things happen. That fact is what makes the public speaking situation so interesting. When the unexpected happens to you, do not let it rattle you. At the end of a class period late in the afternoon of a long day, a student raised her hand and asked me if I knew that I was wearing two different colored shoes, one black and one blue. I looked down and saw that she was right; my shoes did not match. I laughed at myself, complimented the student on her observational abilities and moved on with the important thing, the material I had to deliver.

Stress Management Techniques

Even when we employ positive thinking and are well prepared, some of us still feel a great deal of anxiety about public speaking. When that is the case, it can be more helpful to use stress management than to try to make the anxiety go away.

One general technique for managing stress is **positive visualization**. Visualization is the process of seeing something in your mind’s eye; essentially it is a form of self-hypnosis. Frequently used in sports training, positive visualization involves using the imagination to create images of relaxation or ultimate success. Essentially, you imagine in great detail the goal for which you are striving, say, a rousing round of applause after you give your speech. You mentally picture yourself standing at the front of the room, delivering your introduction, moving through the body of your speech, highlighting your presentation aids, and sharing a memorable conclusion. If you imagine a positive outcome, your body will respond to it as though it were real. Such mind-body techniques create the psychological grounds for us to achieve the goals we have imagined. As we discussed earlier, communication apprehension has a psychological basis, so mind-body techniques such as visualization can be important to reducing anxiety. It’s important to keep in mind, though, that visualization does not mean you can skip practicing your speech out loud. Just as an athlete still needs to work out and practice the sport, you need to practice your speech in order to achieve the positive results you visualize.

Systematic desensitization is a behavioral modification technique that helps individuals overcome anxiety disorders. People with phobias, or irrational fears, tend to avoid the object of their fear. For example, people with a phobia of elevators avoid riding in elevators—and this only adds to their fear because they never “learn” that riding in elevators is usually perfectly safe. Systematic desensitization changes this avoidance pattern by gradually exposing the individual to the object of fear until it can be tolerated.

First, the individual is trained in specific muscle relaxation techniques. Next, the individual learns to respond with conscious relaxation even when confronted with the situation that previously caused them fear. James McCroskey used this technique to treat students who suffered from severe, trait-based communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1972). He found that “the technique was eighty to ninety percent effective” for the people who received the training (McCroskey, 2001). If you’re highly anxious about public speaking, you might begin a program of systematic desensitization by watching someone else give a speech. Once you are able to do this without discomfort, you would then move to talking about giving a speech yourself, practicing, and, eventually, delivering your speech.

The success of techniques such as these clearly indicates that increased exposure to public speaking reduces overall anxiety. Consequently, you should seek out opportunities to speak in public rather than avoid them. As the famous political orator William Jennings Bryan once noted, “The ability to speak effectively is an acquirement rather than a gift” (Carnegie, 1955).

Key Takeaways

- There are many steps you can take during the speech preparation process to manage your communication apprehension, including thinking positively, analyzing your audience, clearly organizing your ideas, adapting your language to the oral mode, and practicing.
- You can employ a variety of techniques while you are speaking to reduce your apprehension, such as anticipating your body’s reactions, focusing on the audience, and maintaining your sense of humor.

- Stress management techniques, including cognitive restructuring and systematic desensitization, can also be helpful.

Exercises

1. Go to <http://www.hypknowsis.com> and practice a few of the simple beginning visualization exercises presented there.
2. Make a plan for managing your anxiety before and during your speech that includes specific techniques you want to try before your next public speaking assignment.

References

- Beebe, S.A., & Beebe, S. J. (2000). *Public speaking: An audience centered approach*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Carnegie, D. (1955). *Public speaking and influencing men in business*. New York, NY: American Book Stratford Press, Inc.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1972). The implementation of a large-scale program of systematic desensitization for communication apprehension. *The Speech Teacher*, 21, 255–264.
- Metcalf, S. (1994). *Building a speech*. New York, NY: The Harcourt Press.
- Witt, P. L., Brown, K. C., Roberts, J. B., Weisel, J., Sawyer, C., & Behnke, R. (2006, March). Somatic anxiety patterns before, during and after giving a public speech. *Southern Communication Journal*, 71, 89.

This page titled [5.3: Reducing Communication Apprehension](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

5.4: Coping with the Unexpected

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common difficulties that may fluster even experienced speakers.
2. Describe some basic strategies for dealing with unexpected events during a public speech.

Coping with the Unexpected



Des Morris – I H8 PC – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

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

Speech Content Issues

Nearly every experienced speaker has gotten to the middle of a presentation and realized that a key notecard is missing or that he or she skipped important information from the beginning of the speech. When encountering these difficulties, a good strategy is to pause for a moment to think through what you want to do next. Is it important to include the missing information, or can it be omitted without hurting the audience's ability to understand the rest of your speech? If it needs to be included, do you want to add the information now, or will it fit better later in the speech? It is often difficult to remain silent when you encounter this situation, but pausing for a few seconds will help you to figure out what to do and may be less distracting to the audience than sputtering through a few "ums" and "uhs."

Technical Difficulties

Technology has become a very useful aid in public speaking, allowing us to use audio or video clips, presentation software, or direct links to websites. However, one of the best known truisms about technology is that it does break down. Web servers go offline, files will not download in a timely manner, and media are incompatible with the computer in the presentation room. It is important to always have a backup plan, developed in advance, in case of technical difficulties with your presentation materials. As you develop your speech and visual aids, think through what you will do if you cannot show a particular graph or if your presentation slides are hopelessly garbled. Although your beautifully prepared chart may be superior to the oral description you can provide, your ability to provide a succinct oral description when technology fails can give your audience the information they need.

External Distractions

Although many public speaking instructors directly address audience etiquette during speeches, you're still likely to encounter an audience member who walks in late, a ringing cell phone, or even a car alarm going off outside your classroom. If you are distracted by external events like these, it is often useful, and sometimes necessary (as in the case of the loud car alarm), to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention and be heard.

Whatever the unexpected event, your most important job as a speaker is to maintain your composure. It is important not to get upset or angry because of these types of glitches—and, once again, the key to this is being fully prepared. If you keep your cool and quickly implement a “plan B” for moving forward with your speech, your audience is likely to be impressed and may listen even more attentively to the rest of your presentation.

Key Takeaways

1. Plan ahead for how to cope with unexpected difficulties such as forgetting part of your speech content, having technical trouble with visual aids, or being interrupted by external distractions.

Exercises

1. Talk to people who engage in public speaking regularly (e.g., teachers and professionals) and find out what unexpected events have happened when they were giving speeches. What did they do to deal with these unexpected happenings?
2. Fill out the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA24). The measure can be found at <http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/prca24.htm>.

This page titled [5.4: Coping with the Unexpected](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Delivery

Delivering the Speech



bswise - [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) - CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

How we deliver a speech is just as important, if not more so, than the basic message we are trying to convey to an audience. But if you have worked hard on preparing the verbal part of your speech, you may feel that delivery is just an “extra” that should not require much time or effort. After all, your speech is carefully planned, researched, and polished. It is committed safely to paper and hard drive. It’s a carefully constructed, logically crafted, ethical message. The words alone should engage your audience’s attention and interest—right?

The nonverbal part of your speech is a presentation of yourself as well as your message. Through the use of eye contact, vocal expression, body posture, gestures, and facial display, you enhance your message and invite your audience to give their serious attention to it, and to you. Your credibility, your sincerity, and your knowledge of your speech become apparent through your nonverbal behaviors. The interplay between the verbal and nonverbal components of your speech can either bring the message vividly to life or confuse or bore the audience. Therefore, it is best that you neither overdramatize your speech delivery behaviors nor downplay them. This is a balance achieved through rehearsal, trial and error, and experience.

In this chapter, we are going to examine effective strategies for delivering a speech. To help you enhance your delivery, we will begin by discussing how to prepare your delivery for different environments. Second, we will talk about how to effectively use notes to enhance your delivery. Finally, we will examine characteristics of good delivery and give some strategies for practicing effectively for the day when you will deliver your speech.

[6.1: Four Methods of Delivery](#)

[6.2: Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery](#)

[6.3: Using Notes Effectively](#)

[6.4: Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery](#)

6: Delivery is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

6.1: Four Methods of Delivery

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among the four methods of speech delivery.
2. Understand when to use each of the four methods of speech delivery.

Four Methods of Delivery



Maryland GovPics – [House of Ruth Luncheon](#) – CC BY 2.0.

The easiest approach to speech delivery is not always the best. Substantial work goes into the careful preparation of an interesting and ethical message, so it is understandable that students may have the impulse to avoid “messaging it up” by simply reading it word for word. But students who do this miss out on one of the major reasons for studying public speaking: to learn ways to “connect” with one’s audience and to increase one’s confidence in doing so. You already know how to read, and you already know how to talk. But public speaking is neither reading nor talking.

Speaking in public has more formality than talking. During a speech, you should present yourself professionally. This doesn’t mean you must wear a suit or “dress up” (unless your instructor asks you to), but it does mean making yourself presentable by being well groomed and wearing clean, appropriate clothes. It also means being prepared to use language correctly and appropriately for the audience and the topic, to make eye contact with your audience, and to look like you know your topic very well.

While speaking has more formality than talking, it has less formality than reading. Speaking allows for meaningful pauses, eye contact, small changes in word order, and vocal emphasis. Reading is a more or less exact replication of words on paper without the use of any nonverbal interpretation. Speaking, as you will realize if you think about excellent speakers you have seen and heard, provides a more animated message.

The next sections introduce four methods of delivery that can help you balance between too much and too little formality when giving a public speech.

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is the presentation of a short message without advance preparation. Impromptu speeches often occur when someone is asked to “say a few words” or give a toast on a special occasion. You have probably done impromptu speaking many times in informal, conversational settings. Self-introductions in group settings are examples of impromptu speaking: “Hi, my name is Steve, and I’m a volunteer with the Homes for the Brave program.” Another example of impromptu speaking occurs when you answer a question such as, “What did you think of the documentary?”

The advantage of this kind of speaking is that it's spontaneous and responsive in an animated group context. The disadvantage is that the speaker is given little or no time to contemplate the central theme of his or her message. As a result, the message may be disorganized and difficult for listeners to follow.

Here is a step-by-step guide that may be useful if you are called upon to give an impromptu speech in public.

- Take a moment to collect your thoughts and plan the main point you want to make.
- Thank the person for inviting you to speak.
- Deliver your message, making your main point as briefly as you can while still covering it adequately and at a pace your listeners can follow.
- Thank the person again for the opportunity to speak.
- Stop talking.

As you can see, impromptu speeches are generally most successful when they are brief and focus on a single point.

Speaking from a Manuscript

Manuscript speaking is the word-for-word iteration of a written message. In a manuscript speech, the speaker maintains his or her attention on the printed page except when using visual aids.

The advantage to reading from a manuscript is the exact repetition of original words. As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in some circumstances this can be extremely important. For example, reading a statement about your organization's legal responsibilities to customers may require that the original words be exact. In reading one word at a time, in order, the only errors would typically be mispronunciation of a word or stumbling over complex sentence structure.

However, there are costs involved in manuscript speaking. First, it's typically an uninteresting way to present. Unless the speaker has rehearsed the reading as a complete performance animated with vocal expression and gestures (as poets do in a poetry slam and actors do in a reader's theater), the presentation tends to be dull. Keeping one's eyes glued to the script precludes eye contact with the audience. For this kind of "straight" manuscript speech to hold audience attention, the audience must be already interested in the message before the delivery begins.

It is worth noting that professional speakers, actors, news reporters, and politicians often read from an autocue device, such as a TelePrompter, especially when appearing on television, where eye contact with the camera is crucial. With practice, a speaker can achieve a conversational tone and give the impression of speaking extemporaneously while using an autocue device. However, success in this medium depends on two factors: (1) the speaker is already an accomplished public speaker who has learned to use a conversational tone while delivering a prepared script, and (2) the speech is written in a style that sounds conversational.

Speaking from Memory

Memorized speaking is the rote recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory. Actors, of course, recite from memory whenever they perform from a script in a stage play, television program, or movie scene. When it comes to speeches, memorization can be useful when the message needs to be exact and the speaker doesn't want to be confined by notes.

The advantage to memorization is that it enables the speaker to maintain eye contact with the audience throughout the speech. Being free of notes means that you can move freely around the stage and use your hands to make gestures. If your speech uses visual aids, this freedom is even more of an advantage. However, there are some real and potential costs. First, unless you also plan and memorize every vocal cue (the subtle but meaningful variations in speech delivery, which can include the use of pitch, tone, volume, and pace), gesture, and facial expression, your presentation will be flat and uninteresting, and even the most fascinating topic will suffer. You might end up speaking in a monotone or a sing-song repetitive delivery pattern. You might also present your speech in a rapid "machine-gun" style that fails to emphasize the most important points. Second, if you lose your place and start trying to ad lib, the contrast in your style of delivery will alert your audience that something is wrong. More frighteningly, if you go completely blank during the presentation, it will be extremely difficult to find your place and keep going.

Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemporaneous speaking is the presentation of a carefully planned and rehearsed speech, spoken in a conversational manner using brief notes. By using notes rather than a full manuscript, the extemporaneous speaker can establish and maintain eye contact with the audience and assess how well they are understanding the speech as it progresses. The opportunity to assess is also an opportunity to restate more clearly any idea or concept that the audience seems to have trouble grasping.

For instance, suppose you are speaking about workplace safety and you use the term “sleep deprivation.” If you notice your audience’s eyes glazing over, this might not be a result of their own sleep deprivation, but rather an indication of their uncertainty about what you mean. If this happens, you can add a short explanation; for example, “sleep deprivation is sleep loss serious enough to threaten one’s cognition, hand-to-eye coordination, judgment, and emotional health.” You might also (or instead) provide a concrete example to illustrate the idea. Then you can resume your message, having clarified an important concept.

Speaking extemporaneously has some advantages. It promotes the likelihood that you, the speaker, will be perceived as knowledgeable and credible. In addition, your audience is likely to pay better attention to the message because it is engaging both verbally and nonverbally. The disadvantage of extemporaneous speaking is that it requires a great deal of preparation for both the verbal and the nonverbal components of the speech. Adequate preparation cannot be achieved the day before you’re scheduled to speak.

Because extemporaneous speaking is the style used in the great majority of public speaking situations, most of the information in this chapter is targeted to this kind of speaking.

Key Takeaways

- There are four main kinds of speech delivery: impromptu, manuscript, memorized, and extemporaneous.
- Impromptu speaking involves delivering a message on the spur of the moment, as when someone is asked to “say a few words.”
- Manuscript speaking consists of reading a fully scripted speech. It is useful when a message needs to be delivered in precise words.
- Memorized speaking consists of reciting a scripted speech from memory. Memorization allows the speaker to be free of notes.
- Extemporaneous speaking consists of delivering a speech in a conversational fashion using notes. This is the style most speeches call for.

Exercises

1. Find a short newspaper story. Read it out loud to a classroom partner. Then, using only one notecard, tell the classroom partner in your own words what the story said. Listen to your partner’s observations about the differences in your delivery.
2. In a group of four or five students, ask each student to give a one-minute impromptu speech answering the question, “What is the most important personal quality for academic success?”
3. Watch the evening news. Observe the differences between news anchors using a TelePrompter and interviewees who are using no notes of any kind. What differences do you observe?

6.1: Four Methods of Delivery is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

6.2: Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how the physical setting of a speech is an element that calls for preparation.
2. Examine some tips and strategies for common speaking situations.

Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery



Mad Mou – [Empty](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at a gigantic civil rights rally on an August afternoon in 1963. His lectern was bristling with microphones placed there for news coverage and for recording the historic event. His audience, estimated to number a quarter of a million people, extended as far as the eye could see. He was the last speaker of the day, delivering his speech after more than a dozen civil rights leaders and world-famous performers such as Joan Baez, Mahalia Jackson, and Charlton Heston had occupied the stage (Ross, 2007). King gave us his speech in the assertive ringing tones of inspired vision. Nothing less would have worked that day.

Most of us will never speak to so many people at once. Even an appearance on television will probably command a much smaller audience than the crowd that heard King’s speech. Even though you don’t expect an audience of such size or a setting of such symbolic importance, you should still be prepared to adapt to the setting in which you will speak.

Our audiences, circumstances, and physical contexts for public speaking will vary. At some point in your life you may run for public office or rise to a leadership role in a business or volunteer organization. Or you may be responsible for informing coworkers about a new policy, regulation, or opportunity. You may be asked to deliver remarks in the context of a worship service, wedding, or funeral. You may be asked to introduce a keynote speaker or simply to make an important announcement in some context. Sometimes you will speak in a familiar environment, while at other times you may be faced with an unfamiliar location and very little time to get used to speaking with a microphone. These are contexts and situations we address in the following subsections.

Using Lecterns

A lectern is a small raised surface, usually with a slanted top, where a speaker can place notes during a speech. While a lectern adds a measure of formality to the speaking situation, it allows speakers the freedom to do two things: to come out from behind the lectern to establish more immediate contact with the audience and to use both hands for gestures.

However, for new speakers who feel anxious, it is all too tempting to grip the edges of the lectern with both hands for security. You might even wish you could hide behind it. Be aware of these temptations so you can manage them effectively and present yourself to your audience in a manner they will perceive as confident. One way to achieve this is by limiting your use of the lectern to simply a place to rest your notes. Try stepping to the side or front of the lectern when speaking with free hands, only occasionally standing at the lectern to consult your notes. This will enhance your eye contact as well as free up your hands for gesturing.

Speaking in a Small or Large Physical Space

If you are accustomed to being in a classroom of a certain size, you will need to make adjustments when speaking in a smaller or larger space than what you are used to.

A large auditorium can be intimidating, especially for speakers who feel shy and “exposed” when facing an audience. However, the maxim that “proper preparation prevents poor performance” is just as true here as anywhere. If you have prepared and practiced well, you can approach a large-venue speaking engagement with confidence. In terms of practical adjustments, be aware that your voice is likely to echo, so you will want to speak more slowly than usual and make use of pauses to mark the ends of phrases and sentences. Similarly, your facial expressions and gestures should be larger so that they are visible from farther away. If you are using visual aids, they need to be large enough to be visible from the back of the auditorium.

Limited space is not as disconcerting for most speakers as enormous space, but it has the advantage of minimizing the tendency to pace back and forth while you speak. We have all seen dramatic soliloquies in the movies and plays where an actor makes use of the space on the stage, but this is generally not a good strategy for a speech. A small space also calls for more careful management of notecards and visual aids, as your audience will be able to see up close what you are doing with your hands. Do your best to minimize fumbling, including setting up in advance or arriving early to decide how to organize your materials in the physical space. We will discuss visual aids further in Chapter 13 “Presentation Aids: Design and Usage”.

Speaking Outdoors

Outdoor settings can be charming, but they are prone to distractions. If you’re giving a speech in a setting that is picturesquely beautiful, it may be difficult to maintain the audience’s attention. If you know this ahead of time, you might plan your speech to focus more on mood than information and perhaps to make reference to the lovely view.

More typically, outdoor speech venues can pose challenges with weather, sun glare, and uninvited guests, such as ants and pigeons. If the venue is located near a busy highway, it might be difficult to make yourself heard over the ambient noise. You might lack the usual accommodations, such as a lectern or table. Whatever the situation, you will need to use your best efforts to project your voice clearly without sounding like you’re yelling.

Using a Microphone

Most people today are familiar with microphones that are built into video recorders and other electronic devices, but they may be new at using a microphone to deliver a speech. One overall principle to remember is that a microphone only amplifies, it does not clarify. If you are not enunciating clearly, the microphone will merely enable your audience to hear amplified mumbling.

Microphones come in a wide range of styles and sizes. Generally, the easiest microphone to use is the clip-on style worn on the front of your shirt. If you look closely at many television personalities and news anchors, you will notice these tiny microphones clipped to their clothing. They require very little adaptation. You simply have to avoid looking down—at your notes, for instance—because your voice will be amplified when you do so.

Lectern and handheld microphones require more adaptation. If they’re too close to your mouth, they can screech. If they’re too far away, they might not pick up your voice. Some microphones are directional, meaning that they are only effective when you speak directly into them. If there is any opportunity to do so, ask for tips about how to use a particular microphone and practice with it for a few minutes while you have someone listen from a middle row in the audience and signal whether you can be heard well. The best plan, of course, would be to have access to the microphone for practice ahead of the speaking date.

Often a microphone is provided when it isn’t necessary. If the room is small or the audience is close to you, do not feel obligated to use the microphone. Sometimes an amplified voice can feel less natural and less compelling than a direct voice. However, if you

forgo the microphone, make sure to speak loudly enough for all audience members to hear you—not just those in front.

Audience Size

A small audience is an opportunity for a more intimate, minimally formal tone. If your audience has only eight to twelve people, you can generate greater audience contact. Make use of all the preparation you have done. You do not have to revamp your speech just because the audience is small. When the presentation is over, there will most likely be opportunities to answer questions and have individual contact with your listeners.

Your classroom audience may be as many as twenty to thirty students. The format for an audience of this size is still formal but conversational. Depending on how your instructor structures the class, you may or may not be asked to leave time after your speech for questions and answers.

Some audiences are much larger. If you have an audience that fills an auditorium, or if you have an auditorium with only a few people in it, you still have a clearly formal task, and you should be guided as much as possible by your preparation.

Key Takeaways

- Not every speaking setting happens in a classroom. As such, different environments call for speakers to think through their basic speaking strategies.
- Speakers need to be prepared to deal with five common challenges in speaking contexts: using a lectern, large or small space, speaking in the outdoors, using a microphone, and audience size.

Exercises

1. Get permission from your instructor and announce a campus event to the class. Make sure your details are complete and accurate. How does your physical space affect the way you present the information?
2. Watch a speech that takes place indoors or outside. How do you think this speech would be different if the speech occurred in the other location? What changes would you recommend for the speaker?
3. If you were suddenly asked to give your next classroom speech in front of two hundred of your peers, how would adjust your speech? Why?

References

Ross, S. (2007). Civil rights march on Washington. *Infoplease*. Retrieved from <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/marchonwashington.html>

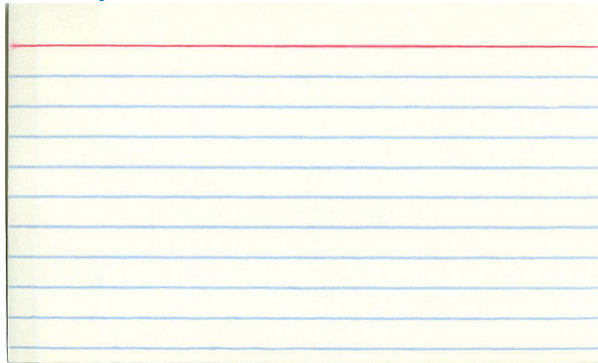
6.2: Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

6.3: Using Notes Effectively

Learning Objectives

1. Know how to use notecards to free you from your manuscript.
2. Know how to use notecards to stay organized while you make audience contact.
3. Understand how to develop effective notecards for a speech.

Using Notes Effectively



Dave Gray – [Blank index card!](#) – CC BY 2.0.

It's a great deal of work to prepare a good speech, and you want to present it effectively so that your audience will benefit as much as possible. We've already said that extemporaneous speaking provides the best opportunity for speaker-audience contact and that speaking extemporaneously means you do not have your full manuscript or outline with you. Instead, you will use notecards. The cards should have notes, not the full text of your speech. This can also be done with an autocue device—the TelePrompter does not have to provide a full word-for-word script.

We have developed a system for creating highly effective notecards. Our system has been used effectively both in public speaking courses and in freshman composition courses. Surprisingly, the system consists of only five cards. For many people, this does not sound like nearly enough cards. We would make the case that you can do a good job with five cards, and we have seen many students do just that.

The Purpose of Speaker Notes

Using notes adds to your credibility as a speaker. If you depend on a full manuscript to get through your delivery, your listeners might believe you don't know the content of your speech. Second, the temptation to read the entire speech directly from a manuscript, even if you're only carrying it as a safety net, is nearly overwhelming. Third, well-prepared cards are more gracefully handled than sheets of paper, and they don't rattle if your hands tremble from nervousness. Finally, cards look better than sheets of paper. Five carefully prepared cards, together with practice, will help you more than you might think.

Key Tips for Using Notes

Plan on using just five cards, written on one side only. Get 4×6 cards. Use one card for the introduction, one card for each of your three main points, and one card for the conclusion.

Include Only Key Words

Your cards should include key words and phrases, not full sentences. The words and phrases should be arranged in order so that you can stay organized and avoid forgetting important points.

One exception to the key word guideline would be an extended or highly technical quotation from an authoritative source. If it is critically important to present an exact quotation, you may add one additional card that will contain the quotation together with its citation. If you plan to use such a quotation, make sure it has central importance in your speech.

Hold Your Notes Naturally

Notes are a normal part of giving a presentation. You do not need to conceal them from the audience; in fact, trying to hide and use your notes at the same time tends to be very awkward and distracting. Some instructors recommend that you avoid gesturing with your notes on the grounds that nervous shaking is more noticeable if you are holding your notes in your hand. If this is the case for you, practice gesturing with your free hand, or put your cards down if you need to use both hands. Other instructors recommend treating notecards as a natural extension of your hand, as they believe it is distracting to put your notes down and pick them up again. Whichever “rule” you follow, remember that the goal is for your use of notecards to contribute to your overall appearance of confidence and credibility.

Prepare Notecards to Trigger Recall

The “trick” to selecting the words to write on your cards is to identify the keywords that will trigger a recall sequence. For instance, if the word “Fukushima” brings to mind the nuclear power plant meltdown that followed the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in 2011, then that one word on your notecard should propel you through a sizable sequence of points and details. Once you have delivered that material, perhaps you’ll glance at your card again to remind yourself of the key word or phrase that comes next.

You must discover what works for you and then select those words that tend to jog your recall. Having identified what works, make a preliminary set of five cards, written on one side only. Number the cards, and practice with them. Revise and refine them the way you would an outline. If you must, rewrite an entire card to make it work better, and test it the next time you practice.

Always practice with your notecards—and with any visual aids you plan to use. Practicing is also the best way to find out what kinds of things might go wrong with your notes in the presented speech and what steps you should take to make things go smoothly.

Write in Large Letters

You should be able to read something on your card by glancing, not peering at it. A few key words and phrases, written in large, bold print with plenty of white space between them, will help you. If the lighting in your speech location is likely to have glare, be sure to write your notes in ink, as pencil can be hard to read in poor lighting.

Using Your Notecards Well

If you use as much care in developing your five notecards as you do your speech, they should serve you well. If you lose your place or go blank during the speech, you will only need a few seconds to find where you were and get going again. For instance, if you know that you presented the introduction and the first main point, which centers on the Emancipation Proclamation, you can readily go to your second card and remind yourself that your next main point is about the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution.

In addition, the use of your notecards allows you to depart from the exact prepared wordings in your manuscript. In your recovery from losing your place, you can transpose a word or phrase to make your recovery graceful. It allows you to avoid feeling pressured to say every single word in your manuscript.

Under no circumstances should you ever attempt to put your entire speech on cards in little tiny writing. You will end up reading words to your audience instead of telling them your meaning, and the visual aspect of your speech will be spoiled by your need to squint to read your cards.

Key Takeaways

- Good notecards keep you from reading to your audience.
- Good notecards are carefully based on key words and phrases to promote recall.
- Good notecards should enhance your relationship with listeners.

Exercises

1. Using the introduction to your speech, create a 4×6 notecard that includes the grabber, the thesis statement, and the preview. Test it by standing as you would during a speech and using it to guide you.
2. Answer these questions: Is it absolutely crucial to utter every word on your outline? Are there some words or phrases that are crucially important? How can you use your notecards to focus on the most important ideas?
3. Select key terms from your speech that you believe will trigger your recall of the sequence of main ideas in your speech. Use them as the basis of your next four notecards. Test the cards by practicing with them to see whether your selected terms are the

ones you should use.

6.3: Using Notes Effectively is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

6.4: Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery

Learning Objectives

1. Explain why having a strong conversational quality is important for effective public speaking.
2. Explain the importance of eye contact in public speaking.
3. Define vocalics and differentiate among the different factors of vocalics.
4. Explain effective physical manipulation during a speech.
5. Understand how to practice effectively for good speech delivery.

Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery



Christian Pierret – [Speech](#) – CC BY 2.0.

There is no foolproof recipe for good delivery. Each of us is unique, and we each embody different experiences and interests. This means each person has an approach, or a style, that is effective for her or him. This further means that anxiety can accompany even the most carefully researched and interesting message. Even when we know our messages are strong and well-articulated on paper, it is difficult to know for sure that our presentation will also be good.

We are still obligated to do our best out of respect for the audience and their needs. Fortunately, there are some tools that can be helpful to you even the very first time you present a speech. You will continue developing your skills each time you put them to use and can experiment to find out which combination of delivery elements is most effective for you.

What Is Good Delivery?

The more you care about your topic, the greater your motivation to present it well. Good delivery is a process of presenting a clear, coherent message in an interesting way. Communication scholar Stephen E. Lucas tells us:

Good delivery...conveys the speaker's ideas clearly, interestingly, and without distracting the audience. Most audiences prefer delivery that combines a certain degree of formality with the best attributes of good conversation—directness, spontaneity, animation, vocal and facial expressiveness, and a lively sense of communication (Lucas, 2009).

Many writers on the nonverbal aspects of delivery have cited the findings of psychologist Albert Mehrabian, asserting that the bulk of an audience's understanding of your message is based on nonverbal communication. Specifically, Mehrabian is often credited with finding that when audiences decoded a speaker's meaning, the speaker's face conveyed 55 percent of the information, the vocalics conveyed 38 percent, and the words conveyed just 7 percent (Mehrabian, 1972). Although numerous scholars, including Mehrabian himself, have stated that his findings are often misinterpreted (Mitchell), scholars and speech instructors do agree that nonverbal communication and speech delivery are extremely important to effective public speaking.

In this section of the chapter, we will explain six elements of good delivery: conversational style, conversational quality, eye contact, vocalics, physical manipulation, and variety. And since delivery is only as good as the practice that goes into it, we conclude with some tips for effective use of your practice time.

Conversational Style

Conversational style is a speaker's ability to sound expressive and to be perceived by the audience as natural. It's a style that approaches the way you normally express yourself in a much smaller group than your classroom audience. This means that you want to avoid having your presentation come across as didactic or overly exaggerated. You might not feel natural while you're using a conversational style, but for the sake of audience preference and receptiveness, you should do your best to appear natural. It might be helpful to remember that the two most important elements of the speech are the message and the audience. You are the conduit with the important role of putting the two together in an effective way. Your audience should be thinking about the message, not the delivery.

Stephen E. Lucas defines conversational quality as the idea that "no matter how many times a speech has been rehearsed, it still *sounds* spontaneous" [emphasis in original] (Lucas, 2009). No one wants to hear a speech that is so well rehearsed that it sounds fake or robotic. One of the hardest parts of public speaking is rehearsing to the point where it can appear to your audience that the thoughts are magically coming to you while you're speaking, but in reality you've spent a great deal of time thinking through each idea. When you can sound conversational, people pay attention.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is a speaker's ability to have visual contact with everyone in the audience. Your audience should feel that you're speaking to them, not simply uttering main and supporting points. If you are new to public speaking, you may find it intimidating to look audience members in the eye, but if you think about speakers you have seen who did not maintain eye contact, you'll realize why this aspect of speech delivery is important. Without eye contact, the audience begins to feel invisible and unimportant, as if the speaker is just speaking to hear her or his own voice. Eye contact lets your audience feel that your attention is on them, not solely on the cards in front of you.

Sustained eye contact with your audience is one of the most important tools toward effective delivery. O'Hair, Stewart, and Rubenstein note that eye contact is mandatory for speakers to establish a good relationship with an audience (O'Hair, Stewart, & Rubenstein, 2001). Whether a speaker is speaking before a group of five or five hundred, the appearance of eye contact is an important way to bring an audience into your speech.

Eye contact can be a powerful tool. It is not simply a sign of sincerity, a sign of being well prepared and knowledgeable, or a sign of confidence; it also has the power to convey meanings. Arthur Koch tells us that all facial expressions "can communicate a wide range of emotions, including sadness, compassion, concern, anger, annoyance, fear, joy, and happiness" (Koch, 2010).

If you find the gaze of your audience too intimidating, you might feel tempted to resort to "faking" eye contact with them by looking at the wall just above their heads or by sweeping your gaze around the room instead of making actual eye contact with individuals in your audience until it becomes easier to provide real contact. The problem with fake eye contact is that it tends to look mechanical. Another problem with fake attention is that you lose the opportunity to assess the audience's understanding of your message. Still, fake eye contact is somewhat better than gripping your cards and staring at them and only occasionally glancing quickly and shallowly at the audience.

This is not to say that you may never look at your notecards. On the contrary, one of the skills in extemporaneous speaking is the ability to alternate one's gaze between the audience and one's notes. Rehearsing your presentation in front of a few friends should help you develop the ability to maintain eye contact with your audience while referring to your notes. When you are giving a speech that is well prepared and well rehearsed, you will only need to look at your notes occasionally. This is an ability that will develop even further with practice. Your public speaking course is your best chance to get that practice.

Effective Use of Vocalics

Vocalics, also known as paralanguage, is the subfield of nonverbal communication that examines how we use our voices to communicate orally. This means that you speak loudly enough for all audience members (even those in the back of the room) to hear you clearly, and that you enunciate clearly enough to be understood by all audience members (even those who may have a hearing impairment or who may be English-language learners). If you tend to be soft-spoken, you will need to practice using a louder volume level that may feel unnatural to you at first. For all speakers, good vocalic technique is best achieved by facing the audience with your chin up and your eyes away from your notecards and by setting your voice at a moderate speed. Effective use of vocalics also means that you make use of appropriate pitch, pauses, vocal variety, and correct pronunciation.

If you are an English-language learner and feel apprehensive about giving a speech in English, there are two things to remember: first, you can meet with a reference librarian to learn the correct pronunciations of any English words you are unsure of; and

second, the fact that you have an accent means you speak more languages than most Americans, which is an accomplishment to be proud of.

If you are one of the many people with a stutter or other speech challenge, you undoubtedly already know that there are numerous techniques for reducing stuttering and improving speech fluency and that there is no one agreed-upon “cure.” The Academy Award–winning movie *The King’s Speech* did much to increase public awareness of what a person with a stutter goes through when it comes to public speaking. It also prompted some well-known individuals who stutter, such as television news reporter John Stossel, to go public about their stuttering (Stossel, 2011). If you have decided to study public speaking in spite of a speech challenge, we commend you for your efforts and encourage you to work with your speech instructor to make whatever adaptations work best for you.

Volume

Volume refers to the loudness or softness of a speaker’s voice. As mentioned, public speakers need to speak loudly enough to be heard by everyone in the audience. In addition, volume is often needed to overcome ambient noise, such as the hum of an air conditioner or the dull roar of traffic passing by. In addition, you can use volume strategically to emphasize the most important points in your speech. Select these points carefully; if you emphasize everything, nothing will seem important. You also want to be sure to adjust your volume to the physical setting of the presentation. If you are in a large auditorium and your audience is several yards away, you will need to speak louder. If you are in a smaller space, with the audience a few feet away, you want to avoid overwhelming your audience with shouting or speaking too loudly.

Rate

Rate is the speed at which a person speaks. To keep your speech delivery interesting, your rate should vary. If you are speaking extemporaneously, your rate will naturally fluctuate. If you’re reading, your delivery is less likely to vary. Because rate is an important tool in enhancing the meanings in your speech, you do not want to give a monotone drone or a rapid “machine-gun” style delivery. Your rate should be appropriate for your topic and your points. A rapid, lively rate can communicate such meanings as enthusiasm, urgency, or humor. A slower, moderated rate can convey respect, seriousness, or careful reasoning. By varying rapid and slower rates within a single speech, you can emphasize your main points and keep your audience interested.

Pitch

Pitch refers to the highness or lowness of a speaker’s voice. Some speakers have deep voices and others have high voices. As with one’s singing voice range, the pitch of one’s speaking voice is determined to a large extent by physiology (specifically, the length of one’s vocal folds, or cords, and the size of one’s vocal tract). We all have a normal speaking pitch where our voice is naturally settled, the pitch where we are most comfortable speaking, and most teachers advise speaking at the pitch that feels natural to you.

While our voices may be generally comfortable at a specific pitch level, we all have the ability to modulate, or move, our pitch up or down. In fact, we do this all the time. When we change the pitch of our voices, we are using inflections. Just as you can use volume strategically, you can also use pitch inflections to make your delivery more interesting and emphatic. If you ordinarily speak with a soprano voice, you may want to drop your voice to a slightly lower range to call attention to a particular point. How we use inflections can even change the entire meaning of what we are saying. For example, try saying the sentence “I love public speaking” with a higher pitch on one of the words—first raise the pitch on “I,” then say it again with the pitch raised on “love,” and so on. “I love public speaking” conveys a different meaning from “I love *public* speaking,” doesn’t it?

There are some speakers who don’t change their pitch at all while speaking, which is called monotone. While very few people are completely monotone, some speakers slip into monotone patterns because of nerves. One way to ascertain whether you sound monotone is to record your voice and see how you sound. If you notice that your voice doesn’t fluctuate very much, you will need to be intentional in altering your pitch to ensure that the emphasis of your speech isn’t completely lost on your audience.

Finally, resist the habit of pitching your voice “up” at the ends of sentences. It makes them sound like questions instead of statements. This habit can be disorienting and distracting, interfering with the audience’s ability to focus entirely on the message. The speaker sounds uncertain or sounds as though he or she is seeking the understanding or approval of the listener. It hurts the speaker’s credibility and it needs to be avoided.

The effective use of pitch is one of the keys to an interesting delivery that will hold your audience’s attention.

Pauses

Pauses are brief breaks in a speaker's delivery that can show emphasis and enhance the clarity of a message. In terms of timing, the effective use of pauses is one of the most important skills to develop. Some speakers become uncomfortable very quickly with the "dead air" that the pause causes. And if the speaker is uncomfortable, the discomfort can transmit itself to the audience. That doesn't mean you should avoid using pauses; your ability to use them confidently will increase with practice. Some of the best comedians use the well-timed pause to powerful and hilarious effect. Although your speech will not be a comedy routine, pauses are still useful for emphasis, especially when combined with a lowered pitch and rate to emphasize the important point you do not want your audience to miss.

Vocal Variety

Vocal variety has to do with changes in the vocalics we have just discussed: volume, pitch, rate, and pauses. No one wants to hear the same volume, pitch, rate, or use of pauses over and over again in a speech. Your audience should never be able to detect that you're about to slow down or your voice is going to get deeper because you're making an important point. When you think about how you sound in a normal conversation, your use of volume, pitch, rate, and pauses are all done spontaneously. If you try to overrehearse your vocalics, your speech will end up sounding artificial. Vocal variety should flow naturally from your wish to speak with expression. In that way, it will animate your speech and invite your listeners to understand your topic the way you do.

Pronunciation

The last major category related to vocalics is pronunciation, or the conventional patterns of speech used to form a word. Word pronunciation is important for two reasons: first, mispronouncing a word your audience is familiar with will harm your credibility as a speaker; and second, mispronouncing a word they are unfamiliar with can confuse and even misinform them. If there is any possibility at all that you don't know the correct pronunciation of a word, find out. Many online dictionaries, such as the [Wiktionary](https://www.wiktionary.org/) ([wiktionary.org](https://www.wiktionary.org/)), provide free sound files illustrating the pronunciation of words.

Many have commented on the mispronunciation of words such as "nuclear" and "cavalry" by highly educated public speakers, including US presidents. There have been classroom examples as well. For instance, a student giving a speech on the Greek philosopher Socrates mispronounced his name at least eight times during her speech. This mispronunciation created a situation of great awkwardness and anxiety for the audience. Everyone felt embarrassed and the teacher, opting not to humiliate the student in front of the class, could not say anything out loud, instead providing a private written comment at the end of class.

Another aspect of pronunciation in public speaking is avoiding the use of verbal surrogates or "filler" words used as placeholders for actual words (like *er*, *um*, *uh*, etc.). You might be able to get away with saying "um" as many as two or three times in your speech before it becomes distracting, but the same cannot be said of "like." We know of a student who trained herself to avoid saying "like." As soon as the first speech was assigned, she began wearing a rubber band on her left wrist. Each time she caught herself saying "like," she snapped herself with the rubber band. It hurt. Very quickly, she found that she could stop inflicting the snap on herself, and she had successfully confronted an unprofessional verbal habit.

Effective Physical Manipulation

In addition to using our voices effectively, a key to effective public speaking is physical manipulation, or the use of the body to emphasize meanings or convey meanings during a speech. While we will not attempt to give an entire discourse on nonverbal communication, we will discuss a few basic aspects of physical manipulation: posture, body movement, facial expressions, and dress. These aspects add up to the overall physical dimension of your speech, which we call self-presentation.

Posture

"Stand up tall!" I'm sure we've all heard this statement from a parent or a teacher at some point in our lives. The fact is, posture is actually quite important. When you stand up straight, you communicate to your audience, without saying a word, that you hold a position of power and take your position seriously. If however, you are slouching, hunched over, or leaning on something, you could be perceived as ill-prepared, anxious, lacking in credibility, or not serious about your responsibilities as a speaker. While speakers often assume more casual posture as a presentation continues (especially if it is a long one, such as a ninety-minute class lecture), it is always wise to start by standing up straight and putting your best foot forward. Remember, you only get one shot at making a first impression, and your body's orientation is one of the first pieces of information audiences use to make that impression.

Body Movement

Unless you are stuck behind a podium because of the need to use a nonmovable microphone, you should never stand in one place during a speech. However, movement during a speech should also not resemble pacing. One of our authors once saw a speaker who would walk around a small table where her speaking notes were located. She would walk around the table once, toss her chalk twice, and then repeat the process. Instead of listening to what the speaker was saying, everyone became transfixed by her walk-and-chalk-toss pattern. As speakers, we must be mindful of how we go about moving while speaking. One common method for easily integrating some movement into your speech is to take a few steps any time you transition from one idea to the next. By only moving at transition points, not only do you help focus your audience's attention on the transition from one idea to the next, but you also are able to increase your nonverbal immediacy by getting closer to different segments of your audience.

Body movement also includes gestures. These should be neither overdramatic nor subdued. At one extreme, arm-waving and fist-pounding will distract from your message and reduce your credibility. At the other extreme, refraining from the use of gestures is the waste of an opportunity to suggest emphasis, enthusiasm, or other personal connection with your topic.

There are many ways to use gestures. The most obvious are hand gestures, which should be used in moderation at carefully selected times in the speech. If you overuse gestures, they lose meaning. Many late-night comedy parodies of political leaders include patterned, overused gestures or other delivery habits associated with a particular speaker. However, the well-placed use of simple, natural gestures to indicate emphasis, direction, size is usually effective. Normally, a gesture with one hand is enough. Rather than trying to have a gesture for every sentence, use just a few well-planned gestures. It is often more effective to make a gesture and hold it for a few moments than to begin waving your hands and arms around in a series of gestures.

Finally, just as you should avoid pacing, you will also want to avoid other distracting movements when you are speaking. Many speakers have unconscious mannerisms such as twirling their hair, putting their hands in and out of their pockets, jingling their keys, licking their lips, or clicking a pen while speaking. As with other aspects of speech delivery, practicing in front of others will help you become conscious of such distractions and plan ways to avoid doing them.

Facial Expressions

Faces are amazing things and convey so much information. As speakers, we must be acutely aware of what our face looks like while speaking. While many of us do not look forward to seeing ourselves on videotape, often the only way you can critically evaluate what your face is doing while you are speaking is to watch a recording of your speech. If video is not available, you can practice speaking in front of a mirror.

There are two extremes you want to avoid: no facial expression and overanimated facial expressions. First, you do not want to have a completely blank face while speaking. Some people just do not show much emotion with their faces naturally, but this blankness is often increased when the speaker is nervous. Audiences will react negatively to the message of such a speaker because they will sense that something is amiss. If a speaker is talking about the joys of Disney World and his face doesn't show any excitement, the audience is going to be turned off to the speaker and his message. On the other extreme end is the speaker whose face looks like that of an exaggerated cartoon character. Instead, your goal is to show a variety of appropriate facial expressions while speaking.

Like vocalics and gestures, facial expression can be used strategically to enhance meaning. A smile or pleasant facial expression is generally appropriate at the beginning of a speech to indicate your wish for a good transaction with your audience. However, you should not smile throughout a speech on drug addiction, poverty, or the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. An inappropriate smile creates confusion about your meaning and may make your audience feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, a serious scowl might look hostile or threatening to audience members and become a distraction from the message. If you keep the meaning of your speech foremost in your mind, you will more readily find the balance in facial expression.

Another common problem some new speakers have is showing only one expression. One of our coauthors competed in speech in college. After one of his speeches (about how people die on amusement park rides), one of his judges pulled him aside and informed him that his speech was "creepy." Apparently, while speaking about death, our coauthor smiled the entire time. The incongruity between the speech on death and dying and the coauthor's smile just left the judge a little creeped out. If you are excited in a part of your speech, you should show excitement on your face. On the other hand, if you are at a serious part of your speech, your facial expressions should be serious.

Dress

While there are no clear-cut guidelines for how you should dress for every speech you'll give, dress is still a very important part of how others will perceive you (again, it's all about the first impression). If you want to be taken seriously, you must present yourself

seriously. While we do not advocate dressing up in a suit every time you give a speech, there are definitely times when wearing a suit is appropriate.

One general rule you can use for determining dress is the “step-above rule,” which states that you should dress one step above your audience. If your audience is going to be dressed casually in shorts and jeans, then wear nice casual clothing such as a pair of neatly pressed slacks and a collared shirt or blouse. If, however, your audience is going to be wearing “business casual” attire, then you should probably wear a sport coat, a dress, or a suit. The goal of the step-above rule is to establish yourself as someone to be taken seriously. On the other hand, if you dress two steps above your audience, you may put too much distance between yourself and your audience, coming across as overly formal or even arrogant.

Another general rule for dressing is to avoid distractions in your appearance. Overly tight or revealing garments, over-the-top hairstyles or makeup, jangling jewelry, or a display of tattoos and piercings can serve to draw your audience’s attention away from your speech. Remembering that your message is the most important aspect of your speech, keep that message in mind when you choose your clothing and accessories.

Self-Presentation

When you present your speech, you are also presenting yourself. Self-presentation, sometimes also referred to as poise or stage presence, is determined by how you look, how you stand, how you walk to the lectern, and how you use your voice and gestures. Your self-presentation can either enhance your message or detract from it. Worse, a poor self-presentation can turn a good, well-prepared speech into a forgettable waste of time. You want your self-presentation to support your credibility and improve the likelihood that the audience will listen with interest.

Your personal appearance should reflect the careful preparation of your speech. Your personal appearance is the first thing your audience will see, and from it, they will make inferences about the speech you’re about to present.

Variety

One of the biggest mistakes novice public speakers make is to use the same gesture over and over again during a speech. While you don’t want your gestures to look fake, you should be careful to include a variety of different nonverbal components while speaking. You should make sure that your face, body, and words are all working in conjunction with each other to support your message.

Practice Effectively

You might get away with presenting a hastily practiced speech, but the speech will not be as good as it could be. In order to develop your best speech delivery, you need to practice—and use your practice time effectively. Practicing does not mean reading over your notes, mentally running through your speech, or even speaking your speech aloud over and over. Instead, you need to practice with the goal of identifying the weaknesses in your delivery, improving upon them, and building good speech delivery habits.

When you practice your speech, place both your feet in full, firm contact with the floor to keep your body from swaying side to side. Some new public speakers find that they don’t know what to do with their hands during the speech. Your practice sessions should help you get comfortable. When you’re not gesturing, you can rest your free hand lightly on a lectern or simply allow it to hang at your side. Since this is not a familiar posture for most people, it might feel awkward, but in your practice sessions, you can begin getting used to it.

Seek Input from Others

Because we can’t see ourselves as others see us, one of the best ways to improve your delivery is to seek constructive criticism from others. This, of course, is an aspect of your public speaking course, as you will receive evaluations from your instructor and possibly from your fellow students. However, by practicing in front of others before it is time to present your speech, you can anticipate and correct problems so that you can receive a better evaluation when you give the speech “for real.”

Ask your practice observers to be honest about the aspects of your delivery that could be better. Sometimes students create study groups just for this purpose. When you create a study group of classroom peers, everyone has an understanding of the entire creative process, and their feedback will thus be more useful to you than the feedback you might get from someone who has never taken the course or given a speech.

If your practice observers seem reluctant to offer useful criticisms, ask questions. How was your eye contact? Could they hear you? Was your voice well modulated? Did you mispronounce any words? How was your posture? Were your gestures effective? Did you

have any mannerisms that you should learn to avoid? Because peers are sometimes reluctant to say things that could sound critical, direct questions are often a useful way to help them speak up.

If you learn from these practice sessions that your voice tends to drop at the ends of sentences, make a conscious effort to support your voice as you conclude each main point. If you learn that you have a habit of clicking a pen, make sure you don't have a pen with you when you speak or that you keep it in your pocket. If your practice observers mention that you tend to hide your hands in the sleeves of your shirt or jacket, next time wear short sleeves or roll your sleeves up before beginning your speech. If you learn through practice that you tend to sway or rock while you speak, you can consciously practice and build the habit of *not* swaying.

When it is your turn to give feedback to others in your group, assume that they are as interested in doing well as you are. Give feedback in the spirit of helping their speeches be as good as possible.

Use Audio and/or Video to Record Yourself

Technology has made it easier than ever to record yourself and others using the proliferation of electronic devices people are likely to own. Video, of course, allows you the advantage of being able to see yourself as others see you, while audio allows you to concentrate on the audible aspects of your delivery. As we mentioned earlier in the chapter, if neither video nor audio is available, you can always observe yourself by practicing your delivery in front of a mirror.

After you have recorded yourself, it may seem obvious that you should watch and listen to the recording. This can be intimidating, as you may fear that your performance anxiety will be so obvious that everyone will notice it in the recording. But students are often pleasantly surprised when they watch and listen to their recordings, as even students with very high anxiety may find out that they “come across” in a speech much better than they expected.

A recording can also be a very effective diagnostic device. Sometimes students believe they are making strong contact with their audiences, but their cards contain so many notes that they succumb to the temptation of reading. By finding out from the video that you misjudged your eye contact, you can be motivated to rewrite your notecards in a way that doesn't provide the opportunity to do so much reading.

It is most likely that in viewing your recording, you will benefit from discovering your strengths and finding weak areas you can strengthen.

Good Delivery Is a Habit

Luckily, public speaking is an activity that, when done conscientiously, strengthens with practice. As you become aware of the areas where your delivery has room for improvement, you will begin developing a keen sense of what “works” and what audiences respond to.

It is advisable to practice out loud in front of other people several times, spreading your rehearsals out over several days. To do this kind of practice, of course, you need to have your speech be finalized well ahead of the date when you are going to give it. During these practice sessions, you can time your speech to make sure it lasts the appropriate length of time. A friend of ours was the second student on the program in an event where each student's presentation was to last thirty to forty-five minutes. After the first student had been speaking for seventy-five minutes, the professor in charge asked, “Can we speed this up?” The student said yes, and proceeded to continue speaking for another seventy-five minutes before finally concluding his portion of the program. Although we might fault the professor for not “pulling the plug,” clearly the student had not timed his speech in advance.

Your practice sessions will also enable you to make adjustments to your notecards to make them more effective in supporting your contact with your audience. This kind of practice is not just a strategy for beginners; it is practiced by many highly placed public figures with extensive experience in public speaking.

Your public speaking course is one of the best opportunities you will have to manage your performance anxiety, build your confidence in speaking extemporaneously, develop your vocal skills, and become adept at self-presentation. The habits you can develop through targeted practice are to build continuously on your strengths and to challenge yourself to find new areas for improving your delivery. By taking advantage of these opportunities, you will gain the ability to present a speech effectively whenever you may be called upon to speak publicly.

Key Takeaways

- Conversational style is a speaker's ability to sound expressive while being perceived by the audience as natural. Conversational quality is a speaker's ability to prepare a speech and rehearse a speech but still sound spontaneous when delivering it.
- Eye contact helps capture and maintain an audience's interest while contributing to the speaker's credibility.

- Vocalics are the nonverbal components of the verbal message. There are six important vocalic components for a speaker to be aware of: volume (loudness or softness), pitch (highness or lowness), rate (fastness or slowness), pauses (use of breaks to add emphasis), vocal variety (use of a range of vocalic strategies), and pronunciation (using conventional patterns of speech formation).
- Physical manipulation is the use of one's body to add meaning and emphasis to a speech. As such, excessive or nonexistent physical manipulation can detract from a speaker's speech.
- Good delivery is a habit that is built through effective practice.

Exercises

1. Find a speech online and examine the speaker's overall presentation. How good was the speaker's delivery? Make a list of the aspects of delivery in this chapter and evaluate the speaker according to the list. In what areas might the speaker improve?
2. Record a practice session of your speech. Write a self-critique, answering the following questions: What surprised you the most? What is an area of strength upon which you can build? What is *one* area for improvement?

References

Koch, A. (2010). *Speaking with a purpose* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, p. 233.

Lucas, S. E. (2009). *The art of public speaking* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, p. 244.

Mehrabian, A. (1972). *Nonverbal communication*. Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton.

Mitchell, O. (n.d.). Mehrabian and nonverbal communication [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.speakingaboutpresenting.com/presentation-myths/mehrabian-nonverbal-communication-research>

O'Hair, D., Stewart, R., & Rubenstein, H. (2001). *A speaker's guidebook: Text and reference*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Stossel, J. (2011, March 2). An Academy Award-winning movie, stuttering and me [Web log post]. Retrieved from www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=42081

6.4: Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Types of Persuasive Speeches

7.1: Types of Persuasive Speeches

Additional References:

Kumar, S. (2024). *Framework vs. Contentions*. Debate Drills. <https://www.debatedrills.com/lincoln...vs-contentions>

This page titled [7: Types of Persuasive Speeches](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Sarah Stone Watt@Pepperdine University](#) & [Joshua Trey Barnett@Indiana University](#) ([Public Speaking Project](#)) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

7.1: Types of Persuasive Speeches

Persuasive speeches revolve around propositions that can be defended through the use of data and reasoning. Persuasive propositions respond to one of three types of questions: questions of fact, questions of value, and questions of policy. These questions can help the speaker determine what forms of argument and reasoning are necessary to support a specific purpose statement.

Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth. ~ Marcus Aurelius

Propositions of Fact

Questions of fact ask whether something “can potentially be verified as either true or false” (Herrick, 2011, p. 20). These questions can seem very straightforward—something is or it is not—but in reality, the search for truth is a complex endeavor. Questions of fact rarely address simple issues such as, “is the sky blue?” They tend to deal with deep-seated controversies such as the existence of global warming, the cause of a major disaster, or someone’s guilt or innocence in a court of law. To answer these questions, a proposition of fact may focus on whether or not something exists. For example, in the U.S. there is a debate over the prevalence of racial profiling, the practice of law enforcement officers targeting people for investigation and arrest based on skin color. On one hand, the American Civil Liberties Union advances the proposition: “Racial profiling continues to be a prevalent and egregious form of discrimination in the United States” (ACLU, 2012, para. 2). They verify this claim using data from government studies, crime statistics, and personal narratives. However, journalist Heather MacDonald (2002) proposes that studies confirming racial profiling are often based in “junk science”; in fact she says, “there’s no credible evidence that racial profiling exists” (para. 1). To substantiate her proposition, MacDonald relies on a study of traffic stops on the New Jersey turnpike along with personal narratives, policy analysis, and testimony from a criminologist. The claim that racial profiling exists is either true or false, but there is evidence for and against both propositions; therefore no consensus exists.

While some propositions of fact deal with the existence of a particular phenomenon or the accuracy of a theory, others focus on causality. For example, the U.S. government appointed a commission to evaluate the causes of the nation’s recent economic crisis. In their report the commission concluded by proposing that recklessness in the financial industry and failures on the part of government regulators caused the economic crisis. However, Congressman Paul Ryan has proposed that Medicare is to blame, and the chief investment officer at JP Morgan has proposed that U.S. housing policy is the root cause of the problem (Angelides, 2011). Each of these three propositions of fact is backed by its own set of historical and economic analysis.



Propositions of fact may also be used to make predictions concerning what will happen in the future. In the summer of 2011, ten miles of a popular Southern California freeway were closed for an entire weekend. Motorists, news outlets, and government officials called the closure “Carmageddon” because they proposed there would be an “inevitable and likely epic traffic tie-up” (Kandel, 2011, para. 1). As a result of the predictions motorists stayed off the roads and made alternative plans that weekend resulting in much lighter traffic than expected. The proposition may have been true, but the prediction was not fulfilled because people were persuaded to stay off the freeway.

When advancing propositions of fact, you should focus on the evidence you can offer in support of your proposition. First, make sure that your speech contains sufficient evidence to back up your proposition. Next, take the time to interpret that evidence so that it makes sense to your audience. Last, emphasize the relationship between your evidence and your proposition as well as its relevance to the audience (Herrick, 2011).

Bitter experience has taught us how fundamental our values are and how great the mission they represent. ~ Jan Peter Balkenende

Propositions of Value

Persuasive speakers may also be called to address questions of value, which call for a proposition judging the (relative) worth of something. These propositions make an evaluative claim regarding morality, aesthetics, wisdom, or desirability. For example, some vegetarians propose that eating meat is immoral because of the way that animals are slaughtered. Vegetarians may base this claim in a philosophy of utilitarianism or animal rights (DeGrazia, 2009).

Sometimes a proposition of value compares multiple options to determine which is best. Consumers call for these comparisons regularly to determine which products to buy. Car buyers may look to the most recent Car and Driver “10 Best Cars” list to determine their next purchase. In labeling a car one of the best on the market for a given year Car and Driver (2011) says that the cars “don’t have to be the newest, and they don’t have to be expensive . . . They just have to meet our abundant needs while satisfying our every want” (para. 1).



Both the vegetarian and car examples offer standards for evaluating the proposition. Since propositions of value tend to be more subjective, speakers need to establish **evaluation criteria** by which the audience can judge and choose to align with their position. Speakers can aim toward broad, common values such as "justice," "morality," and "liberty," or get more specific with criterion like, "utilitarianism" (that which is the most useful to more people and is therefore more ethical) or "quality of life" (that which improves the living standards for the most people; Kumar, 2024). When advancing a proposition of value, offer a clear set of criteria, offer evidence for your evaluation, and apply the evidence to demonstrate that you have satisfied the evaluation criteria (Herrick, 2011).

An inner process stands in need of outward criteria.~ Ludwig Wittgenstein

The 2005 disagreement between family members over removing a woman’s feeding tube after she had been in a coma for 15 years sparked a national debate over the value of life that highlights the importance of evaluation criteria. After years of failed medical treatments and rehabilitation attempts, Terri Schiavo’s husband petitioned the court to remove her feeding tube, initiating a legal battle with her parents that went all the way to the President of the United States (Cerminara & Goodman, 2012). Opposing sides in the debate both claimed to value life. To support his proposition that his wife had a right to die, Mr. Schiavo applied the evaluation criteria of quality of life and argued that she would not want to continue to live in a vegetative state (Caplan, 2005). Ms. Schiavo’s parents vehemently disagreed with his argument. They also claimed to value life and, with the support of religious groups, relied on the evaluation criteria of the sanctity of life to contend that she should be kept alive (Catholic Culture, 2005). Both sides gained widespread support based on people’s agreement or disagreement with their evaluation criteria. Despite intervention on behalf of both state and federal legislators, the courts eventually ruled that Mr. Schiavo had the right to have his wife’s feeding tube removed and allow her to die.

A policy is a temporary creed liable to be changed, but while it holds good, it has got to be pursued with apostolic zeal.~ Mahatma Gandhi

Propositions of Policy

Although the Schiavo case was rooted in a question of value, the debate resulted in a question of policy. Questions of policy ask the speaker to advocate for an appropriate course of action. This form of persuasive speech is used every day in Congress to determine laws, but it is also used interpersonally to determine how we ought to behave. A proposition of policy may call for people to stop a particular behavior, or to start one. For example, some U.S. cities have started banning single use plastic bags in grocery stores. Long before official public policy on this issue was established, organizations such as The Surfrider Foundation and the Earth Resource Foundation advocated that people stop using these bags because of the damage plastic bags cause to marine life. In this

case local governments and private organizations attempted to persuade people to stop engaging in a damaging behavior—shopping with single use plastic bags. However, the organizations also attempted to persuade people to start a new behavior—shopping with reusable bags.

When answering a question of policy, speakers will typically begin by describing the status quo. If you are arguing that a change must be made, you must first identify the problem inherent in the current behavior, and then demonstrate that the problem is significant enough to warrant immediate consideration. Once you have established that there is a problem which the audience ought to consider, you can then offer your proposal for a preferable course of action (Herrick, 2011). Then, it is up to you to demonstrate that your proposed policy will have more benefits than costs.



In 2011 the U.S. Postal Service, the nation's second-largest employer, told Congress it was facing an \$8.3 billion budget shortfall (Bingham, 2011). To solve the problem, the Postal Service proposed that be permitted to end Saturday mail delivery and close some post offices. To make their argument, they first described the status quo saying that the demand for their service had dramatically decreased with the popularity of email and online bill-pay services. They explained that in preceding years they laid off workers and cut spending to help with the shortfall of revenue, but now another plan was necessary to avoid defaulting on their financial obligations. They offered evidence that people preferred ending Saturday mail to alternatives such as paying more for stamps or allocating more tax money to post offices (Bingham, 2011). Although they made a compelling case, the USPS still needed to overcome perceived disadvantages to their proposition such as the negative impact on businesses and rural towns (Bingham, 2011; Stephenson, 2012). A full year later, the policy proposition passed the U.S. Senate but continues to await approval in the House (Stephenson, 2012).

This page titled [7.1: Types of Persuasive Speeches](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Sarah Stone Watt@Pepperdine University](#) & [Joshua Trey Barnett@Indiana University \(Public Speaking Project\)](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [16.4: Types of Persuasive Speeches](#) by Joshua Trey Barnett, Sarah Stone Watt is licensed [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#). Original source: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180312214950/http://publicspeakingproject.org/psvirtualtext.html>.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Persuasive Strategies - Logical Fallacies

Persuasive Strategies



Michael Coghlan – [Emotional Appeal](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Another of the three forms of rhetorical proofs described by Aristotle is that of pathos, or the appeal to emotion. Emotional appeals can be a very effective tool of persuasion, but it is also the appeal that is most ripe for manipulation. In this chapter, we will explore the concept of pathos, as well as how speakers can appeal to the audience's motivation and needs to achieve their persuasive goals.

[8.1: Fallacies](#)

[8: Persuasive Strategies - Logical Fallacies](#) is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

8.1: Fallacies

Learning Objectives

1. Define inductive, deductive, and causal reasoning.
2. Evaluate the quality of inductive, deductive, and causal reasoning.
3. Identify common fallacies of reasoning.

Persuasive Reasoning and Fallacies

Persuasive speakers should be concerned with what strengthens and weakens an argument. Earlier we discussed the process of building an argument with claims and evidence and how warrants are the underlying justifications that connect the two. We also discussed the importance of evaluating the strength of a warrant, because strong warrants are usually more persuasive. Knowing different types of reasoning can help you put claims and evidence together in persuasive ways and help you evaluate the quality of arguments that you encounter. Further, being able to identify common fallacies of reasoning can help you be a more critical consumer of persuasive messages.

Reasoning

Reasoning refers to the process of making sense of things around us. In order to understand our experiences, draw conclusions from information, and present new ideas, we must use reasoning. We often reason without being aware of it, but becoming more aware of how we think can empower us to be better producers and consumers of communicative messages. The three types of reasoning we will explore are inductive, deductive, and causal.

Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning reaches conclusions through the citation of examples and is the most frequently used form of logical reasoning (Walter, 1966). While introductory speakers are initially attracted to inductive reasoning because it seems easy, it can be difficult to employ well. Inductive reasoning, unlike deductive reasoning, doesn't result in true or false conclusions. Instead, since conclusions are generalized based on observations or examples, conclusions are "more likely" or "less likely." Despite the fact that this type of reasoning isn't definitive, it can still be valid and persuasive.

Some arguments based on inductive reasoning will be more cogent, or convincing and relevant, than others. For example, inductive reasoning can be weak when claims are made too generally. An argument that fraternities should be abolished from campus because they contribute to underage drinking and do not uphold high academic standards could be countered by providing examples of fraternities that sponsor alcohol education programming for the campus and have members that have excelled academically (Walter, 1966). In this case, one overly general claim is countered by another general claim, and both of them have some merit. It would be more effective to present a series of facts and reasons and then share the conclusion or generalization that you have reached from them.

You can see inductive reasoning used in the following speech excerpt from President George W. Bush's address to the nation on the evening of September 11, 2001. Notice how he lists a series of events from the day, which builds to his conclusion that the terrorist attacks failed in their attempt to shake the foundation of America.

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, business men and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge—huge structures collapsing have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong.

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America.



Figure 8.1.1: Claire Sambrook – [UM...](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

If a speaker is able to provide examples that are concrete, proxemic, and relevant to the audience, as Bush did in this example, audience members are prompted to think of additional examples that connect to their own lives. Inductive reasoning can be useful when an audience disagrees with your proposition. As you present logically connected examples as evidence that build to a conclusion, the audience may be persuaded by your evidence before they realize that the coming conclusion will counter what they previously thought. This also sets up cognitive dissonance, which is a persuasive strategy we will discuss later.

Reasoning by analogy is a type of inductive reasoning that argues that what is true in one set of circumstances will be true in another (Walter, 1966). Reasoning by analogy has been criticized and questioned by logicians, since two sets of circumstances are never exactly the same. While this is true, our goal when using reasoning by analogy in persuasive speaking is not to create absolutely certain conclusions but to cite cases and supporting evidence that can influence an audience. For example, let's say you are trying to persuade a university to adopt an alcohol education program by citing the program's success at other institutions. Since two universities are never exactly the same, the argument can't be airtight. To better support this argument, you could first show that the program was actually successful using various types of supporting material such as statistics from campus offices and testimony from students and staff. Second, you could show how the cases relate by highlighting similarities in the campus setting, culture, demographics, and previous mission. Since you can't argue that the schools are similar in all ways, choose to highlight significant similarities. Also, it's better to acknowledge significant limitations of the analogy and provide additional supporting material to address them than it is to ignore or hide such limitations.

So how do we evaluate inductive reasoning? When inductive reasoning is used to test scientific arguments, there is rigorous testing and high standards that must be met for a conclusion to be considered valid. Inductive reasoning in persuasive speaking is employed differently. A speaker cannot cite every example that exists to build to a conclusion, so to evaluate inductive reasoning you must examine the examples that are cited in ways other than quantity. First, the examples should be sufficient, meaning that enough are cited to support the conclusion. If not, you risk committing the hasty generalization fallacy. A speaker can expect that the audience will be able to think of some examples as well, so there is no set number on how many examples is sufficient. If the audience is familiar with the topic, then fewer examples are probably sufficient, while more may be needed for unfamiliar topics. A speaker can make his or her use of reasoning by example more powerful by showing that the examples correspond to the average case, which may require additional supporting evidence in the form of statistics. Arguing that teacher salaries should be increased by providing an example of a teacher who works side jobs and pays for his or her own school supplies could be effectively supported by showing that this teacher's salary corresponds to the national average (Walter, 1966).

Second, the examples should be typical, meaning they weren't cherry-picked to match the point being argued. A speaker who argues to defund the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) because the organization supports art that is "pornographic and offensive" may cite five examples of grants given for projects that caused such controversy. Failing to mention that these examples were pulled from the more than 128,000 grants issued by the NEA would be an inappropriate use of inductive reasoning since the examples aren't sufficient or typical enough to warrant the argument. Another way to support inductive arguments is to show that the examples are a fair sample, meaning they are representative of the larger whole. Arguing that college athletes shouldn't receive

scholarships because they do not have the scholastic merit of other students and have less academic achievement could be supported by sharing several examples. But if those examples were not representative, then they are biased, and the reasoning faulty. A speaker would need to show that the athletes used in the example are representative, in terms of their race, gender, sport, and background, of the population of athletes at the university.

Deductive Reasoning

Deductive reasoning derives specifics from what is already known. It was the preferred form of reasoning used by ancient rhetoricians like Aristotle to make logical arguments (Cooper & Nothstine, 1996). A syllogism is an example of deductive reasoning that is commonly used when teaching logic. A syllogism is an example of deductive reasoning in which a conclusion is supported by major and minor premises. The conclusion of a valid argument can be deduced from the major and minor premises. A commonly used example of a syllogism is “All humans are mortal. Socrates is a human. Socrates is mortal.” In this case, the conclusion, “Socrates is mortal,” is derived from the major premise, “All humans are mortal,” and the minor premise, “Socrates is a human.” In some cases, the major and minor premises of a syllogism may be taken for granted as true. In the previous example, the major premise is presumed true because we have no knowledge of an immortal person to disprove the statement. The minor premise is presumed true because Socrates looks and acts like other individuals we know to be human. Detectives or scientists using such logic would want to test their conclusion. We could test our conclusion by stabbing Socrates to see if he dies, but since the logic of the syllogism is sound, it may be better to cut Socrates a break and deem the argument valid. Since most arguments are more sophisticated than the previous example, speakers need to support their premises with research and evidence to establish their validity before deducing their conclusion.

A syllogism can lead to incorrect conclusions if one of the premises isn't true, as in the following example:

- All presidents have lived in the White House. (Major premise)
- George Washington was president. (Minor premise)
- George Washington lived in the White House. (Conclusion)

In the previous example, the major premise was untrue, since John Adams, our second president, was the first president to live in the White House. This causes the conclusion to be false. A syllogism can also exhibit faulty logic even if the premises are both true but are unrelated, as in the following example:

- Penguins are black and white. (Major premise)
- Some old television shows are black and white. (Minor premise)
- Some penguins are old television shows. (Conclusion)



Figure 8.1.2: Sleepmyf – [Lego detective](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Causal Reasoning

Causal reasoning argues to establish a relationship between a cause and an effect. When speakers attempt to argue for a particular course of action based on potential positive or negative consequences that may result, they are using causal reasoning. Such reasoning is evident in the following example: Eating more local foods will boost the local economy and make you healthier. The “if/then” relationship that is set up in causal reasoning can be persuasive, but the reasoning isn’t always sound. Rather than establishing a true cause-effect relationship, speakers more often set up a correlation, which means there is a relationship between two things but there are other contextual influences.

To use causal reasoning effectively and ethically, speakers should avoid claiming a direct relationship between a cause and an effect when such a connection cannot be proven. Instead of arguing that “x caused y,” it is more accurate for a speaker to say “x influenced y.” Causal thinking is often used when looking to blame something or someone, as can be seen in the following example: It’s the president’s fault that the economy hasn’t recovered more. While such a statement may garner a speaker some political capital, it is not based on solid reasoning. Economic and political processes are too complex to distill to such a simple cause-effect relationship. A speaker would need to use more solid reasoning, perhaps inductive reasoning through examples, to build up enough evidence to support that a correlation exists and a causal relationship is likely. When using causal reasoning, present evidence that shows the following: (1) the cause occurred before the effect, (2) the cause led to the effect, and (3) it is unlikely that other causes produced the effect.

Review of Types of Reasoning

- **Inductive.** Arguing from examples to support a conclusion; includes reasoning by analogy. Examples should be sufficient, typical, and representative to warrant a strong argument.
- **Deductive.** Deriving specifics from what is already known; includes syllogisms. Premises that lead to a conclusion must be true, relevant, and related for the argument to be valid.
- **Causal.** Argues to establish a relationship between a cause and an effect. Usually involves a correlation rather than a true causal relationship.

Fallacies of Reasoning

Fallacies are flaws within the logic or reasoning of an argument. Although we will discuss 10 common fallacies, more than 125 have been identified and named. It’s important to note that the presence of a fallacy in an argument doesn’t mean that it can’t be persuasive. In fact, many people are persuaded by fallacious arguments because they do not identify the fallacy within the argument. Fallacies are often the last effort of uninformed or ill-prepared speakers who find that they have nothing better to say. Being aware of the forms of reasoning and fallacies makes us more critical consumers of persuasive messages, which is a substantial benefit of studying persuasive speaking that affects personal, political, and professional aspects of our lives.

Hasty Generalization

The hasty generalization fallacy relates to inductive reasoning and is the result of too few examples being cited to warrant the generalization. Jumping to conclusions is tempting, especially when pressed for time, but making well-researched and supported arguments is key to being an effective and ethical speaker. Making a claim that train travel is not safe and citing two recent derailments that resulted in injury doesn’t produce a strong warrant when viewed in relation to the number of train passengers who travel safely every day.

False Analogy

The false analogy fallacy also relates to inductive reasoning and results when the situations or circumstances being compared are not similar enough. A common false analogy that people make is comparing something to putting a person on the moon: “If we can put a person on the moon, why can’t we figure out a way to make the tax code easier to understand?” This question doesn’t acknowledge the different skill sets and motivations involved in the two examples being compared.

False Cause

The false cause fallacy relates to causal reasoning and occurs when a speaker argues, with insufficient evidence, that one thing caused or causes another. When I was in high school, teachers used to say that wearing baseball caps would make us go bald when we got older. In an attempt to persuade us to not wear hats in the classroom, they were arguing, fallaciously, that wearing baseball caps is what causes baldness. When a false cause argument is made after the “effect,” it is referred to in Latin as *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, which means “after this, therefore because of this.” Blaming bad fortune on superstitions is a good example of faulty

reasoning that tries to argue for a connection between an “effect” that has already occurred and its preceding “cause.” My bad luck is more likely attributable to poor decisions I have made or random interference than the mirror I broke while moving two years ago.



Figure 8.1.3: Tim Sheerman-Chase – [Seven Years Bad Luck](#) – CC BY 2.0.

False Authority

The false authority fallacy results when the person making an argument doesn’t actually have the qualifications to be credible but is perceived as credible because they are respected or admired. Despite the fact that this form of argument is fallacious, it is obviously quite effective. Advertisers spend millions of dollars to get celebrities and athletes to sell us their products because of the persuasive potential these stars carry in their persona, not in their ability to argue a point. Voters might be persuaded to support a candidate because of a famous musician’s endorsement without questioning the political beliefs of either the musician or the politician to see if they match up with their own.

Bandwagon

Parents and other sources of guidance in our lives have tried to keep us from falling for the bandwagon fallacy. When your mom responds to your argument that you should get to go to the party because everyone else is by asking, “If everyone else jumped off a bridge, would you?” she is rightfully pointing out the fallacy in your argument. In a public-speaking-related example, I have had students try to persuade their audience to buy and eat more organic foods based on their increasing popularity. In short, popular appeal and frequency of use are not strong warrants to support an argument. Just because something is popular, doesn’t mean it’s good.

False Dilemma

The false dilemma fallacy occurs when a speaker rhetorically backs his or her audience into a corner, presenting them with only two options and arguing that they must choose either one or the other. This is also known as the “either/or” fallacy. Critical thinkers know that the world can’t be simplified to black and white, good and bad, or right and wrong. Yet many people rely on such oversimplifications when making arguments. A speaker who argues that immigrants to the United States should learn English or go back to their own country doesn’t acknowledge that there are many successful immigrants who have successful lives and contribute to society without speaking English fluently. The speaker also ignores the fact that many immigrants do not have access to English language instruction or the time to take such classes because they are busy with their own jobs and families. Granted, such a rhetorical strategy does make it easier to discuss complex issues and try to force people into a decision, but it also removes gray area in the form of context that can be really important for making a decision. Be critical of speakers and messages that claim there are only two options from which to choose.

Ad Hominem

Ad hominem means “to the person” in Latin and refers to a common fallacy of attacking a person rather than an argument. Elementary school playgrounds and middle school hallways are often sites of ad hominem attacks. When one person runs out of good reasons to support their argument and retorts to the other, “Well you’re ugly!” they have resorted to a fallacious ad hominem argument. You probably aren’t surprised to know that politicians frequently rely on personal attacks, especially when they are sponsored by political action committees (PACs). The proliferation of these organizations resulted in an increase in “attack ads” during the 2012 presidential race. While all fallacious arguments detract from the quality of public communication, ad hominem arguments in particular diminish the civility of our society.

Slippery Slope

The slippery slope fallacy occurs when a person argues that one action will inevitably lead to a series of other actions. If we take one step down an icy hill it becomes difficult to get back up and you slide all the way down even though you only wanted to take

one step. A slippery slope fallacy in a speech about US foreign policy might take the form of the following argument: If the United States goes to help this country in need, then we will be expected to intervene any time there's a conflict in the world.

Red Herring

The red herring fallacy is my favorite because it has an interesting origin—and it was used in *Scooby Doo*! The origin of the name of this fallacy comes from old foxhunting practices in England. When the hunters were training their dogs to stay on the trail of a fox, they would mark a trail with fox scent so the dog could practice following the scent. As a further test, they would take the smell of fish (like a red herring) and create a second trail leading in another direction. If a dog left the scent of the fox trail to follow the stronger and more noticeable scent trail left by the red herring, then the dog failed the test. The smartest and best-trained dogs weren't distracted by the fishy trail and stayed on the path. Basically every episode of *Scooby Doo* involves a red herring trick—for example, when the ghost at the amusement park turns out to be a distraction created by the owner to cover up his financial problems and shady business practices. A speaker who uses the red herring fallacy makes an argument that distracts from the discussion at hand. Bringing up socialism during an argument about nationalized health care is an example of a red herring fallacy.

Appeal to Tradition

The appeal to tradition fallacy argues that something should continue because “it's the way things have been done before.” Someone may use this type of argument when they feel threatened by a potential change. People who oppose marriage rights for gay and lesbian people often argue that the definition of marriage shouldn't change because of its traditional meaning of a “union between one man and one woman.” Such appeals often overstate the history and prevalence of the “tradition.” Within the United States, many departures from traditional views of marriage have led to changes that we accept as normal today. Within the past one hundred years we have seen law changes that took away men's rights to beat their wives and make decisions for them. And it wasn't until 1993 that every state made marital rape a crime, which changed the millennia-old “tradition” that women were obligated to have sex with their husbands (Coontz, 2006). Many people are resistant to or anxious about change, which is understandable, but this doesn't form the basis of a good argument.

Appeal to Novelty

The appeal to novelty fallacy argues that something that is new or modern is superior to the status quo, based exclusively on its newness. Someone may use this type of argument when they want to invoke a change in their audience. For example, if a technology company wants people to purchase their latest software, they might pitch it to consumers as being “New and improved!” In reality, however, new does not always equal better. In some cases, new might actually be worse!

Review of Fallacies

- **Hasty generalization.** Inductive reasoning fallacy that occurs when too few examples are cited to warrant a conclusion.
- **False analogy.** Inductive reasoning fallacy that occurs when situations or circumstances being compared are not similar enough.
- **False cause.** Causal reasoning fallacy that occurs when a speaker argues with insufficient evidence that one thing caused/causes another.
- **False authority.** Fallacy that occurs when a person making an argument doesn't have the knowledge or qualifications to be credible but is perceived as credible because they are respected or admired.
- **Bandwagon.** Fallacy that relies on arguing for a course of action or belief because it is commonly done or held.
- **False dilemma.** Fallacy that occurs when a speaker presents an audience only two options and argues they must choose one or the other.
- **Ad hominem.** Fallacy that occurs when a speaker attacks another person rather than his or her argument.
- **Slippery slope.** Fallacy that occurs when a person argues that one action will inevitably lead to a series of other actions.
- **Red herring.** Fallacy that occurs when a speaker poses an argument that is meant to distract from the argument at hand.
- **Appeal to tradition.** Fallacy that results when a speaker argues that something should continue because “it's the way things have been done before.”
- **Appeal to novelty.** Fallacy that occurs when a speaker argues that something that is new or modern is superior to something that is older.

Key Takeaways

- We use reasoning to make sense of the world around us and draw conclusions. Three types of reasoning are inductive, deductive, and causal.

- Inductive reasoning refers to arguments that persuade by citing examples that build to a conclusion. Examples should be sufficient, typical, and representative to warrant a strong argument. Reasoning by analogy argues that what is true in one set of circumstances will be true in another, and is an example of inductive reasoning.
- Deductive reasoning refers to arguments that derive specifics from what is already known and includes syllogisms. Premises that lead to the conclusion must be true and relevant for the argument to be valid.
- Causal reasoning refers to arguments that establish a relationship between a cause and an effect and usually involves a correlation rather than a true causal relationship.
- Fallacies refer to flaws within the logic or reasoning of an argument. Ten fallacies of reasoning discussed in this chapter are hasty generalization, false analogy, false cause, false authority, false dilemma, ad hominem, slippery slope, red herring, and appeal to tradition.

Exercises

1. Identify examples of inductive, deductive, and causal reasoning in the sample persuasive speech on education in prisons included in Section 4.3 “Nonverbal Communication Competence”.
2. People often use fallacies in arguments, usually without knowing it. Being able to identify fallacies is an important critical thinking skill. Find a letter to the editor in a paper or online and see if you can identify any of the ten fallacies discussed in this chapter.
3. Of the ten fallacies discussed in the chapter, which do you think is the most unethical and why?

References

- Coontz, S., “Traditional Marriage Has Changed a Lot,” *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, February 23, 2006, accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www.seattlepi.com/default/article/Traditional-marriage-has-changed-a-lot-1196563.php>.
- Cooper, M. D., and William L. Nothstine, *Power Persuasion: Moving an Ancient Art into the Media Age* (Greenwood, IN: Educational Video Group, 1996), 27.
- Walter, O. M., *Speaking to Inform and Persuade* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 58.

This page titled [8.1: Fallacies](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

- [11.3: Persuasive Reasoning and Fallacies](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Ethics Matters

[9.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking](#)

[9.2: The Ethics Pyramid](#)

[9.3: Ethics in Public Speaking](#)

[9.4: Free Speech](#)

[9.5: Chapter Exercises](#)

Thumbnail: pixabay.com/photos/crossed-fingers-363478/

This page titled [9: Ethics Matters](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

9.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking

Ethics Today

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



Figure 9.1.1: Pixabay – CC0 public domain.

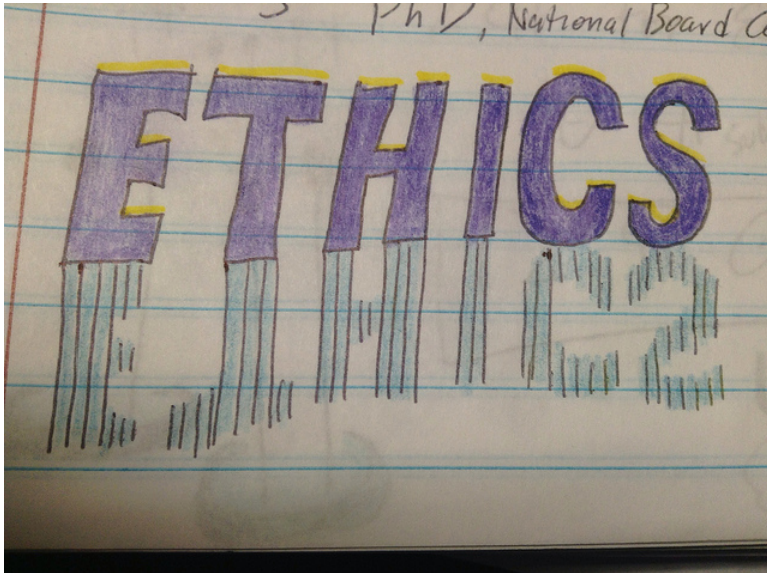
This page titled [9.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [2.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

9.2: The Ethics Pyramid

Learning Objective

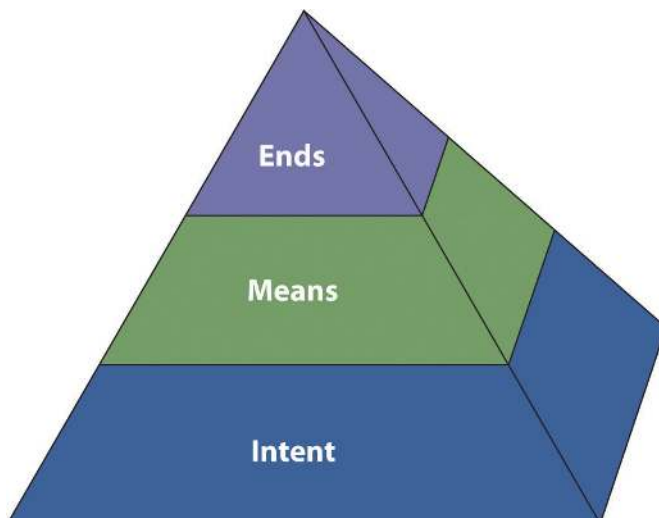
1. Explain how the three levels of the ethics pyramid might be used in evaluating the ethical choices of a public speaker or listener.



Dannon Loveland – ETHICS – CC BY 2.0.

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

Figure 2.1 Ethical Pyramid



Elspeth Tilley, a public communication ethics expert from Massey University, proposes a structured approach to thinking about ethics (Tilley, 2005). Her ethics pyramid involves three basic concepts: intent, means, and ends. Figure 2.1 illustrates the Tilley pyramid.

Intent

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

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

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

Means

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

For example, suppose you want your friend Marty to spend an hour reviewing a draft of your speech according to criteria, such as audience appropriateness, adequate research, strong support of assertions, and dynamic introduction and conclusion. What means might you use to persuade Marty to do you this favor? You might explain that you value Marty's opinion and will gladly return the favor the next time Marty is preparing a speech (good means), or you might threaten to tell a professor that Marty cheated on a test (bad means). While both of these means may lead to the same end—having Marty agree to review your speech—one is clearly more ethical than the other.

Ends

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

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

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

Thinking through the Pyramid

Ultimately, understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid: intent, means, and ends. When thinking about the ethics of a given behavior, Tilley recommends asking yourself three basic questions:

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

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

Key Takeaways

- The ethics pyramid is a pictorial way of understanding the three fundamental parts of ethics: intent, means, and ends. Intent exists at the base of the ethical pyramid and serves as a foundation for determining the ethics of specific behavior. Means are the tools one uses to accomplish a goal and constitute the second layer of the ethical pyramid. Finally, ends are the results that occur after a specific behavior has occurred and exist at the top of the pyramid.

Exercises

1. Can you think of a time when you intended to have a “good” end and employed “good” means, but you ended up accomplishing a “bad” end? Why do you think our ends are not always in line with our intentions?
2. Ursula is developing a speech on the importance of organ donation. She has found lots of impressive statistics in her research but feels she needs an interesting story to really make an impression on her audience and persuade them to become organ donors. Ursula can’t find a true story she really likes, so she takes elements of several stories and pieces them together into a single story. Her speech is a huge success and six of her classmates sign up to be organ donors immediately after her presentation. How do we decide whether Ursula’s behavior is ethical?
3. Pablo has been scheduled to work late several nights this week and is very tired by the time his public speaking class rolls around in the late afternoon. One of his classmates gives a speech about environmental sustainability and Pablo does not really pay attention to what the classmate is saying. After the speech, Pablo’s teacher asks him to critique the speech. Because he doesn’t really know what happened in the speech, Pablo makes a general statement that the speech was pretty good, that the delivery was OK, and that the organization was fine. Using the ethics pyramid as a guide, in what ways might Pablo’s response be ethical? In what ways might it be unethical? What are Pablo’s responsibilities as an ethical listener?

References

- McCroskey, J. C., Wrench, J. S., & Richmond, V. P. (2003). *Principles of public speaking*. Indianapolis, IN: The College Network.
- Tilley, E. (2005). The ethics pyramid: Making ethics unavoidable in the public relations process. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 20, 305–320.

This page titled [9.2: The Ethics Pyramid](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [2.2: The Ethics Pyramid](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

9.3: Ethics in Public Speaking

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how to apply the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication within the context of public speaking.
2. Understand how you can apply ethics to your public speaking preparation process.

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

Communication Code of Ethics

In 1999, the National Communication Association officially adopted the Credo for Ethical Communication (see the following sidebar). Ultimately, the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication is a set of beliefs communication scholars have about the ethics of human communication.

National Communication Association Credo for Ethical Communication

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

- We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.
- We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.
- We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

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

Applying the NCA Credo to Public Speaking

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



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

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

It is also important to be honest about where all your information comes from in a speech. As speakers, examine your information sources and determine whether they are biased or have hidden agendas. For example, you are not likely to get accurate information about nonwhite individuals from a neo-Nazi website. While you may not know all your sources of information firsthand, you should attempt to find objective sources that do not have an overt or covert agenda that skews the argument you are making. We will discuss more about ethical sources of information in Chapter 7 later in this book.

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

In the previous sentence, we placed quotation marks around the sentence to indicate that the words came from the American Psychological Association and not from us. When speaking informally, people sometimes use "air quotes" to signal direct quotations—but this is not a recommended technique in public speaking. Instead, speakers need to verbally tell an audience when they are using someone else's information. The consequences for failing to cite sources during public speeches can be substantial. When Senator Joseph Biden was running for president of the United States in 1988, reporters found that he had plagiarized portions of his stump speech from British politician Neil Kinnock. Biden was forced to drop out of the race as a result. More recently, the student newspaper at Malone University in Ohio alleged that the university president, Gary W. Streit, had plagiarized material in a public speech. Streit retired abruptly as a result.

Even if you are not running for president of the United States or serving as a college president, citing sources is important to you as a student. Many universities have policies that include dismissal from the institution for student plagiarism of academic work, including public speeches. Failing to cite your sources might result, at best, in lower credibility with your audience and, at worst, in a failing grade on your assignment or expulsion from your school. While we will talk in more detail about plagiarism later in this

book, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of giving credit to the speakers and authors whose ideas we pass on within our own speeches and writing.

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

The second plagiarism trap public speakers fall into is paraphrasing what someone else said or wrote without giving credit to the speaker or author. For example, you may have read a book and learned that there are three types of schoolyard bullying. In the middle of your speech you talk about those three types of schoolyard bullying. If you do not tell your audience where you found that information, you are plagiarizing. Typically, the only information you do not need to cite is information that is general knowledge. General knowledge is information that is publicly available and widely known by a large segment of society. For example, you would not need to provide a citation within a speech for the name of Delaware's capital. Although many people do not know the capital of Delaware without looking it up, this information is publicly available and easily accessible, so assigning credit to one specific source is not useful or necessary.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Endorse Freedom of Expression, Diversity of Perspective, and Tolerance of Dissent to Achieve the Informed and Responsible Decision Making Fundamental to a Civil Society

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

If everyone only listened to one source of information, then we would be easily manipulated and controlled. For this reason, we believe that individuals should be willing to listen to a range of speakers on a given subject. As listeners or consumers of communication, we should realize that this diversity of perspectives enables us to be more fully informed on a subject. Imagine voting in an election after listening only to the campaign speeches of one candidate. The perspective of that candidate would be so narrow that you would have no way to accurately understand and assess the issues at hand or the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing candidates. Unfortunately, some voters do limit themselves to listening only to their candidate of choice and, as a result, base their voting decisions on incomplete—and, not infrequently, inaccurate—information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To create a climate of caring and mutual respect, it is important for us as speakers to be open with our audiences so that our intentions and perceptions are clear. Nothing alienates an audience faster than a speaker with a hidden agenda unrelated to the stated purpose of the speech. One of our coauthors once listened to a speaker give a two-hour talk, allegedly about workplace wellness, which actually turned out to be an infomercial for the speaker's weight-loss program. In this case, the speaker clearly had a hidden (or not-so-hidden) agenda, which made the audience feel disrespected.

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

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

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

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

At the same time, it is important for listeners to pay attention to expressions of intolerance or hatred. Extremist speakers sometimes attempt to disguise their true agendas by avoiding bigoted "buzzwords" and using mild-sounding terms instead. For example, a speaker advocating the overthrow of a government might use the term "regime change" instead of "revolution"; similarly, proponents of genocide in various parts of the world have used the term "ethnic cleansing" instead of "extermination." By listening critically to the gist of a speaker's message as well as the specific language he or she uses, we can see how that speaker views the world.

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

We believe that finding and bringing to light situations of inequality and injustice within our society is important. Public speaking has been used throughout history to point out inequality and injustice, from Patrick Henry arguing against the way the English government treated the American colonists and Sojourner Truth describing the evils of slavery to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Army Lt. Dan Choi's speeches arguing that the military's "don't ask, don't tell policy" is unjust. Many social justice movements have started because young public speakers have decided to stand up for what they believe is fair and just.

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

This ethical principle involves balancing personal disclosure with discretion. It is perfectly normal for speakers to want to share their own personal opinions and feelings about a topic; however, it is also important to highlight information within a speech that represents your own thoughts and feelings. Your listeners have a right to know the difference between facts and personal opinions.

Similarly, we have an obligation to respect others' privacy and confidentiality when speaking. If information is obtained from printed or publicly distributed material, it's perfectly appropriate to use that information without getting permission, as long as you cite it. However, when you have a great anecdote one of your friends told you in confidence, or access to information that is not available to the general public, it is best to seek permission before using the information in a speech.

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

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

The last statement of NCA's ethical credo may be the most important one. We live in a society where a speaker's message can literally be heard around the world in a matter of minutes, thanks to our global communication networks. Extreme remarks made by politicians, media commentators, and celebrities, as well as ordinary people, can unexpectedly "go viral" with regrettable consequences. It is not unusual to see situations where a speaker talks hatefully about a specific group, but when one of the speaker's listeners violently attacks a member of the group, the speaker insists that he or she had no way of knowing that this could possibly have happened. Washing one's hands of responsibility is unacceptable: all speakers should accept responsibility for the short-term and long-term consequences of their speeches. Although it is certainly not always the speaker's fault if someone commits an act of violence, the speaker should take responsibility for her or his role in the situation. This process involves being truly reflective and willing to examine how one's speech could have tragic consequences.

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

Practicing Ethical Public Speaking

Thus far in this section we've introduced you to the basics of thinking through the ethics of public speaking. Knowing about ethics is essential, but even more important to being an ethical public speaker is putting that knowledge into practice by thinking through possible ethical pitfalls prior to standing up and speaking out. Table 2.1 is a checklist based on our discussion in this chapter to help you think through some of these issues.

Table 2.1 Public Speaking Ethics Checklist

Instructions: For each of the following ethical issues, check either "true" or "false."		True	False
1.	I have knowingly added information within my speech that is false.		
2.	I have attempted to persuade people by unnecessarily tapping into emotion rather than logic.		
3.	I have not clearly cited all the information within my speech.		

4.	I do not know who my sources of information are or what makes my sources credible.		
5.	I wrote my speech based on my own interests and really haven't thought much about my audience.		
6.	I haven't really thought much about my audience's needs and desires.		
7.	I have altered some of the facts in my speech to help me be more persuasive.		
8.	Some of the language in my speech may be considered bigoted.		
9.	My goal is to manipulate my audience to my point of view.		
10.	I sometimes blend in my personal opinions when discussing actual facts during the speech.		
11.	My personal opinions are just as good as facts, so I don't bother to distinguish between the two during my speech.		
12.	I've used information in my speech from a friend or colleague that probably shouldn't be repeated.		
13.	I'm using information in my speech that a source gave me even though it was technically "off the record."		
14.	It's just a speech. I really don't care what someone does with the information when I'm done speaking.		
15.	I haven't really thought about the short- or long-term consequences of my speech.		

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

Key Takeaways

- All eight of the principles espoused in the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication can be applied to public speaking. Some of the principles relate more to the speaker's role in communication, while others relate to both the speaker's and the audience's

role in public speech.

- When preparing a speech, it is important to think about the ethics of public speaking from the beginning. When a speaker sets out to be ethical in his or her speech from the beginning, arriving at ethical speech is much easier.

Exercises

1. Fill out the “Public Speaking Ethics Checklist” while thinking about your first speech. Did you mark “true” for any of the statements? If so, why? What can you do as a speaker to get to the point where you can check them all as “false”?
2. Robert is preparing a speech about legalizing marijuana use in the United States. He knows that his roommate wrote a paper on the topic last semester and asks his roommate about the paper in an attempt to gather information. During his speech, Robert orally cites his roommate by name as a source of his information but does not report that the source is his roommate, whose experience is based on writing a paper. In what ways does Robert’s behavior violate the guidelines set out in the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication?

References

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author, p. 349.

Associated Press. (2011, May 5). Conn. shekel shellacking. *New York Post*.

Shiffrin, S. H. (1999). *Dissent, injustice and the meanings of America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

This page titled [9.3: Ethics in Public Speaking](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [2.3: Ethics in Public Speaking](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

9.4: Free Speech

Learning Objectives

1. Define the concept of free speech and discuss its origins.
2. Discuss the First Amendment to the US Constitution in terms of free speech.
3. Describe how free speech relates to other freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution.



Mouth wide shut (CC BY 2.0.; Soumyadeep Paul)

What Is Free Speech?

Free speech has been a constitutional right since the founding of our nation, and according to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary of Law*, **free speech** entails “the right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations (as the power of the government to avoid a clear and present danger) esp. as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution” (Freedom of speech). Free speech is especially important to us as public speakers because expressing information and ideas is the purpose of public speaking. It is also important to audiences of public speeches because free speech allows us to hear and consider multiple points of view so that we can make more informed decisions.

The First Amendment to the Constitution

Free speech was so important to the founders of the United States that it is included in the first of the ten amendments to the US Constitution that are known as the Bill of Rights. This is not surprising, considering that many American colonists had crossed the Atlantic to escape religious persecution and that England had imposed many restrictions on personal freedoms during the colonial era. The text of the First Amendment reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (National Archives and Records Administration, 2011).

The freedoms protected by the First Amendment may seem perfectly natural today, but they were controversial in 1791 when the Bill of Rights was enacted. Proponents argued that individuals needed protection from overreaching powers of government, while opponents believed these protections were unnecessary and that amending them to the Constitution could weaken the union.

Freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, of association, of assembly and petition are all guaranteed in amendments to the US Constitution. Free speech allows us to exercise our other First Amendment rights. Freedom of assembly means that people can gather to discuss and protest issues of importance to them. If free speech were not protected, citizens would not be able to exercise their right to protest about activities such as war or policies such as health care reform.

Free speech does not mean, however, that every US citizen has the legal right to say anything at any time. If your speech is likely to lead to violence or other illegal acts, it is not protected. One recent example is a 2007 Supreme Court decision in the *Morse et al. v. Frederick* case. In this case, a high school student held up a sign reading “Bong Hits 4 Jesus” across from the school during the 2002 Olympic Torch Relay. The principal suspended the teenager, and the teen sued the principal for violating his First

Amendment rights. Ultimately, the court decided that the principal had the right to suspend the student because he was advocating illegal behavior (Supreme Court of the United States, 2007).

The meaning of “free speech” is constantly being debated by politicians, judges, and the public, even within the United States, where this right has been discussed for over two hundred years. As US citizens, it is important to be aware of both the protections afforded by free speech and its limits so that we can be both articulate speakers and critical listeners when issues such as antiwar protests at military funerals or speech advocating violence against members of specific groups come up within our communities.



Figure (public domain; via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Key Takeaways

- Freedom of speech is the right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations.
- Free speech helps us to enact other freedoms protected by the First Amendment, including freedom of assembly and freedom of religion. Without free speech, we would not be able to assemble in groups to publically debate and challenge government policies or laws. Without free speech, we would not be able to exercise our rights to express our religious views even when they are at odds with popular opinion.

Exercises

1. What are your campus’s internal codes on speech and free speech? Do you have free speech areas on campus? If so, how are they used and regulated?
2. Some college campuses have experienced controversy in recent years when they invited speakers such as Ward Churchill or those who deny that the Holocaust occurred to campus. Discuss in a small group how these controversies reflect the importance of free speech in our society.

References

Freedom of speech. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster’s dictionary of law*. Retrieved from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/freedom%20of%20speech>

National Archives and Records Administration. (2011). Bill of rights transcription. Retrieved from http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html

Supreme Court of the United States. (2007). Syllabus: *Morse et al. v. Frederick*. No. 06–278. Argued March 19, 2007–Decided June 25, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/06pdf/06-278.pdf>

This page titled [9.4: Free Speech](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- **2.4: Free Speech** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

9.5: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Jerold Follinsworth is an elected official on the verge of giving the most important speech of his entire life, but he doesn't know which speech to give. He looks down at his hands and sees two very different speeches. The speech in his left hand clearly admits to the public that he has been having an affair with a senior staffer. The allegations have been around for a few months, but his office has been denying the allegations as slanderous attacks from his opponents. In his right hand, he has a speech that sidesteps the affair allegations and focuses on an important policy issue. If Jerold gives the speech in his left hand, an important initiative for his state will be defeated by his political enemies. If Jerold gives the speech in his right hand, he will be deceiving the public, but it will lead to increased growth in jobs for his state. Jerold asked his top speech writer to prepare both speeches. As Jerold waits in the wings for his press conference, he's just not sure which speech he should give.

1. What ethical communication choices do you see Jerold as having in this case?
2. How would you analyze Jerold's decision using the ethical pyramid?
3. How would you apply the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication to this case?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Darlene is in the process of preparing a speech on global warming. She knowingly includes a source from a fringe group that has been previously discredited, but she thinks the source will really help her drive her argument home. What combination of the ethics pyramid does this case represent?
 - a. intentional use of bad means
 - b. intentional use of good means
 - c. unintentional use of bad means
 - d. unintentional use of good means
 - e. intentional use of neutral means
2. Which of the following is *not* an ethical aspect described by the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication?
 - a. freedom of expression
 - b. access to communication resources and opportunities
 - c. accepting responsibility for one's own communication
 - d. respecting a source before evaluating her or his message
 - e. promoting ethical standards in business

Answer Key

1. a
2. e

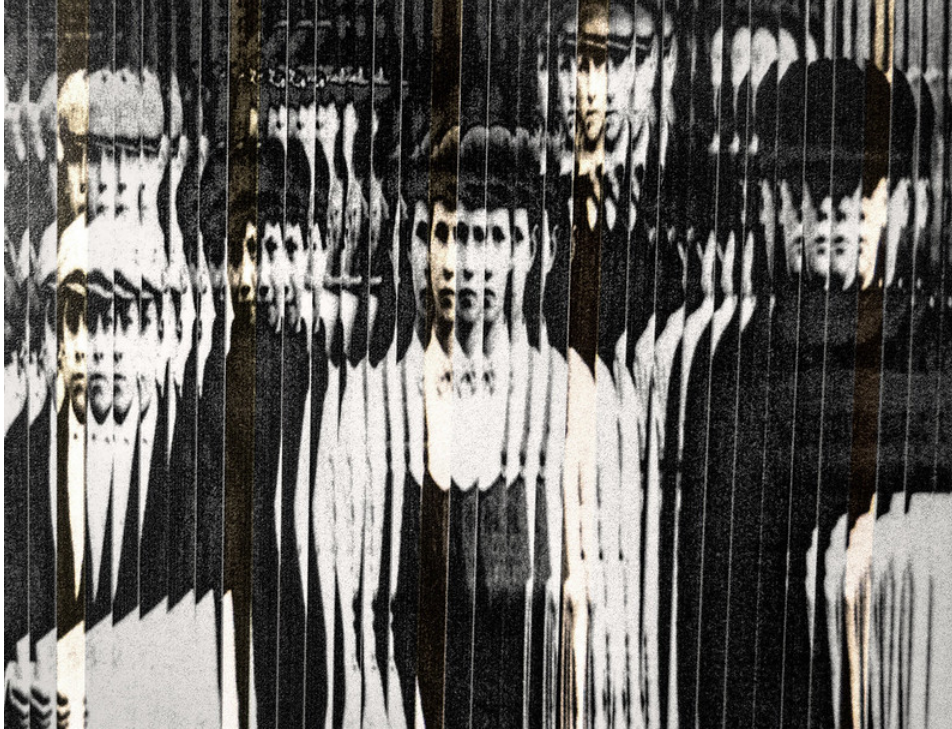
This page titled [9.5: Chapter Exercises](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [2.5: Chapter Exercises](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Persuasive Theories - Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Persuasive Theories: Cognitive Dissonance Theory



Robert Couse-Baker – [cognitive dissonance](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Understanding how people are persuaded is very important to the discussion of public speaking. Thankfully, a number of researchers have created theories that help explain why people are persuaded. While there are numerous theories that help to explain persuasion, we are only going to examine one here: cognitive dissonance theory.

10.1: Cognitive Dissonance Theory

[10: Persuasive Theories - Cognitive Dissonance Theory](#) is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

10.1: Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the theory of persuasion discussed in the text: cognitive dissonance theory.

Theories of Persuasion

Understanding how people are persuaded is very important to the discussion of public speaking. Thankfully, a number of researchers have created theories that help explain why people are persuaded. While there are numerous theories that help to explain persuasion, we are only going to examine one here: cognitive dissonance theory.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory



bruthanick – [Smoking Kills Others](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

In 1957, Leon Festinger proposed another theory for understanding how persuasion functions: cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance is an aversive motivational state that occurs when an individual entertains two or more contradictory attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors simultaneously. For example, maybe you know you should be working on your speech, but you really want to go to a movie with a friend. In this case, practicing your speech and going to the movie are two cognitions that are inconsistent with one another. The goal of persuasion is to induce enough dissonance in listeners that they will change their attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Frymier and Nadler noted that for cognitive dissonance to work effectively there are three necessary conditions: aversive consequences, freedom of choice, and insufficient external justification (Frymier & Nadler, 2007). First, for cognitive dissonance to work, there needs to be a strong enough aversive consequence, or punishment, for *not* changing one's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. For example, maybe you're giving a speech on why people need to eat more apples. If your aversive consequence for

not eating apples is that your audience will not get enough fiber, most people will simply not be persuaded, because the punishment isn't severe enough. Instead, for cognitive dissonance to work, the punishment associated with not eating apples needs to be significant enough to change behaviors. If you convince your audience that without enough fiber in their diets they are at higher risk for heart disease or colon cancer, they might fear the aversive consequences enough to change their behavior.

The second condition necessary for cognitive dissonance to work is that people must have a freedom of choice. If listeners feel they are being coerced into doing something, then dissonance will not be aroused. They may alter their behavior in the short term, but as soon as the coercion is gone, the original behavior will reemerge. It's like the person who drives more slowly when a police officer is nearby but ignores speed limits once officers are no longer present. As a speaker, if you want to increase cognitive dissonance, you need to make sure that your audience doesn't feel coerced or manipulated, but rather that they can clearly see that they have a choice of whether to be persuaded.

The final condition necessary for cognitive dissonance to work has to do with external and internal justifications. External justification refers to the process of identifying reasons outside of one's own control to support one's behavior, beliefs, and attitudes. Internal justification occurs when someone voluntarily changes a behavior, belief, or attitude to reduce cognitive dissonance. When it comes to creating change through persuasion, external justifications are less likely to result in change than internal justifications (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Imagine that you're giving a speech with the specific purpose of persuading college students to use condoms whenever they engage in sexual intercourse. Your audience analysis, in the form of an anonymous survey, indicates that a large percentage of your listeners do not consistently use condoms. Which would be the more persuasive argument: (a) "Failure to use condoms inevitably results in unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including AIDS"—or (b) "If you think of yourself as a responsible adult, you'll use condoms to protect yourself and your partner"? With the first argument, you have provided external justification for using condoms (i.e., terrible things will happen if you don't use condoms). Listeners who reject this external justification (e.g., who don't believe these dire consequences are inevitable) are unlikely to change their behavior. With the second argument, however, if your listeners think of themselves as responsible adults and they don't consistently use condoms, the conflict between their self-image and their behavior will elicit cognitive dissonance. In order to reduce this cognitive dissonance, they are likely to seek internal justification for the view of themselves as responsible adults by changing their behavior (i.e., using condoms more consistently). In this case, according to cognitive dissonance theory, the second persuasive argument would be the one more likely to lead to a change in behavior.

Key Takeaways

- Cognitive dissonance theory reasons that people do not like holding to ideas in their heads that are contrary and will do what is necessary to get rid of the dissonance caused by the two contrary ideas.

Exercises

1. Imagine you're giving a speech to a group of college fraternity and sorority members about why hazing shouldn't be tolerated. Explain the persuasive process using the theory of persuasion discussed in this chapter.

References

- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, & Company.
- Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58, 203–210.
- Frankish, K. (1998). Virtual belief. In P. Carruthers & J. Boucher (Eds.), *Language and thought* (pp. 249–269). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Frymier, A. B., & Nadler, M. K. (2007). *Persuasion: Integrating theory, research, and practice*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Perloff, R. M. (2003). *The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the 21st Century* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 5–6.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123–205.
- Sherif, M., & Hovland, C. I. (1961). *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

10.1: Cognitive Dissonance Theory is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Organizing Policy Speeches

Persuasive Theories: Monroe's Motivated Sequence



League of Women Voters – [petition](#) – CC BY 2.0.

As we've learned, persuasion is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal. Previously in this text, we discussed general guidelines for organizing persuasive speeches. In this section, we are going to look at another organizational pattern that is ideally suited for persuasive speeches: Monroe's motivated sequence.

11.1: Organizing Policy Speeches

11: Organizing Policy Speeches is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

11.1: Organizing Policy Speeches

Learning Objectives

1. Understand three common organizational patterns for persuasive speeches.
2. Explain the parts of a Problem-Cause-Solution speech.
3. Explain the parts of a Cause-Effect-Solution speech.
4. Explain the steps utilized in Monroe's Motivated Sequence.

Organizing Persuasive Speeches



Steven Lilley – [Engaged](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Previously in this text we discussed general guidelines for organizing speeches. In this section, we are going to look at three organizational patterns ideally suited for persuasive speeches: Problem-Cause-Solution, Cause-Effect-Solution, and Monroe's Motivated Sequence.

Problem-Cause-Solution

One format for organizing a persuasive speech is the **Problem-Cause-Solution** format. In this organizational pattern, you would provide evidence to show that a problem exists, explain what is causing the problem to persist, and then propose a solution with additional evidence or reasoning to justify the course of action. One main point should address the problem, one main point should address the cause of the problem, and one main point should address the solution. In the first main point addressing the **problem**, you should clearly state what the problem is, make the significance of the problem clear by providing evidence and statistics, and finally document the harms of the problem. You should be able to explain to your audience the ultimate impact of the problem. In the second main point addressing the **cause**, you should explain what is causing the problem, why it continues to exist, and why it hasn't already been solved. Note that you are explaining the *cause* of the problem not what the problem *causes*. This section of your speech should get to the root of the problem. Finally, in the third main point addressing the **solution**, you should state the solution, explain how the solution works, and explain the practicality and desirability of the problem. The solution should clearly connect to both the problem and the causes of the problem that you discussed earlier in your speech.

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classroom peers that our campus should adopt a zero-tolerance policy for hate speech.

Main Points:

1. Demonstrate that there is distrust among different groups on campus that has led to unnecessary confrontations and violence.
2. Show that the confrontations and violence are a result of hate speech that occurred prior to the events.
3. Explain how instituting a campus-wide zero-tolerance policy against hate speech could stop the unnecessary confrontations and violence.

In this speech, you want to persuade people to support a new campus-wide policy calling for zero-tolerance of hate speech. Once you have shown the problem, you then explain to your audience that the cause of the unnecessary confrontations and violence is

prior incidents of hate speech. Lastly, you argue that a campus-wide zero-tolerance policy could help prevent future unnecessary confrontations and violence. Again, this method of organizing a speech is as simple as its name: problem-cause-solution.

Cause-Effect Solution

An alternate version of the Problem-Cause-Solution pattern is the **Cause-Effect-Solution** pattern. In this organizational pattern, you would start by explaining what is causing the problem, then describe the negative effects of the problem, and finally, propose a solution with additional evidence or reasoning to justify the course of action. Generally, one main point should address the cause of the problem, one main point should address the effects of the problem, and one main point should address the solution. The first main point should address the **cause** of the problem. Just as before, the main point addressing the cause should explain what is causing the problem, why it continues to exist, and why it hasn't already been solved. Remember that you are explaining the *cause* of the problem not what the problem *causes*. In the second main point addressing the **effect** of the problem, you should describe the negative outcomes of the problem, elaborate on what will happen if the problem continues to exist, and describe the ultimate impact of the problem. You should be trying to describe the worst-case-scenario for your audience here and show them what will ultimately happen if this problem continues to go unsolved. There are several ways to use causes and effects to structure a speech. You could have more than one cause that leads to the same effect or a single cause that leads to multiple effects. Finally, in the third main point addressing the **solution**, you should state the solution, explain how the solution works, and explain the practicality and desirability of the problem. The solution should clearly connect to the causes of the problem and solve for the effects of the problem that you discussed earlier in your speech.

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classroom peers that our campus should adopt a zero-tolerance policy for hate speech.

Main Points:

1. Demonstrate hate speech led to confrontations and violence on campus.
2. Explore the impact of the confrontations and violence on the student body.
3. Explain how instituting a campus-wide zero-tolerance policy against hate speech could stop the unnecessary confrontations and violence.

In this speech, you want to persuade people to support a new campus-wide policy calling for zero-tolerance of hate speech. Once you have explained that the cause of the problem is the hate speech used by various groups on campus, you then demonstrate to your audience the effects of the unnecessary confrontations and violence. Lastly, you argue that a campus-wide zero-tolerance policy could help prevent future unnecessary confrontations and violence.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

One of the most commonly cited and discussed organizational patterns for persuasive speeches is Alan H. Monroe's motivated sequence. The purpose of **Monroe's Motivated Sequence** is to help speakers "sequence supporting materials and motivational appeals to form a useful organizational pattern for speeches as a whole" (German et al., 2010).

While Monroe's Motivated Sequence is commonly discussed in most public speaking textbooks, we do want to provide one minor caution. Thus far, almost no research has been conducted that has demonstrated that Monroe's motivated sequence is any more persuasive than other structural patterns. In the only study conducted experimentally examining Monroe's motivated sequence, the researchers did not find the method more persuasive, but did note that audience members found the pattern more organized than other methods (Micciche, Pryor, & Butler, 2000). We wanted to add this sidenote because we don't want you to think that Monroe's motivated sequence is a kind of magic persuasive bullet; the research simply doesn't support this notion. At the same time, research does support that organized messages are perceived as more persuasive as a whole, so using Monroe's motivated sequence to think through one's persuasive argument could still be very beneficial.

Table 11.1.1 "Monroe's Motivated Sequence" lists the basic steps of Monroe's motivated sequence and the subsequent reaction a speaker desires from his or her audience.

Table 11.1.1 Monroe's Motivated Sequence

Steps	Audience Response
Attention —Getting Attention	I want to listen to the speaker.
Need —Showing the Need, Describing the Problem	Something needs to be done about the problem.

Steps	Audience Response
Satisfaction —Satisfying the Need, Presenting the Solution	In order to satisfy the need or fix the problem this is what I need to do.
Visualization —Visualizing the Results	I can see myself enjoying the benefits of taking action.
Action —Requesting Audience Action or Approval	I will act in a specific way or approve a decision or behavior.

Attention

The first step in Monroe's motivated sequence is the attention step, in which a speaker attempts to get the audience's attention. To gain an audience's attention, we recommend that you think through three specific parts of the attention step. First, you need to have a strong attention-getting device. As previously discussed in Chapter 9 "Introductions Matter: How to Begin a Speech Effectively", a strong attention getter at the beginning of your speech is very important. Second, you need to make sure you introduce your topic clearly. If your audience doesn't know what your topic is quickly, they are more likely to stop listening. Lastly, you need to explain to your audience why they should care about your topic.

Needs

In the need step of Monroe's motivated sequence, the speaker establishes that there is a specific need or problem. In Monroe's conceptualization of need, he talks about four specific parts of the need: statement, illustration, ramification, and pointing. First, a speaker needs to give a clear and concise statement of the problem. This part of a speech should be crystal clear for an audience. Second, the speaker needs to provide one or more examples to illustrate the need. The illustration is an attempt to make the problem concrete for the audience. Next, a speaker needs to provide some kind of evidence (e.g., statistics, examples, testimony) that shows the ramifications or consequences of the problem. Lastly, a speaker needs to point to the audience and show exactly how the problem relates to them personally.

Satisfaction

In the third step of Monroe's motivated sequence, the satisfaction step, the speaker sets out to satisfy the need or solve the problem. Within this step, Monroe (1935) proposed a five-step plan for satisfying a need:

1. Statement
2. Explanation
3. Theoretical demonstration
4. Reference to practical experience
5. Meeting objections

First, you need to clearly state the attitude, value, belief, or action you want your audience to accept. The purpose of this statement is to clearly tell your audience what your ultimate goal is.

Second, you want to make sure that you clearly explain to your audience why they should accept the attitude, value, belief, or action you proposed. Just telling your audience they should do something isn't strong enough to actually get them to change. Instead, you really need to provide a solid argument for why they should accept your proposed solution.

Third, you need to show how the solution you have proposed meets the need or problem. Monroe calls this link between your solution and the need a theoretical demonstration because you cannot prove that your solution will work. Instead, you theorize based on research and good judgment that your solution will meet the need or solve the problem.

Fourth, to help with this theoretical demonstration, you need to reference practical experience, which should include examples demonstrating that your proposal has worked elsewhere. Research, statistics, and expert testimony are all great ways of referencing practical experience.

Lastly, Monroe recommends that a speaker respond to possible objections. As a persuasive speaker, one of your jobs is to think through your speech and see what counterarguments could be made against your speech and then rebut those arguments within your speech. When you offer rebuttals for arguments against your speech, it shows your audience that you've done your homework and educated yourself about multiple sides of the issue.

Visualization

The next step of Monroe's motivated sequence is the visualization step, in which you ask the audience to visualize a future where the need has been met or the problem solved. In essence, the visualization stage is where a speaker can show the audience why accepting a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior can positively affect the future. When helping people to picture the future, the more concrete your visualization is, the easier it will be for your audience to see the possible future and be persuaded by it. You also need to make sure that you clearly show how accepting your solution will directly benefit your audience.

According to Monroe, visualization can be conducted in one of three ways: positive, negative, or contrast (Monroe, 1935). The positive method of visualization is where a speaker shows how adopting a proposal leads to a better future (e.g., recycle, and we'll have a cleaner and safer planet). Conversely, the negative method of visualization is where a speaker shows how not adopting the proposal will lead to a worse future (e.g., don't recycle, and our world will become polluted and uninhabitable). Monroe also acknowledged that visualization can include a combination of both positive and negative visualization. In essence, you show your audience both possible outcomes and have them decide which one they would rather have.

Action

The final step in Monroe's motivated sequence is the action step, in which a speaker asks an audience to approve the speaker's proposal. For understanding purposes, we break action into two distinct parts: audience action and approval. Audience action refers to direct physical behaviors a speaker wants from an audience (e.g., flossing their teeth twice a day, signing a petition, wearing seat belts). Approval, on the other hand, involves an audience's consent or agreement with a speaker's proposed attitude, value, or belief.

When preparing an action step, it is important to make sure that the action, whether audience action or approval, is realistic for your audience. Asking your peers in a college classroom to donate one thousand dollars to charity isn't realistic. Asking your peers to donate one dollar is considerably more realistic. In a persuasive speech based on Monroe's motivated sequence, the action step will end with the speech's concluding device. As discussed elsewhere in this text, you need to make sure that you conclude in a vivid way so that the speech ends on a high point and the audience has a sense of energy as well as a sense of closure.

Now that we've walked through Monroe's motivated sequence, let's look at how you could use Monroe's motivated sequence to outline a persuasive speech:

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classroom peers that the United States should have stronger laws governing the use of for-profit medical experiments.

Main Points:

- **Attention:** Want to make nine thousand dollars for just three weeks of work lying around and not doing much? Then be a human guinea pig. Admittedly, you'll have to have a tube down your throat most of those three weeks, but you'll earn three thousand dollars a week.
- **Need:** Every day many uneducated and lower socioeconomic-status citizens are preyed on by medical and pharmaceutical companies for use in for-profit medical and drug experiments. Do you want one of your family members to fall prey to this evil scheme?
- **Satisfaction:** The United States should have stronger laws governing the use of for-profit medical experiments to ensure that uneducated and lower-socioeconomic-status citizens are protected.
- **Visualization:** If we enact tougher experiment oversight, we can ensure that medical and pharmaceutical research is conducted in a way that adheres to basic values of American decency. If we do not enact tougher experiment oversight, we could find ourselves in a world where the lines between research subject, guinea pig, and patient become increasingly blurred.
- **Action:** In order to prevent the atrocities associated with for-profit medical and pharmaceutical experiments, please sign this petition asking the US Department of Health and Human Services to pass stricter regulations on this preying industry that is out of control.

This example shows how you can take a basic speech topic and use Monroe's motivated sequence to clearly and easily outline your speech efficiently and effectively.

Table 11.1.2 "Monroe's Motivated Sequence Checklist" also contains a simple checklist to help you make sure you hit all the important components of Monroe's motivated sequence.

Table 11.1.2 Monroe's Motivated Sequence Checklist

Step in the Sequence	Yes	No
Attention Step		
Gained audience's attention	☐	☐
Introduced the topic clearly	☐	☐
Showed the importance of the topic to the audience	☐	☐
Need Step		
Need is summarized in a clear statement	☐	☐
Need is adequately illustrated	☐	☐
Need has clear ramifications	☐	☐
Need clearly points the audience	☐	☐
Satisfaction Step		
Plan is clearly stated	☐	☐
Plan is plainly explained	☐	☐
Plan and solution are theoretically demonstrated	☐	☐
Plan has clear reference to practical experience	☐	☐
Plan can meet possible objections	☐	☐
Visualization Step		
Practicality of plan shown	☐	☐
Benefits of plan are tangible	☐	☐
Benefits of plan relate to the audience	☐	☐
Specific type of visualization chosen (positive method, negative method, method of contrast)	☐	☐
Action Step		
Call of specific action by the audience	☐	☐
Action is realistic for the audience	☐	☐
Concluding device is vivid	☐	☐

Key Takeaways

- There are three common patterns that persuaders can utilize to help organize their speeches effectively: Problem-Cause-Solution, Cause-Effect-Solution, and Monroe's Motivated Sequence. Each of these patterns can effectively help a speaker think through his or her thoughts and organize them in a manner that will be more likely to persuade an audience.
- The Problem-Cause-Solution proposal is a three-pronged speech pattern. The speaker starts by explaining the problem the speaker sees. The speaker then explains what he or she sees as the underlying causes of the problem. Lastly, the speaker proposes a solution to the problem that corrects the underlying causes.
- The Cause-Effect-Solution proposal is a three-pronged speech pattern. The speaker starts by explaining what is causing the problem the speaker sees. The speaker then explains what they see as the ultimate impact of the problem. Lastly, the speaker proposes a solution to the problem that corrects the underlying causes.

- Alan H. Monroe's (1935) motivated sequence is a commonly used speech format that is used by many people to effectively organize persuasive messages. The pattern consists of five basic stages: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action. In the first stage, a speaker gets an audience's attention. In the second stage, the speaker shows an audience that a need exists. In the third stage, the speaker shows how they persuasive proposal could satisfy the need. The fourth stage shows how the future could be if the persuasive proposal is or is not adopted. Lastly, the speaker urges the audience to take some kind of action to help enact the speaker's persuasive proposal.

Exercises

1. Create a speech using Monroe's motivated sequence to persuade people to recycle.
2. Create a speech using the problem-cause-solution method for a problem you see on your college or university campus.

References

- German, K. M., Gronbeck, B. E., Ehninger, D., & Monroe, A. H. (2010). *Principles of public speaking* (17th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, p. 236.
- 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, 1135–1138.
- Monroe, A. H. (1935). *Principles and types of speech*. Chicago, IL: Scott Foresman.

11.1: Organizing Policy Speeches is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Persuasive Theories - Elaboration Likelihood Model

Persuasive Theories: Elaboration Likelihood Model



Bart Everson – [Yes There are Two Path You Can Go By](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Understanding how people are persuaded is very important to the discussion of public speaking. Thankfully, a number of researchers have created theories that help explain why people are persuaded. While there are numerous theories that help to explain persuasion, we are only going to examine one here: the elaboration likelihood model.

[12.1: Elaboration Likelihood Model](#)

[12: Persuasive Theories - Elaboration Likelihood Model](#) is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

12.1: Elaboration Likelihood Model

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the theory of persuasion discussed in the text: the elaboration likelihood model.

Theories of Persuasion

Understanding how people are persuaded is very important to the discussion of public speaking. Thankfully, a number of researchers have created theories that help explain why people are persuaded. While there are numerous theories that help to explain persuasion, we are only going to examine one here: the elaboration likelihood model.

Elaboration Likelihood Model



Wikimedia Commons – [Routes of ELM](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

The last of the three theories of persuasion discussed here is the elaboration likelihood model created by Petty and Cacioppo (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The basic model has a continuum from high elaboration or thought or low elaboration or thought. For the purposes of Petty and Cacioppo's model, the term elaboration refers to the amount of thought or cognitive energy someone uses for analyzing the content of a message. High elaboration uses the central route and is designed for analyzing the content of a message. As such, when people truly analyze a message, they use cognitive energy to examine the arguments set forth within the message. In an ideal world, everyone would process information through this central route and actually analyze arguments presented to them. Unfortunately, many people often use the peripheral route for attending to persuasive messages, which results in low elaboration or thought. Low elaboration occurs when people attend to messages but do not analyze the message or use cognitive energy to ascertain the arguments set forth in a message.

For researchers of persuasion, the question then becomes: how do people select one route or the other when attending to persuasive messages? Petty and Cacioppo noted that there are two basic factors for determining whether someone centrally processes a persuasive message: ability and motivation. First, audience members must be able to process the persuasive message. If the language or message is too complicated, then people will not highly elaborate on it because they will not understand the persuasive message. Motivation, on the other hand, refers to whether the audience member chooses to elaborate on the message. Frymier and Nadler discussed five basic factors that can lead to high elaboration: personal relevance and personal involvement, accountability, personal responsibility, incongruent information, and need for cognition (Frymier & Nadler, 2007).

Personal Relevance and Personal Involvement

The first reason people are motivated to take the central route or use high elaboration when listening to a persuasive message involves personal relevance and involvement. Personal relevance refers to whether the audience member feels that he or she is

actually directly affected by the speech topic. For example, if someone is listening to a speech on why cigarette smoking is harmful, and that listener has never smoked cigarettes, he or she may think the speech topic simply isn't relevant. Obviously, as a speaker you should always think about how your topic is relevant to your listeners and make sure to drive this home throughout your speech. Personal involvement, on the other hand, asks whether the individual is actively engaged with the issue at hand: sends letters of support, gives speeches on the topic, has a bumper sticker, and so forth. If an audience member is an advocate who is constantly denouncing tobacco companies for the harm they do to society, then he or she would be highly involved (i.e., would engage in high elaboration) in a speech that attempts to persuade listeners that smoking is harmful.

Accountability

The second condition under which people are likely to process information using the central route is when they feel that they will be held accountable for the information after the fact. With accountability, there is the perception that someone, or a group of people, will be watching to see if the receiver remembers the information later on. We've all witnessed this phenomenon when one student asks the question "will this be on the test?" If the teacher says "no," you can almost immediately see the glazed eyes in the classroom as students tune out the information. As a speaker, it's often hard to hold your audience accountable for the information given within a speech.

Personal Responsibility

When people feel that they are going to be held responsible, without a clear external accounting, for the evaluation of a message or the outcome of a message, they are more likely to critically think through the message using the central route. For example, maybe you're asked to evaluate fellow students in your public speaking class. Research has shown that if only one or two students are asked to evaluate any one speaker at a time, the quality of the evaluations for that speaker will be better than if everyone in the class is asked to evaluate every speaker. When people feel that their evaluation is important, they take more responsibility and therefore are more critical of the message delivered.

Incongruent Information

Some people are motivated to centrally process information when it does not adhere to their own ideas. Maybe you're a highly progressive liberal, and one of your peers delivers a speech on the importance of the Tea Party movement in American politics. The information presented during the speech will most likely be in direct contrast to your personal ideology, which causes incongruence because the Tea Party ideology is opposed to a progressive liberal ideology. As such, you are more likely to pay attention to the speech, specifically looking for flaws in the speaker's argument.

Need for Cognition

The final reason some people centrally process information is because they have a personality characteristic called need for cognition. Need for cognition refers to a personality trait characterized by an internal drive or need to engage in critical thinking and information processing. People who are high in need for cognition simply enjoy thinking about complex ideas and issues. Even if the idea or issue being presented has no personal relevance, high need for cognition people are more likely to process information using the central route.

Key Takeaways

- The elaboration likelihood model posits that persuaders should attempt to get receivers to think about the arguments being made (going through the central route) rather than having receivers pay attention to nonargument related aspects of the speech.

Exercises

1. Imagine you're giving a speech to a group of college fraternity and sorority members about why hazing shouldn't be tolerated. Explain the persuasive process using the theory of persuasion discussed in this chapter.
2. Make a list of strategies that you could employ to ensure that your audience analyzes your message using the central route and not the peripheral route. According to Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model, which of these strategies are most likely to be effective? Why?

References

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, & Company.

- Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58, 203–210.
- Frankish, K. (1998). Virtual belief. In P. Carruthers & J. Boucher (Eds.), *Language and thought* (pp. 249–269). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Frymier, A. B., & Nadler, M. K. (2007). *Persuasion: Integrating theory, research, and practice*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Perloff, R. M. (2003). *The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the 21st Century* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 5–6.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123–205.
- Sherif, M., & Hovland, C. I. (1961). *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

12.1: Elaboration Likelihood Model is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Mass Media and Persuasion

Media, Technology, and Communication

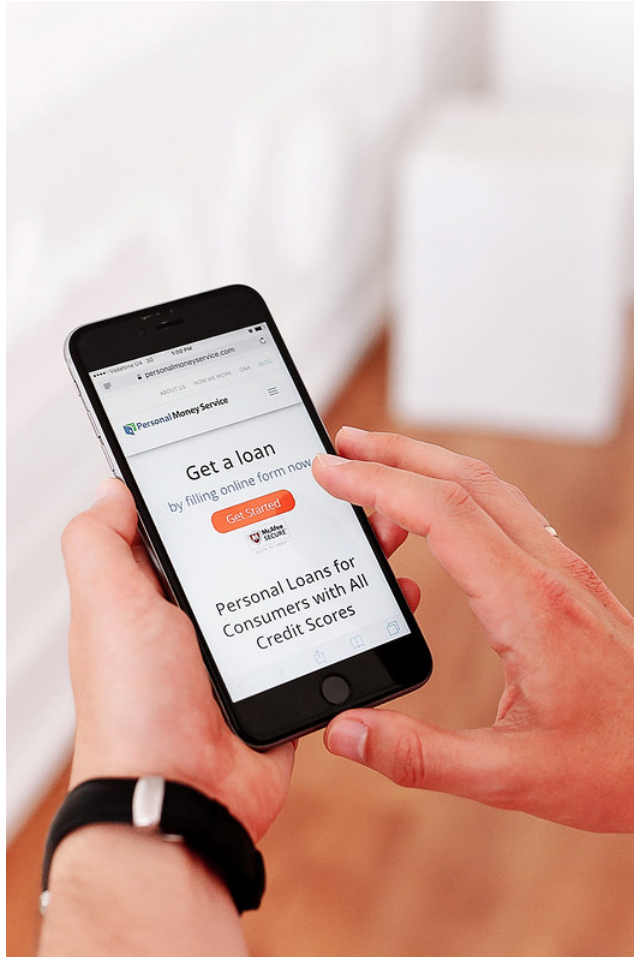


Image Genie – [smartphone](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

We live in a media-saturated world and rely on a variety of old and new media for information, entertainment, and connection. The beginnings of mass media and mass communication go back 560 years to the “print revolution” that occurred in Europe in the fifteenth century. As we progressed through the centuries, mass communication evolved from a mechanical process to electronic transmission, which paved the way for the digitized world of today. While technological advances are an important part of the narrative regarding media, the effects of media are also important to consider. In this chapter, we will discuss some functions and theories of mass communication and some of the key ethical issues related to media and communication.

[13.1: Technological Advances- From the Printing Press to the iPhone](#)

[13.2: Functions and Theories of Mass Communication](#)

[13.3: Mass Communication and Ethics](#)

This page titled [13: Mass Media and Persuasion](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

13.1: Technological Advances- From the Printing Press to the iPhone

Learning Objectives

1. Summarize the technological advances of the print, audiovisual, and Internet and digital media ages.
2. Identify key effects of various mass media on society.
3. Discuss how mass media adapt as new forms of media are invented and adopted.

Technological Advances: From the Printing Press to the iPhone

It is only through technology that **mass media** can exist. While our interpersonal interactions are direct, our interactions with mass media messages are indirect, as they require technology or a “third party” to facilitate the connection. As you’ll recall, mass communication involves transmitting messages to many people through print or electronic media. While talking to someone about a movie you just watched is interpersonal communication, watching the Academy Awards on a network or in clips on the Internet is mass communication. In this section, we will trace the development of various forms of technology that led to new channels (media) of communication and overview the characteristics of some of the most common mass media.

As we trace the development of different forms of mass media, take note of how new technologies and competition among various media formats have made media messages more interpersonal and personalized. In short, the mass media that served large segments of the population with limited messages evolved into micromedia that serve narrow interest groups (Self, Gaylord, & Gaylord, 2009). The brief discussion here of these recent changes in how media operate in our lives will be expanded more in the following chapter on new media and communication. It is also interesting to note the speed with which technologies advanced. As we move closer to our current digital age of media, we can see that new media formats are invented and then made available to people more quickly than media that came before. For example, while it took 175,000 years for writing to become established, and about 1,000 years for printing to gain a firm foundation as a medium, audiovisual media (radio, television, and movies) penetrated society within a few decades, and digital media gained prominence in even less time (Poe, 2011).

Print Mass Media

The printing press and subsequent technological advances related to paper manufacturing and distribution led to the establishment of print as the first mass medium. While the ability to handwrite manuscripts and even reproduce them existed before the print revolution, such processes took considerable time and skill, making books and manuscripts too expensive for nearly anyone in society except the most privileged and/or powerful to possess. And despite the advent of many other forms of mass media, print is still important as a channel for information and as an industry. For example, in the United States, about 3.1 billion books, 1,400 daily newspapers, and 19,000 magazines are published a year (Poe, 2011). Let’s now look back at how we progressed from writing to print and trace the birth of the first mass medium.

The “manuscript age” is the period in human history that immediately predated the advent of mass media and began around 3500 BCE with the introduction of written texts and lasted until the printing revolution of 1450 CE (Poe, 2011). Of course, before writing emerged as a form of expression, humans drew cave paintings and made sculptures, pottery, jewelry, and other forms of visual expression. The spread of writing, however, as a means of documenting philosophy, daily life, government, laws, and business transactions was a necessary precursor to the print revolution. Physical and technical limitations of the time prevented the written word from becoming a mass medium, as texts were painstakingly reproduced by hand or reproduced slowly using rudimentary printing technology such as wood cutouts. The high price of these texts and the fact that most people could not read or write further limited the spread of print.

The German blacksmith and printer Johannes Gutenberg, often cited as the inventor of the printing press, didn’t actually invent much, as most of the technology needed to print, such as movable type, already existed and had been in use for many years. In fact, the mass reproduction and distribution of texts began in East Asia around 700 CE, more than 700 years before Gutenberg, as the Chinese used a wood-block printing method to mass produce short Buddhist texts (Poe, 2011). However, Gutenberg’s use of a press to mash the paper against the typeset, as opposed to the Chinese method of manually rubbing the paper against the typeset, made the process faster and more effective. Additionally, the rise of printing in East Asia didn’t become a “print revolution,” because the audience for the texts was so limited, given low literacy rates.



Mighty June – [wood letter blocks](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Increasing literacy rates in Europe in the two centuries before Gutenberg undoubtedly contributed to the success of his printing efforts, since literacy creates a market for printed texts. The impact of the printing press, as introduced to Europe by Gutenberg starting with his first printing shop in 1439, should not be underestimated. His press helped usher in the Age of Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution that swept Europe during the 1600s. This spread was aided by aristocratic and religious leaders who turned to the printing press as a way to both spread Christian thought and seek to improve society by educating individuals. In 1454, Gutenberg's famous forty-two-line Bible was the first book that was mass produced by modern methods and not transcribed by hand, which had been the practice for thousands of years. With this, the "print age" began, which extended from 1450 to 1850 and marked the birth and rise of the first mass medium (Poe, 2011).

Books

The explosion of printing following 1450 definitely proves that print was the first mass medium. Books of the time were often shorter than today, but they were still the earliest form of communication to be distributed to the masses, which led to significant cultural and social transformation. Between 1454 and 1500, 30,000 books and pamphlets were published in Europe. In the 1500s, between 150,000 and 200,000 separate titles were printed. Remember, these numbers represent each separate book and not the total copies of each of those titles that were printed. The total number of copies is much more staggering. Between 1450 and 1500, 20 million individual books were printed. During the 1600s, between 150 and 200 million books were printed in Europe. Given that Europe's population at the time was only 78 million, that's about three books for each person (Poe, 2011). Of course, books weren't evenly distributed, since most people couldn't read or write and had no use for them. At the same time, though, cheaper, shorter materials were printed that included content that catered more to the "common" person. These early publications were similar to tabloids in that they were sold as news items but featured stories about miracles, monsters, and other sensational or fantastical events. Although not regarded for their content or positive effect on society, these publications quickly grew into what we would recognize today as newspapers and magazines, which we will discuss later.

The printing and distribution of books led to cultural transformation, just as radio, television, and the Internet did. The rise of literacy and the availability of literature, religious texts, dictionaries, and other reference books allowed people to learn things for themselves, distinguish themselves from others by what they read and what they knew, and figuratively travel beyond their highly localized lives to other lands and time periods. Before this, people relied on storytellers, clergy, teachers, or other leaders for information. In this way, people may only be exposed to a few sources of information throughout their lives and the information conveyed by these sources could be limited and distorted. Remember, only a select group of people, usually elites, had access to manuscripts and the ability to read them. Publishers still acted as gatekeepers, just as mass media outlets do today, which limited the content and voices that circulated on the new medium. But despite that, the world was opened up for many in a way it had never before been.

Demand for books quickly expanded in the United States in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Technological advances in the manufacturing of paper and cheaper materials for binding books—for example, using cloth covers instead of leather—helped reduce the cost of books. Dime novels were very popular in the United States in the mid to late 1800s. These books, also called pulp fiction, had content that was appealing to mass audiences who enjoyed dramatic, short fiction stories. During this time, publishing became more competitive and profit driven—characteristics that still apply to the industry today. While radio and magazines flourished in the first half of the twentieth century, the book industry didn't fare as well. Many people turned to these

new media over books, since radio and magazines were generally cheaper and provided more timely information about major world events like the World Wars and the Great Depression.

The book industry today caters to a variety of audiences and markets. The following are the major divisions of book publishing and their revenue from 2009, which is the most recent Census data available:^[1]

- Textbooks (K–12 and college)—\$9,891,000,000
- Children’s books—\$2,522,000,000
- Reference books—\$625,000,000
- Professional, technical, and scholarly books—\$3,838,000,000
- Adult fiction, nonfiction—\$5,862,000,000

These numbers show that the book industry is still generating much revenue, but books, like other forms of media, have had to adapt to changing market forces and technologies. Whereas local bookstores used to be the primary means by which people acquired new and used books, the expansion of chain bookstores and the advent of online book purchasing have led to a dramatic decline in local and independent booksellers. Well-known independent bookstores in larger cities—for example, Tattered Cover in Denver, Colorado; Powell’s Books in Portland, Oregon; Strand Book Store in New York City; and Left Bank Books in St. Louis, Missouri—compete against national chains to attract customers. The closure of nearly four hundred Borders bookstores in 2011 after the company filed for bankruptcy also shows that even chain bookstores are struggling. In terms of technological changes, many book publishers have embraced e-books in the past few years as a way to adapt to new digital media and devices such as e-readers, but they have also had to develop new ways to prevent unauthorized reproduction and “pirating” of digital versions of books. In 2011, for the first time, e-books became the number one format for adult fiction and young adult titles, surpassing print (Sporkin, 2012). Despite this fact, brick-and-mortar stores are still the primary channel through which books are sold—but for how much longer?

Newspapers

Newspapers, more than books, serve as the chronicle of daily life in our society, providing regular coverage of events, both historic and mundane, and allowing us to learn about current events outside of our community and country. While radio, television, and online news serve that function for most people now, newspapers were the first mass medium to collect and disseminate such information. The first regularly (weekly) published newspaper emerged in Paris in 1631, and others popped up in Florence, Rome, and Madrid over the next few decades. The first daily newspaper was published in Leipzig, Germany, in 1660. In just a little over a hundred years, in the late 1700s, large European cities like London and Paris had around two hundred newspapers, some published daily, some weekly, and some at other intervals. Not surprisingly, literacy rates also increased during this time (Poe, 2011). Also around 1700, newspapers were published in the colonies that would later become the United States. The following timeline marks some of the historical developments in newspaper publishing from colonial times to the Internet age.

Timeline of Events in Newspaper Publishing (Breig, 2012; Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007)

- **1690.** First newspaper in North America is published in Boston. Due to its anti-British tone, it is banned after the first issue is printed.
- **1704.** The *Boston News-Letter* is the first newspaper in the colonies to be published regularly. Its content is not timely, since its focus on European events means the information is weeks to months old by the time it is published.
- **1721.** James Franklin, Benjamin Franklin’s older brother, publishes the *New England Courant* in Boston, which caters to business and political leaders.
- **1729.** Benjamin Franklin runs the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which is well respected for the quality of its contents and also generates revenue through advertisements.
- **1784.** The first daily newspaper is published in the United States—*The Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser*.^[2]
- **1833.** Benjamin Day, founder of the *New York Sun*, changes the pricing, distribution, and content of newspapers by cutting the cost of the paper to one penny per issue and selling them individually on the streets and through vendors rather than through subscriptions, which are cost prohibitive for many people. The *Sun* focuses more on “human-interest stories,” which attracts readers and begins a surge of other competing “penny papers” using a similar model.
- **1848.** The *Associated Press* is formed when six New York City papers agree to share incoming information from dispatched reporters and other news sources far away. The news is transmitted through telegraph and other cable/wire services—the label “wire service” or “news wire” is still used today.
- **Late 1800s.** Many newspapers practice “yellow journalism” to be competitive, meaning they publish sensational news items like scandals and tragedies and use attention-getting (in terms of size and wording) headlines to attract customers. The *New*

York Times begins to distance itself from yellow journalism and helps to usher in a period of more factual and rigorous reporting and a split between objective and tabloid publications that begins in the early 1900s and continues today.

- **1955.** The *Village Voice* is published in Greenwich Village, New York, which marks the beginning of the rise of underground and alternative newspapers.
- **1980.** The *Columbus Dispatch* is the first newspaper to publish content online.
- **1982.** *USA Today* is launched, which challenges long-standing newspaper publishing norms and adopts a more visual style. The size, layout, use of color and images, and content is designed to attract a new newspaper audience, one used to watching television news.
- **1998.** The *Drudge Report*, an online gossip and news aggregation site, gains national attention when it breaks a story about *Newsweek* magazine delaying the publication of a story about then-president Clinton's affair with intern Monica Lewinsky (Rogers, 2012). Although online news sites have been around for years, this marks the beginning of the rise of Internet-based news gathering and reporting by people with little to no training in or experience with journalism. Traditional journalists criticize this practice, but such news outlets attract millions of readers and begin to change the way we think about how news is gathered and reported and how we get our news.

Newspapers have faced many challenges in recent decades—namely, the increase of Internet-based news, leading to a major decline in revenue and readers. In recent years major papers like the *Rocky Mountain News* have gone out of business completely, and others like the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* have switched to online-only formats. Additionally, major newspapers like the *Chicago Sun Times* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* have declared bankruptcy due to heavy debt burdens (Grabowicz, 2012). To deal with these financial issues, papers have laid off employees, cut resources for reporters, closed international bureaus, eliminated rural or distant delivery, reduced frequency of publication, and contracted out or partnered on content. This last strategy received national attention recently when it was found out that hundreds of newspapers were using the services of a company called Journatic to create hyperlocal content for them to publish (Sheffield, 2012). Hyperlocal content includes information like real-estate transactions, obituaries, school lunch menus, high school sports team statistics, and police activities, which are a considerable drain on already strained newsrooms. However, readers and media critics were surprised to learn that Journatic was paying people in the Philippines to write this content and then publish it under fake names. After news of this spread, many papers announced that they would go back to generating this content using their own resources (Folkenflik, 2012).

Magazines

Although newspapers were the first record of daily life in the United States, magazines were the first national mass medium, reaching people all over the growing nation of the late 1700s and into the 1800s. Although the reach of magazines made them the first national medium, they were generally unsuccessful, and the content of the early magazines was not highly regarded.



Sean Winters – [Magazines](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

The high cost of transportation and delivery made magazine subscriptions unaffordable for most people, and the content consisted mostly of stories reprinted from newspapers with the occasional essay on the arts or current events. Toward the middle of the 1800s, magazines began to play a more central role in society. At the time, magazines devoted more content to important issues such as slavery and women's right to vote (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007). Magazines as a mass medium overcame early challenges to enjoy a period of relative success in the early 1900s and then met one of their biggest challenges, the rise of television, in the mid-1900s. The following timeline traces some of the most important developments and changes in magazines (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007).

Timeline of Events in Magazine Publishing

- **1741.** Colonial magazines are published. As with colonial newspapers, Benjamin Franklin plays a central role getting them started. Unlike newspapers, magazines face more challenges in terms of postage rates and finding an audience. Over the next thirty years, about one hundred magazines are published and go defunct.
- **Early 1800s.** The number of magazines increases to about one hundred in circulation by 1825. Although they generate some revenue through advertising, they still face financial struggles. Most magazines serve a specific community or area and still consist of content that is mostly reprinted from other sources.
- **1820s.** Specialized magazines catering to niche audiences begin to emerge. For example, literary magazines feature the writing of people like Mark Twain and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and magazines focus on specific professions or topics such as farming, law, education, or science.
- **1821.** The *Saturday Evening Post* is founded and becomes the longest-published magazine in the United States and the first general-interest magazine to be successfully marketed to a national audience.
- **1828.** The first women's magazine, *Ladies' Magazine*, is founded and marks the beginning of the trend toward targeting women as a distinct audience.
- **1850s.** Magazines pioneer the use of images in printed texts, reproducing high-quality illustrations and sketches, though not photographs.
- **1865.** The *Nation* is published, which focuses on political opinion and caters toward a more educated and liberal readership.
- **1879–early 1900s.** The Postal Act of 1879 is passed, which lowers the cost of postage for magazines. This, along with improvements in rail transportation and mass-production printing, leads to a surge in the number of magazines and the number of subscribers. These changes attract more advertisers, which allows magazine publishers to drop the price per issue below what it actually costs to produce the magazine. This attracts more readers, which attracts more advertisers and allows publishers to make up the loss between subscription and production rates with ad revenue.
- **1900–1960.** This is a peak time for magazine success. The early 1900s sees a rise in investigative journalism that goes into much more depth than newspaper coverage. The 1920s and 1930s see the rise of general-interest magazines such as *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, and *Life*. Magazines play a key role in providing in-depth coverage of the World Wars and start to cover the cultural revolutions of the 1960s when they run into new challenges.
- **1960s and 1970s.** As television explodes as the new mass medium of choice, national magazines lose advertisers to the new audiovisual medium. Audiences (now viewers instead of readers) turn to nightly news programs to follow the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, and the Vietnam War.
- **1970s–present day.** Magazines adapt to changing times by devoting pages or entire publications to the covering of television and movies. Magazines like *People*, launched in 1974, provide news on a wide range of celebrities. Magazines also adapt by becoming more specialized, trying to appeal more to niche rather than general-interest audiences.

While television forced magazines to adapt to an increasingly popular visual medium, radio and magazines coexisted relatively well. But the clash between print, audio, and visual media in the early 1900s marks an interesting time in the history of mass media. The growth and spread of print as a mass medium took hundreds of years, which seems like an eternity when compared to the spread of audiovisual media. The lack of and resistance to literacy made the printed medium spread less quickly than audio and visual media, which is not surprising from an evolutionary perspective. Humans evolved to talk, look, and listen, as evidenced by the fact that we have body parts/organs that help us do these things. We did not evolve to read and write, which is why the process of teaching those things is so difficult and time consuming (Poe, 2011). In general, people enjoy watching and listening more than reading and writing. While we had to adapt our brains to decode written language and our arms, hands, and fingers to be able to produce written text, the turn to listening to the radio and watching and listening to television and movies was much more comfortable, familiar, and effortless.

Sound Mass Media

The origins of sound-based mass media, radio in particular, can be traced primarily to the invention and spread of the telegraph (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007). The telegraph was invented in the 1840s and was made practical by Samuel Morse, who invented a system of dots and dashes that could be transmitted across the telegraph cable using electric pulses, making it the first nearly instant one-to-one communication technology. Messages were encoded to and decoded from dots and dashes on either end of the cable. The first telegraph line ran between Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland, in 1844, and the first transcontinental line started functioning in 1861. By 1866, we could send transatlantic telegraphs on a cable that ran across the ocean floor between Newfoundland, Canada, and Ireland. This first cable could only transmit about six words per minute, but it was the precursor to the global communications network that we now rely on every day. Something else was needed, though, to solve some ongoing

communication problems. First, the telegraph couldn't transmit the human voice or other messages aside from language translated into coded electrical pulses. Second, anything not connected to a cable—like a ship, for instance—couldn't benefit from telegraph technology. During this time, war ships couldn't be notified when wars ended and they sometimes went on fighting for months before they could be located and informed.

Wireless Sound Transmission

As the telegraph was taking off around the world, the physicist Heinrich Hertz began to theorize about electromagnetic energy, which is measurable physical energy in the atmosphere that moves at light speed. Although Hertz proved the existence of this energy all around us in the atmosphere, it was up to later inventors and thinkers to turn this potential into a mass medium (Bittner, 1996). Hertz's theories fascinated Italian-born Guglielmo Marconi, who in his late teens began capitalizing on Hertz and others' theories of electromagnetism to inform and further his own experiments. By 1895 his work had enabled him to send a wireless signal about a mile and a half. With this, the wireless telegraph, which used electromagnetic waves to transmit signals coded into pulses and was the precursor to radio, was born. Marconi traveled to England, where he received a patent on his wireless telegraph machine in 1896. By 1901, Marconi successfully sent a wireless message across the Atlantic Ocean. Marconi became extremely successful, establishing companies in the United States and Europe and holding exclusive contracts with shipping companies and other large businesses. For example, the Marconi Telegraph Company had the communications contract with White Star Lines and was responsible for sending the SOS call that alerted other ships that the Titanic had struck an iceberg. For years, Marconi essentially had a monopoly on the transmission of wireless messages. His success at adapting the already existing system of Morse code to wireless transmission was apparently satisfying enough that Marconi showed little interest in expanding the technology to transmit actual sounds like speech or music.



Wikimedia Commons – CC BY-SA 2.0.

After Marconi, the road to radio broadcast and sound-based mass media was relatively short, as others quickly expanded on his work. As is often the case with rapid technological advancement, numerous experiments and public demonstrations of radio technology—some more successful than others—were taking place around the same time in the late 1800s and early 1900s. This rapid overlapping development has created debate over who first accomplished particular feats. Although working separately, Nathan B. Stubblefield, a melon farmer from Kentucky, and Reginald A. Fessenden, a professor from Pittsburgh, paved the way for radio as a mass medium when they broadcast speech and music over a wireless signal in the 1890s (Bittner, 1996). Although these men were able to transmit weather updates and music, their equipment was much too large and complicated to attract a mass of people eager to own it. Inventions by J. Ambrose Fleming and Lee de Forest paved the way for much more controlled and manageable receivers. Lee de Forest, in particular, was interested in competing with Marconi by advancing wireless technology to be able to transmit speech and music. Despite the contributions of the other inventors mentioned before, de Forest patented more than three hundred inventions and is often referred to as the “father of radio” because of his improvements on reception, conduction, and amplification of the signals—now including music and speech—sent wirelessly. His improvements on the vacuum tube made the way for radio and television and ushered in a new age of modern electronics (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007). Since the technological advances that paved the way for radio and television happened during this time, we can mark this as the beginning of the “audiovisual age” that spanned the years from 1850 to 1990 (Poe, 2011).

The Birth of Broadcast Radio

As the technology became more practical and stable, businesses and governments began to see the value in expanding these devices from primarily a point-to-point or person-to-person application to a one-to-many application. It wasn't until 1916 that David Sarnoff, a former Marconi telegraph operator, proposed making radio a household necessity. He suggested that his new employer, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), invest in a household radio that contained all the necessary parts in one box. His pitch was made more appealing by his suggestion that such a device would make RCA a household name and attract national and international attention (Bittner, 1996).

Sarnoff's plan to make radio a centerpiece of nearly every US American household was successful, and the still relatively new medium of sound transmission was on its way to becoming the primary means of entertainment and information for many. With the technology now accessible, other key elements of radio as a mass medium like stations, content, financing, audience identification, advertising, and competition began to receive attention.

Timeline of Developments in Radio (White, 2012)

- **1909.** First commercial radio station signs on the air as an experimental venture by Dr. Charles David Herrold in San Jose, California, which he primarily uses to advertise for his new School of Radio.
- **1919.** First noncommercial radio station goes on the air at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.
- **1920.** KDKA, the station often credited as signaling the beginning of the age of commercial broadcast radio, receives financial backing from Westinghouse (a major company) and gains much national attention for airing election returns following the 1920 presidential election.
- **1921.** The US Commerce Department licenses five radio stations.
- **1922.** The first broadcasting network is created by New York station WEAf to give advertisers a discount and allow them to reach a larger audience at once.
- **1923.** More than 600 commercial and noncommercial radio stations are in operation and about 550,000 radio receivers have been sold to US consumers.
- **1925.** 5.5 million radios are now in use in the United States, making radio a powerful mass medium.
- **Late 1920s.** The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the largest radio network, begins to form affiliate relationships with independent stations that will broadcast NBC's content to supplement their own programming (a practice that is still used today by radio and television networks). The network/affiliate model allows major networks to concentrate news broadcasting, acting, singing, and technical talent in one place and still have that programming reach people all over the country, which saves time and money.
- **1927.** 25–30 million people listen to a “welcome home party” for Charles Lindbergh, who had just completed the first solo transatlantic flight, making it the largest shared audience experience in history until that point.

How Radio Adapted to Changing Technologies

The 1920s boom in radio created problems as radio waves became so crowded that nearly every radio had poor or sporadic reception. The Radio Act of 1927 and the Federal Communications Act of 1934 helped establish some order and guidelines for frequency use and created a policy that stated any broadcaster using the now government-owned airwaves had to act in the public's interest. As reception became more reliable, programming content became more diverse to include news, dramas, comedies, music, and quiz shows, among others, and radio entered its “golden age.” During the 1930s and 1940s, the radio was the center of most US American families' living rooms. Later, as television began to replace the radio as the central part of home entertainment, radio was forced to adapt to the changing marketplace (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007). For example, during the 1950s, radio technology had advanced to the point that it could now be made portable. Since radio was being forced outside the home, radio capitalized on its portability by marketing pocket-sized transistor radios that could go places television could not. Radio also partnered with car manufacturers and soon became a standard feature in new automobiles, something that was very uncommon before the 1950s. Radio also turned to the music industry to replace the content it had lost to television. Stations that once aired prime-time dramas and comedies now aired popular music of the day, as the “Top 40” format that played new songs in a heavy rotation was introduced. Talk radio also began to grow as radio personalities combined the talk, news, traffic, and music formats during the very popular and competitive “drive time” hours during which many people still listen to the radio while traveling to and from work or school. Even more recently, radio stations have turned to online streaming and podcasts so their content can still make its way to computers and portable devices such as smartphones. Just as radio caught on quickly, however, so did television and movies. In the end, the combination of audio and visual offered by these new media won out over radio.

Visual Mass Media

Humans like to both watch and listen to something at the same time. For at least 140,000 years, humans have been entertained and informed by watching and listening to the things going on around them (Poe, 2011). But whether it was watching other humans or listening to the sounds of the forest, it had to happen in the moment, as there was no artificial way to convey images or sounds. It wasn't until about 40,000 years ago that we know our ancestors first began to explore visual media including drawings, paintings, and sculptures. We later know that performing arts became a popular visual medium in societies like ancient Greece, for example, where plays were an important but still relatively new and controversial form of entertainment. Plato's early critiques of theater mirror those that have been targeted toward television and movies more recently.



Greek theatre – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Plato decried the fact that playwrights seemed to focus their plots on the most unpleasant and unrefined aspects of society, such as lust, greed, and violence. What Plato may not have realized was that the Greek playwrights were continuing a theme that started with the earliest producers of visual media. The drawings, paintings, sculptures, and plays produced until that point shared some human themes—namely, sex, food, drink, wealth, and violence. I'm sure Plato would not be pleased to learn that these themes continue today in more modern forms of visual media like television and movies. Although we can see that visual media have long been a part of human history, they didn't constitute a mass medium until the late 1800s and early 1900s with the advent of motion pictures and television.

Technology Leading to Visual Mass Media

As with the birth of any mass medium, technological advances had to take place to move us from interpersonal or group engagement with visual media to mass engagement. In the 1830s, the technologies needed to create photographs were put together in Europe, and photos were in regular circulation by the 1840s. By the late 1800s, photographs could be mass-produced and included in existing print-based mass media like books, newspapers, and magazines. As soon as photographic technology began to circulate, people began to experiment with its limits to see what other potential it held. In the late 1870s, experiments with serial photography were under way, which was the precursor to motion pictures (Dirks, 2012). In the 1890s, Thomas Edison commercialized film, creating a motion picture company and demonstrating the new technology at expos and fairs and inviting guests to come watch short movies of people doing mundane things—for a fee, of course. At the same time, advances in sound recording and wireless transmission of sound were occurring, which was essential to bring together the audio and visual elements of modern movies and television. Movies became the first mass medium to combine audio and visual electronic communication. Movie technology developed more quickly than television because it didn't have to overcome challenges presented by electromagnetic transmission and reception.

As was the case with radio, several people were simultaneously working to expand the technology that would soon be known as television. The earliest television was mechanical, meaning that it had to be turned or moved rather than relying on electronics. In 1884, Paul Nipkow invented a mechanical television-like device that could project a visual image of the then famous Felix the Cat. It took a while for this crude version of a television to be turned into a more functional electronic version. In 1923, Vladimir Zworykin improved on this technology, followed closely by John Baird and Philo Farnsworth (Poe, 2011). Collectively, these men are responsible for the invention of television, which was the first mass medium capable of instantly and wirelessly transmitting audio and visual signals.

Timeline of Developments in Television Technology (Federal Communications Commission, 2012)

- **Late 1800s.** The cathode ray tube is invented, which serves as the basic picture tube for later televisions. Paul Nipkow invents a scanning disk that separates a picture into small pinpoints of light that can be transmitted line by line and decoded to recreate a rough (low-resolution by the standards of early television) image.
- **1923.** Vladimir Zworykin develops the iconoscope, the first television camera tube capable of converting light rays into electrical signals. At the same time, Philo Farnsworth patents an electronic image dissector tube and John Baird improves on Nipkow's disk. Baird, working in Great Britain, transmits the first live moving pictures in 1926, and Farnsworth, working in the United States, transmits a picture (of a dollar sign) in 1927.
- **1935–39.** Public demonstrations of television capture the attention of people around the world, culminating in the famous demonstration of television by RCA at the 1939 World's Fair.
- **1940.** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopts standards for television transmissions that help commercialize and turn television into a mass medium.
- **1940s–70s.** Television is in its “golden age,” dominating the visual medium market.
- **Late 1970s–80s.** Satellite and cable providers challenge network television's dominance.

Television's Golden Age

Television's initial success as a mass medium came largely from formats and programming strategies already tested and used by radio stations. From the perspective of successful radio stations, television stole the best ideas from radio, including prime-time programming and show ideas and even the stars of the shows. For example, the radio show *Candid Microphone* became the television show *Candid Camera*, and radio stars like George Burns became even larger television stars (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007). Television also secured advertising and sponsorship from many of the same sources as radio, which started a fierce competition between radio and television.

Television's rising popularity and its effect on other forms of entertainment are documented in many ways. For example, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, cities with television stations saw a drop in nightclub attendance, radio listening, and library book circulation, as well as a 20 to 40 percent drop in movie ticket sales (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007). By 1951, television's status as the most important mass media of the time was cemented, as sales of television sets surpassed radios for the first time. From the mid-1950s until the cable and satellite boom of the 1980s, broadcast television was in its “golden age.” Television was made more prominent with the advent of color broadcasting, which by 1966 was standard for the prime-time lineup at the three major networks (NBC, CBS, and ABC). The rush to include color programming is just one of many examples of the intense competition among the three major networks.

During the golden age of television, the major networks aired very similar types of programs, all aimed at gaining higher ratings and audience shares than the others. Programming was primarily divided into two main categories: information and entertainment. In terms of information, the three big networks viewed their nightly news programs as flagships that helped establish their credibility as a network and helped attract a loyal viewer base. Even today, the networks' news programs are among some of the highest-rated programs on network television. In addition, to meet the requirement by the FCC that stations serve the public interest and offer more informational programs, the networks offered newsmagazines as a more dramatized source of news. These programs, including *Nightline*, *Dateline*, *60 Minutes*, and *20/20*, are still important features of the network lineup that draw in large audiences.

Since the major networks broadcast to the whole country and the three options (NBC, CBS, and ABC) needed programming that appealed to mass audiences, television producers and executives were sometimes reluctant to stray from proven models of success. The typical lineup of sitcoms, hour-long dramas, news programs, sketch comedy and variety shows, and soap operas persisted from the 1950s until the 1980s. During this thirty-year period, the three main networks accounted for 95 percent of prime-time viewership, which meant that almost everyone in the country watching television was watching one of these three networks (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007). The days of only having three options was about to change, however, and network television saw its influence decline starting in the 1980s. The introduction of FOX as a fourth network signaled a programming change as the new network tried to appeal to a more specific audience with some of its shows. Adult-oriented prime-time cartoons like *The Simpsons* and more diverse sketch comedy shows like *In Living Color* shook up the rather predictable lineup of the other three networks. The networks soon had more than three channels to compete with, however, as cable and satellite became more accessible and affordable and offered many more programming options.



Steve Rider – Time Warner Cable TV iPad App – 4 – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Cable and Satellite Television

Network and broadcast television was forever changed by the growth of cable and satellite technology. Although the mass medium is still the same (moving images sent from one place to many television sets), the increased competition led to further development and changes to how we, as users, interact with and experience the medium (National Cable and Telecommunications Association, 2012). Until the early 1970s, the major networks had lobbied the FCC to control and regulate cable television to reduce the potential for competition. Although cable television technology had been around for thirty years, it wasn't until the FCC changed policies in 1972 that cable got the green light to compete directly with the networks. Time, Inc. (which is still a part of Time-Warner Cable) launched a satellite to relay its HBO signal in 1975, and cable magnate Ted Turner launched a satellite for his WTBS station (still on cable as TBS) in 1976. Turner's Cable News Network (CNN) also competed with the networks' monopoly on televised news coverage. Cable television then grew steadily and quickly for the next several years, and many more channels were quickly introduced. Cable was especially attractive to people who lived in mountainous, hilly, or rural areas that had difficulty receiving the broadcast channels' signals. Many people were also happy to give up ugly rooftop antennae that required readjustment for each channel change or to compensate for other signal interference. The price for the access and convenience, however, was a monthly cable charge, which was a big change from the public and free broadcast channels. As cable's subscriber base and channel options grew, different pricing options helped make cable an "easier sell" to potential customers. Additionally, cable companies and satellite television providers compete fiercely with each other, which helps reduce cost. In 2012, 90 percent of US households with televisions subscribed to cable, satellite, or fiber-optic television.^[3] Although this number makes it clear that the days of broadcast networks entering viewers' homes free over the airwaves are over, there is a growing trend of people who are turning back to the free airwaves as a primary source of television. The "Getting Plugged In" box discusses this new phenomenon of "cord cutters" and broadcast television's growing popularity over cable among a new generation of television viewers.

"Getting Plugged In": Cord Cutters and the New Challenge to Cable Television

For the past few years, cable companies have grown increasingly nervous about a new trend in television-viewing habits. The practice of *cord cutting* refers to people who cancel their cable television packages and rely on broadband Internet service and traditional broadcast television signals to watch the programming they used to receive through monthly cable subscriptions (Rogowsky, 2012). Although the number of television households in the cord-cutter category increased by approximately one million in 2011, they still only account for about 5 percent of total television households.

Age as a demographic category is key to understanding this phenomenon. There is a generation of television viewers that grew up on free broadcast television, didn't get cable or satellite when they became popular in the 1980s and 1990s, and still doesn't pay for television and never will. Market analysts note that this segment of the market is elderly and will not be around for much longer. Many baby boomers who saw the advent of cable and satellite and have long enjoyed the diverse programming their subscriptions offer view their monthly bills as a standard utility and will likely continue subscribing until they die. Generation Xers, who are currently in their thirties and forties, are caught in the middle. Many of these people are

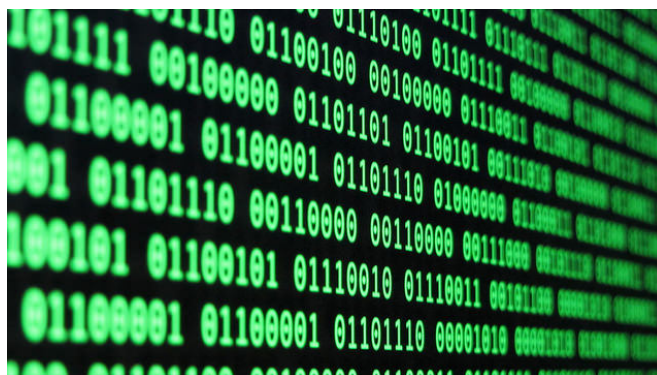
technologically savvy and know how to access (and occasionally do access) online television and movies. Many of them may also find their monthly cable or satellite bills annoying but acceptable. This group of people will likely keep their subscriptions as well, out of convenience, but could be tempted to cut the cord if they hit a financial hardship and/or the process of going to an online-only viewing model became easier. Last, we have a generation of people who are in college or are recent graduates who happen to be coming of age during a harsh economic crisis. They have also spent much of their lives watching online videos, television shows, and movies. The thought of committing to a monthly cable or satellite bill that would likely run them upwards of \$100 a month when money is tight and they know how to access their entertainment elsewhere doesn't sound like a winning proposition. In a time when we can get unlimited streaming on Netflix and Hulu Plus for about \$8 a month each, a la carte access to programs through iTunes or Amazon Streaming, or illegal downloads of shows through torrent services, cable and satellite have to face challenges that many of us couldn't have imagined just ten years ago. Even though 98 percent of television viewing still occurs through traditional means (cable, satellite, broadcast, or telephone company), 9 percent of US Americans have cut the cord to rely only on online viewing content, and an additional 11 percent are considering doing the same, which points to the fact that this practice is only going to increase over the coming years.^[4] Luckily for the cable and satellite companies, many subscribers don't cut their services completely, since they may also rely on the company to provide the Internet access they need to switch to online-only viewing.

1. How do you access your television shows and movies? What is your preferred way? How do you think your age group/generation feels about monthly cable/satellite subscriptions?
2. Do you think cable and satellite companies have a future in providing television programming? Why or why not? As we have learned in this chapter already, many forms of media have to adapt as technologies change and competition increases. How might cable and satellite adapt to these changing forces?

The Internet and Digital Media

The "Internet and digital media age" began in 1990 and continues today. Whereas media used to be defined by their delivery systems, digital media are all similarly constructed with digital, binary code made up of ones and zeros. Instead of paper being the medium for books, radio waves being the medium for sound broadcasting, and cables being the medium for cable television, a person can now read a book, listen to the radio, and access many cable television shows on the Internet. In short, digital media read, write, and store data (text, images, sound, and video) using numerical code, which revolutionized media more quickly than ever before (Biagi, 2007).

Just as technological advances made radio and television possible, the Internet would not have been possible without some key breakthroughs. The Internet is a decentralized communications and information network that relies on the transmission of digital signals through cables, phone lines, and satellites, which are then relayed through network servers, modems, and computer processors. The development of digital code was the first innovation that made way for the Internet and all digital media. Surprisingly, this innovation occurred in the 1940s, leading to the development of the first computers. Second, in 1971, microprocessors capable of reading and storing electronic signals helped make the room-sized computers of the past much smaller and more affordable for individuals. Last, the development of fiber-optic cables in the mid-1980s allowed for the transmission of large amounts of information, including video and sound, using lasers to create pulses of light. These cables began to replace the copper cables used by telephone, television, cable, and satellite companies. Because of these advances, information now travels all around us in the form of light pulses representing digits (digital code) instead of the old electrical pulses (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007).



Christiaan Colen – Binary code – CC BY-SA 2.0.

The birth of the Internet can be traced back to when government scientists were tasked with creating a means of sharing information over a network that could not be interrupted, accidentally or intentionally. More than thirty years ago, those government scientists created an Internet that was much different from what we think of as the Internet today. The original Internet was used as a means of sharing information among researchers, educators, and government officials. That remained its main purpose until the Cold War began to fade and the closely guarded information network was opened up to others. At this time, only a small group of computer enthusiasts and amateur hackers made use of the Internet, because it was still not accessible to most people. Some more technological advances had to occur for the Internet to become the mass medium that it is today.

Tim Berners-Lee is the man who made the Internet functional for the masses. In 1989, Berners-Lee created new computer-programming codes that fixed some problems that were limiting the growth of the Internet as a mass medium (Biagi, 2007). The main problem was that there wasn't a common language that all computers could recognize and use to communicate and connect. He solved this problem with the creation of the hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP), which allows people to make electronic connections or links to information on other computers or servers. He also invented hypertext markup language (HTML), which gave users a common language with which to create and design online content. I actually remember learning HTML code and creating my first (very simple by today's standards) website in 1996. Learning HTML code wasn't something that the masses were going to rush to do, but new software programs and webpage building programs emerged that allowed people to build web content without having to know the code. As if inventing HTTP and HTML wasn't enough, Berners-Lee also invented the first browser, which allowed people to search out information and navigate the growing number of interconnections among computers. Berners-Lee named his new network the "World Wide Web," and he put all his inventions into the public domain so that anyone could use and adapt them for free, which undoubtedly contributed to the web's exploding size. The growing web was navigable using available browsers, but it was sometimes like navigating in the ocean with no compass, a problem that led to the creation of search engines. Yahoo! launched in 1995 and became an instant phenomenon. I remember thinking how cool I was when I got my first yahoo.com e-mail address in 1996! Yahoo's success spawned many more tech companies and the beginning of the "tech bubble" of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The following timeline provides an overview of some of the key developments related to the Internet:

Timeline of Developments in the Internet

- **Late 1960s.** The US Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) begins to develop a communications network called ARPAnet ("the Net" for short) with numerous points of connection (rather than a message coming from one place and going to many) for military and research use that was not as vulnerable to failure related to a technical malfunction, natural disaster, or planned attack.
- **1970–82.** The Net is in its developmental stage, being used primarily by academic and government researchers to send text-based information using e-mail and bulletin boards. Bulletin boards contained information on specific topics such as computer programs, historical events, and health issues (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2007).
- **1982–93.** The Net is in its entrepreneurial stage after an investment by the National Science Foundation is used to create a high-speed communications network with connection points all across the country. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s brings an end to the military uses of ARPAnet. By that time people with computer know-how outside of the military had already begun to create many thousands of new connections on the Net, which meant ARPAnet couldn't ever be turned off (finally fulfilling its original purpose).
- **1993.** The Net has now developed to the point that pictures, video, and sound (in addition to text) can be transmitted. The rapid growth of the Internet during this time is something that none of the developers could have imagined. The number of Internet users doubled each year during the 1990s.
- **2005.** Web 2.0 is realized as the Internet use becomes more social and communal, as evidenced by the popularity of such platforms and websites as Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, and Facebook that encourage and enable the creation and sharing of user-generated content.

From the beginning, the Internet was a mass medium like none other. The majority of the content was user generated and the programs needed to create and navigate online content were in the public domain. This fusing of free access to information and user creativity still forms the basis of digital "new media" that are much more user controlled and personal. Demand for Internet access and more user-friendly programs created the consumer side of the net, and old media companies and regular people saw the web as another revenue generator.

A major source of revenue generated by the Internet goes to Internet service providers (ISPs), who charge customers for Internet access. The more reliable and fast the connection, the more expensive the service. Interestingly, old media providers like cable

companies (who were competing against satellite companies) and phone companies (who were also struggling after the growth of cell phone and e-mail communication) are the largest providers of high-speed Internet access. In the late 2000s, these companies were bringing in more than \$30 billion a year from these services (Biagi, 2007).

Many others make money from the web through traditional exchanges of goods or services for money or by selling space to advertisers. These methods of commerce are not new for any mass media, as they were used in print, radio, and television. Online auction sites like eBay and online stores like Amazon simply moved a traditional commercial exchange to the realm of cyberspace. Advertising online, however, is quite different from advertising in other media. Old media advertisers measure their success with ads based on a corresponding increase or decrease in sales—a method that is not very precise or immediate. Online advertisers, on the other hand, can know exactly how many people see their ads based on the number of site visitors, and they can measure how effective their ad is by how many people click on it. This can allow them to revise, pull, or buy more of an ad quickly based on the feedback. Additionally, certain online environments provide even more user data to advertisers, which allows them to target advertisements. If you, for example, search for “vacation rentals on Lake Michigan” using a search engine, ads for lake houses or vacation spots may also show up. The social networks that people create on the Internet also create potential for revenue generation. In fact, many people have started to take advantage of this potential by monetizing their personal or social media sites, which you can read more about in the “Getting Real” box.

“Getting Real”: Monetizing the Web: Entrepreneurship and Digital/Social Media

The “Getting Real” boxes in this book have focused on how the concepts we are learning relate to specific careers. Although you might not make a whole career out of being a web entrepreneur, many people are turning to the Internet as an extra source of income. People have been making money off the web for decades now, but sites like eBay really opened people’s eyes, for the first time, to the possibility of spinning something you already have or already do into some extra cash. Anyone can establish a web presence now, whether it’s through starting your own website, building a profile on an existing website like a blog-hosting service, or using a space you already have like your Facebook or Twitter account. Next, you need to think about what it is you’re offering and who it is that might want it. For example, if you have a blog that attracts a regular stream of readers because they like your posts about the weekend party scene in your city, you might be able to utilize a service like Google’s AdSense to advertise on your page and hope that some of your readers click the ads. In this case, you’re offering content that attracts readers to advertisers. This is a pretty traditional way of making money through advertising just as with newspapers and billboards.

Less conventional means of monetizing the web involve harnessing the power of social media. In this capacity, you can extend your brand or the brand of something/someone else. To extend your brand, you first have to brand yourself. Determine what you can offer people—consulting in your area of expertise such as voice lessons, entertainment such as singing at weddings, delivering speeches or writing about your area of expertise, and so on. Then create a web presence that you can direct people back to through your social media promotion. If you have a large number of followers on Twitter, for example, other brands may want to tap into your ability to access that audience to have you promote their product or service. If you follow any celebrities on Twitter, you are well aware that many of their tweets link to a product that they say they love or a website that’s offering a special deal. The marketing agency Adly works with celebrities and others who have a large Twitter audience to send out sponsored tweets from more than 150 different advertisers (Friel, 2011). Two movie studios now include in actors’ contracts terms that require them to make a certain number of social mentions of the project on all their social media sites. Another online company, MyLikes (www.mylikes.com), works with regular people, too, not just celebrities, to help them monetize their social media accounts (Davila, 2012).

1. How do you think your friends would react if you started posting messages that were meant to make you money rather than connect with them?
2. Do you have a talent, service, or area of expertise that you think you could spin into some sort of profit using social or digital media?
3. What are some potential ethical challenges that might arise from celebrities using their social media sites for monetary gain? What about for people in general?

Internet access is also following people away from their home and work computers, just as radio followed people into their cars. Smartphones and the development of cell phone networks capable of handling data traffic allowed cell phone providers to profit from the web. The convergence of the Internet with personal electronics like smartphones and the use of the Internet for social

purposes are key parts of the discussion of personal media and social media that we will take up in Chapter 16 “New Media and Communication”.

Key Takeaways

- Technological advances made possible newer forms of media that displaced others.
 - **The Print Age.** The development of the printing press in Europe around 1450 was the key technological advance that moved us from the manuscript era to the print era. As paper and bookbinding materials became cheaper, books spread around the world and literacy rates increased. Cheaper paper, more advanced printing presses, and faster and more reliable transportation technologies also contributed to the rise of newspapers and magazines as print media.
 - **The Audiovisual Age.** Wireless telegraphy paved the way for radio and television broadcasts. Advances in signal transmission and reception as well as vacuum tube technology made televisions and radios more reliable and compact. Cable and satellite television began to compete with broadcast television, as they provided access to more channels and service in areas where broadcast signal reception was unreliable.
 - **The Internet and Digital Media Age.** The development of digital code, microprocessors, and fiber-optic cables were key technological advances that made the Internet and digital communication possible. Rapid developments around 1990, such as the creation of HTTP and HTML coding and Internet browsers, created what we know today as the World Wide Web.
- Each form of mass media affected society in important ways. Books allowed people to educate themselves and be more selective about the information to which they were exposed rather than relying solely on teachers or clergy. Newspapers chronicled the daily life of societies and provided a public forum for information sharing and debate. Magazines were the first medium to make major advances in the mass printing of photographs, which brought a more visual medium to their audience before the advent of television. Radio allowed masses of people to experience something at the same time, which helped create a more unified national identity and also brought entertainment and news programs into people’s homes. Television copied many of radio’s ideas and soon displaced the radio as the centerpiece for entertainment in people’s homes. The Internet brought a new decentralized and communal form of media that could not be controlled by any one government or business and allowed for the creation of user-generated content.
- Electronic media especially has had to adapt as new forms of media are invented. Radio, for example, lost much of its advertising revenue to television, which led radio to adapt its programming from news and entertainment to broadcasting music. Radio also took advantage of new technologies to become portable and follow people out of their house. Broadcast television had to diversify its program lineup as cable and satellite providers offered many more channels. All these media, even print, had to adapt to the advent of the digital age. Copyright violations—pirating—become a problem when old media content is digitized, which makes it more easily reproducible and sharable.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: Discuss how technology affects your communication in various contexts including academic, professional, civic, and personal. Also discuss how your engagement with technology changes from context to context. For example, do you use online technology more in one context than another? In what contexts/situations might you prefer “old media” like phone, written letter, or even face-to-face communication?
2. Print and broadcast media have been struggling to survive in a digitized world. Do some research on one of these media to see what some of the current issues are. Why are they struggling? What do you think they could do to remain profitable and relevant?
3. As more media products become digital, issues of ownership and copyright get more attention. Identify some pros and cons of limits on sharing digital media and stricter copyright laws.

References

- Biagi, S., *Media/Impact: An Introduction to Mass Media* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2007), 173–74.
- Bittner, J. R., *Mass Communication*, 6th ed. (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1996), 159.
- Breig, J., “Early American Newspapering,” *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Spring 2003), accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/spring03/journalism.cfm>.
- Campbell, R., Christopher R. Martin, and Bettina Fabos, *Media & Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford St. Martin’s, 2007), 274–230.

- Davila, D., "How Twitter Celebrities Monetize Their Accounts," *Idaconcepts*, accessed September 19, 2012, <http://idaconcepts.com/2011/01/11/how-twitter-celebrities-monetize-their-accounts>.
- Dirks, T., "The History of Film: The Pre-1920s," *Filmsite*, accessed September 15, 2012, <http://www.filmsite.org/pre20sintro.html>.
- Federal Communications Commission, "Historical Periods in Television Technology," accessed September 15, 2012, transition.fcc.gov/omd/history/tv.
- Folkenflik, D., "Fake Bylines Reveal Hidden Costs of Local News," *National Public Radio*, July 6, 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/06/156311.-of-local-news>.
- Friel, C., "Celebrities Finding New, Lucrative Ways to Monetize Their Social Network Presence," *Foxnews.com*, August 19, 2011, accessed September 19, 2012, www.foxnews.com/entertainment/lebrity-tweets.
- Grabowicz, P., "The Transition to Digital Journalism," *UC Berkeley: Knight Digital Media Center*, September 8, 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/transition-decline.
- National Cable and Telecommunications Association, "History of Cable Television," accessed September 15, 2012, www.ncta.com/About/About/Hist.elevision.aspx.
- Poe, M. T., *A History of Communications: Media and Society from the Evolution of Speech to the Internet* (New York: Cambridge, 2011), 164.
- Rogers, T., "Website Profile: The Drudge Report," *About.com*, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://journalism.about.com/od/webjournalism/a/drudge.htm>.
- Rogowsky, M., "Are Cable TV Carriers Seeing Meaningful Subscriber Degradation Due to Young People Not Signing Up?" *Forbes.com*, June 20, 2012, accessed September 19, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2012/06/20/are-cable-tv-carriers-starting-to-see-meaningful-subscriber-degradation-due-to-more-young-people-not-signing-up-for-cable-or-satellite-tv-in-their-homes>.
- Self, C. C., Edward L. Gaylord, and Thelma Gaylord, "The Evolution of Mass Communication Theory in the 20th Century," *The Romanian Review of Journalism and Communication* 6, no. 3 (2009): 29.
- Sheffield, H., "Journatic Busted for Using Fake Bylines," *Columbia Journalism Review: Behind the News*, July 6, 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/media_start-up_journatic_buste.php.
- Sporkin, A., "Bookstats 2012 Highlights," *Association of American Publishers*, July 18, 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, www.publishers.org/press/74.
- White, T. H., "United States Early Radio History," accessed September 15, 2012, earlyradiohistory.us.

-
1. "Table 1137, Book Publishers' Net Shipments: 2007 to 2010," United States Census, accessed September 20, 2012, www.census.gov/compendia/stat.es/12s1137.pdf. ↵
 2. "Today in History: September 21," *The Library of Congress: American Memory*, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/sep21.html>. ↵
 3. "Cross Platform Report: Q3 2011," *Nielsen*, accessed September 20, 2012, www.nielsen.com/content/corporate-q3-2011.html. ↵
 4. "Broadcast TV-Broadband Only Homes Rising Fast," *Marketing Charts*, February 13, 2012, accessed September 19, 2012, <http://www.marketingcharts.com/television/broadcast-only-broadband-tv-homes-rising-fast-21076>. ↵
-

This page titled **13.1: Technological Advances- From the Printing Press to the iPhone** is shared under a **CC BY-NC-SA** license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by **Anonymous**.

- **15.1: Technological Advances- From the Printing Press to the iPhone** by Anonymous is licensed **CC BY-NC-SA 3.0**. Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

13.2: Functions and Theories of Mass Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Identify key functions of the mass media.
2. Explain how the media functions as a gatekeeper.
3. Discuss theories of mass communication, including hypodermic needle theory, media effects, and cultivation theory.

Functions and Theories of Mass Communication

How does mass communication function differently than interpersonal communication? Do we have relationships with media like we have relationships with people? To answer these questions, we can look at some of the characteristics and functions of mass communication. One key characteristic of mass communication is its ability to overcome the physical limitations present in face-to-face communication. The human voice can only travel so far, and buildings and objects limit the amount of people we can communicate with at any time. While one person can engage in public speaking and reach one hundred thousand or so people in one of the world's largest stadiums, it would be impossible for one person to reach millions without technology.

Another key characteristic of mass communication in relation to other forms of communication is its lack of sensory richness. In short, mass communication draws on fewer sensory channels than face-to-face communication. While smell, taste, and touch can add context to a conversation over a romantic dinner, our interaction with mass media messages rely almost exclusively on sight and sound. Because of this lack of immediacy, mass media messages are also typically more impersonal than face-to-face messages. Actually being in the audience while a musician is performing is different from watching or listening at home. Last, mass media messages involve less interactivity and more delayed feedback than other messages. The majority of messages sent through mass media channels are one way. We don't have a way to influence an episode of *The Walking Dead* as we watch it. We could send messages to the show's producers and hope our feedback is received, or we could yell at the television, but neither is likely to influence the people responsible for sending the message. Although there are some features of communication that are lost when it becomes electronically mediated, mass communication also serves many functions that we have come to depend on and expect.

Functions of Mass Media

The mass media serves several general and many specific functions. In general, the mass media serves information, interpretation, instructive, bonding, and diversion functions:

- **Information function.** We have a need for information to satisfy curiosity, reduce uncertainty, and better understand how we fit into the world. The amount and availability of information is now overwhelming compared to forty years ago when a few television networks, local radio stations, and newspapers competed to keep us informed. The media saturation has led to increased competition to provide information, which creates the potential for news media outlets, for example, to report information prematurely, inaccurately, or partially.
- **Interpretation function.** Media outlets interpret messages in more or less explicit and ethical ways. Newspaper editorials have long been explicit interpretations of current events, and now cable television and radio personalities offer social, cultural, and political commentary that is full of subjective interpretations. Although some of them operate in ethical gray areas because they use formats that make them seem like traditional news programs, most are open about their motives.
- **Instructive function.** Some media outlets exist to cultivate knowledge by teaching instead of just relaying information. Major news networks like CNN and BBC primarily serve the information function, while cable news networks like Fox News and MSNBC serve a mixture of informational and interpretation functions. The in-depth coverage on National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service, and the more dramatized but still educational content of the History Channel, the National Geographic Channel, and the Discovery Channel, serve more instructive functions.
- **Bonding function.** Media outlets can bring people closer together, which serves the bonding function. For example, people who share common values and interests can gather on online forums, and masses of people can be brought together while watching coverage of a tragic event like 9/11 or a deadly tornado outbreak.
- **Diversion function.** We all use the media to escape our day-to-day lives, to distract us from our upcoming exam, or to help us relax. When we are being distracted, amused, or relaxed, the media is performing the diversion function.



Jacqui – [Gates](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

The Media as Gatekeeper

In addition to the functions discussed previously, media outlets also serve a gatekeeping function, which means they affect or control the information that is transmitted to their audiences. This function has been analyzed and discussed by mass communication scholars for decades. Overall, the mass media serves four gatekeeping functions: relaying, limiting, expanding, and reinterpreting (Bittner, 1996). In terms of relaying, mass media requires some third party to get a message from one human to the next. Whereas interpersonal communication only requires some channel or sensory route, mass media messages need to “hitch a ride” on an additional channel to be received. For example, a *Sports Illustrated* cover story that you read at SI.com went through several human “gates,” including a writer, editor, publisher, photographer, and webmaster, as well as one media “gate”—the Internet. We also require more than sensory ability to receive mass media messages. While hearing and/or sight are typically all that’s needed to understand what someone standing in front of you is saying, you’ll need a computer, smartphone, or tablet to pick up that SI.com cover story. In summary, relaying refers to the gatekeeping function of transmitting a message, which usually requires technology and equipment that the media outlet controls and has access to, but we do not. Although we relay messages in other forms of communication such as interpersonal and small group, we are primarily receivers when it comes to mass communication, which makes us depend on the gatekeeper to relay the message.

In terms of the gatekeeping function of limiting, media outlets decide whether or not to pass something along to the media channel so it can be relayed. Because most commercial media space is so limited and expensive, almost every message we receive is edited, which is inherently limiting. A limited message doesn’t necessarily mean the message is bad or manipulated, as editing is a necessity. But a range of forces including time constraints, advertiser pressure, censorship, or personal bias, among others, can influence editing choices. Limiting based on bias or self-interest isn’t necessarily bad as long as those who relay the message don’t claim to be objective. In fact, many people choose to engage with media messages that have been limited to match their own personal views or preferences. This kind of limiting also allows us to have more control over the media messages we receive. For example, niche websites and cable channels allow us to narrow in on already-limited content, so we don’t have to sift through everything on our own.

Gatekeepers also function to expand messages. For example, a blogger may take a story from a more traditional news source and fact check it or do additional research, interview additional sources, and post it on his or her blog. In this case, expanding helps us get more information than we would otherwise so we can be better informed. On the other hand, a gatekeeper who expands a message by falsifying evidence or making up details either to appear more credible or to mislead others is being unethical.

Last, gatekeepers function to reinterpret mass media messages. Reinterpretation is useful when gatekeepers translate a message from something too complex or foreign for us to understand into something meaningful. In the lead-up to the Supreme Court’s June 2012 ruling on President Obama’s health-care-overhaul bill, the media came under scrutiny for not doing a better job of informing the public about the core content and implications of the legislation that had been passed. Given that policy language is difficult for many to understand and that legislation contains many details that may not be important to average people, a concise and lay reinterpretation of the content by the gatekeepers (the media outlets) would have helped the public better understand the bill. Of course, when media outlets reinterpret content to the point that it is untruthful or misleading, they are not ethically fulfilling the gatekeeping function of reinterpretation.

In each of these gatekeeping functions, the media can fulfill or fail to fulfill its role as the “fourth estate” of government—or government “watchdog.” You can read more about this role in the “Getting Critical” box.

“Getting Critical”: The Media as “Watchdog”

While countries like China, North Korea, Syria, and Burma have media systems that are nearly if not totally controlled by the state regime, the media in the United States and many other countries is viewed as the “watchdog” for the government. This watchdog role is intended to keep governments from taking too much power from the people and overstepping their bounds. Central to this role is the notion that the press works independently of the government. The “freedom of the press” as guaranteed by our First-Amendment rights allows the media to act as the eyes and ears of the people. The media is supposed to report information to the public so they can make informed decisions. The media also engages in investigative reporting, which can uncover dangers or corruption that the media can then expose so that the public can demand change.

Of course, this ideal is not always met in practice. Some people have critiqued the media’s ability to fulfill this role, referring to it instead as a lapdog or attack dog. In terms of the lapdog role, the media can become too “cozy” with a politician or other public figure, which might lead it to uncritically report or passively relay information without questioning it. Recent stories about reporters being asked to clear quotes and even whole stories with officials before they can be used in a story drew sharp criticism from other journalists and the public, and some media outlets put an end to that practice. In terms of the attack-dog role, the twenty-four-hour news cycle and constant reporting on public figures has created the kind of atmosphere where reporters may be waiting to pounce on a mistake or error in order to get the scoop and be able to produce a tantalizing story. This has also been called being on “scandal patrol” or “gaffe patrol.” Media scholars have critiqued this practice, saying that too much adversarial or negative reporting leads the public to think poorly of public officials and be more dissatisfied with government. Additionally, they claim that attack-dog reporting makes it more difficult for public officials to do their jobs (Coronel, 2008).

1. In what ways do you think the media should function in a democratic society?
2. Do you think the media in the United States acts more as a watchdog, lapdog, or attack dog? Give specific examples to support your answer.
3. In an age of twenty-four-hour news and instant reporting, do you think politicians’ jobs are made easier or more difficult? Do you think reporters’ jobs are made easier or more difficult? Support your answers.

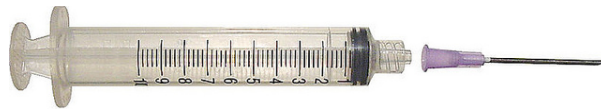
Theories of Mass Communication

Theories of mass communication have changed dramatically since the early 1900s, largely as a result of quickly changing technology and more sophisticated academic theories and research methods. A quick overview of the state of the media in the early 1900s and in the early 2000s provides some context for how views of the media changed. In the early 1900s, views of mass communication were formed based on people’s observation of the popularity of media and assumptions that something that grew that quickly and was adopted so readily must be good. Many people were optimistic about the mass media’s potential to be a business opportunity, an educator, a watchdog, and an entertainer. For example, businesses and advertisers saw media as a good way to make money, and the educator class saw the media as a way to inform citizens who could then be more active in a democratic society. As World War I and the Depression came around, many saw the media as a way to unite the country in times of hardship. Early scholarship on mass media focused on proving these views through observational and anecdotal evidence rather than scientific inquiry.

Fast forward one hundred years and newspapers are downsizing, consolidating to survive, or closing all together; radio is struggling to stay alive in the digital age; and magazine circulation is decreasing and becoming increasingly more focused on microaudiences. The information function of the news has been criticized and called “infotainment,” and rather than bringing people together, the media has been cited as causing polarization and a decline in civility (Self, Gaylord, & Gaylord, 2009). The extremes at each end of the twentieth century clearly show that the optimistic view of the media changed dramatically. An overview of some of the key theories can help us better understand this change.

Hypodermic Needle and Beyond

In the 1920s, early theories of mass communication were objective, and social-scientific reactions to the largely anecdotal theories that emerged soon after mass media quickly expanded. These scholars believed that media messages had strong effects that were knowable and predictable. Because of this, they theorized that controlling the signs and symbols used in media messages could control how they were received and convey a specific meaning (Self, Gaylord, & Gaylord, 2009).



ChrisWaldeck – The Media Needle – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Extending Aristotle's antiquated linear model of communication that included a speaker, message, and hearer, these early theories claimed that communication moved, or transmitted, an idea from the mind of the speaker through a message and channel to the mind of the listener. To test the theories, researchers wanted to find out how different messages influenced or changed the behavior of the receiver. This led to the development of numerous theories related to media effects. Media businesses were invested in this early strand of research, because data that proved that messages directly affect viewers could be used to persuade businesses to send their messages through the media channel in order to directly influence potential customers.

This early approach to studying media effects was called the hypodermic needle approach or bullet theory and suggested that a sender constructed a message with a particular meaning that was "injected" or "shot" into individuals within the mass audience. This theory is the basis for the transmission model of communication that we discussed in Chapter 1 "Introduction to Communication Studies". It was assumed that the effects were common to each individual and that the meaning wasn't altered as it was transferred. Through experiments and surveys, researchers hoped to map the patterns within the human brain so they could connect certain stimuli to certain behaviors. For example, researchers might try to prove that a message announcing that a product is on sale at a reduced price will lead people to buy a product they may not otherwise want or need. As more research was conducted, scholars began to find flaws within this thinking. New theories emerged that didn't claim such a direct connection between the intent of a message and any single reaction on the part of receivers. Instead, these new theories claimed that meaning could be partially transferred, that patterns may become less predictable as people are exposed to a particular stimulus more often, and that interference at any point in the transmission could change the reaction.

These newer theories incorporated more contextual factors into the view of communication, acknowledging that both sender and receiver interpret messages based on their previous experience. Scholars realized that additional variables such as psychological characteristics and social environment had to be included in the study of mass communication. This approach connects to the interaction model of communication. In order to account for perspective and experience, mass media researchers connected to recently developed theories in perception that emerged from psychology. The concept of the gatekeeper emerged, since, for the first time, the sender of the message (the person or people behind the media) was the focus of research and not just the receiver. The concepts of perceptual bias and filtering also became important, as they explained why some people interpreted or ignored messages while others did not. Theories of primacy and recency, which we discussed in Chapter 9 "Preparing a Speech", emerged to account for the variation in interpretation based on the order in which a message is received. Last, researchers explored how perceptions of source credibility affect message interpretation and how media messages may affect viewers' self-esteem. By the 1960s, many researchers in mass communication concluded that the research in the previous twenty years had been naïve and flawed, and they significantly challenged the theory of powerful media effects, putting much more emphasis on individual agency, context, and environment (McQuail, 2010).

The next major turn in mass communication theory occurred only a few years after many scholars had concluded that media had no or only minimal effects (McQuail, 2010). In the 1970s, theories once again positioned media effects as powerful and influential based on additional influences from social psychology. From sociology, mass media researchers began to study the powerful socializing role that the media plays but also acknowledged that audience members take active roles in interpreting media messages. During this time, researchers explored how audience members' schemata and personalities (concepts we discussed in Chapter 2 "Communication and Perception") affect message interpretation. Researchers also focused more on long-term effects and how media messages create opinion climates, structures of belief, and cultural patterns.

In the late 1970s and into the 1980s, a view of media effects as negotiated emerged, which accounts for the sometimes strong and sometimes weak influences of the media. This view sees the media as being most influential in constructing meanings through multiple platforms and representations. For example, the media constructs meanings for people regarding the role of technology in our lives by including certain kinds of technology in television show plots, publishing magazines like *Wired*, broadcasting news about Microsoft's latest product, airing advertisements for digital cameras, producing science fiction movies, and so on. Although these messages are diverse and no one person is exposed to all the same messages, the messages are still constructed in some predictable and patterned ways that create a shared social reality. Whether or not the media intends to do this or whether or not we acknowledge that how we think about technology or any other social construct is formed through our exposure to these messages is

not especially relevant. Many mass communication scholars now seek to describe, understand, or critique media practices rather than prove or disprove a specific media effect.



Sean MacEntee – [Remote Control](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Additionally, mass communication scholars are interested in studying how we, as audience members, still have agency in how these constructions affect our reality, in that we may reject, renegotiate, or reinterpret a given message based on our own experiences. For example, a technology geek and a person living “off the grid” have very different lives and very different views of technology, but because of their exposure to various forms of media that have similar patterns of messages regarding technology, they still have some shared reality and could talk in similar ways about computers, smartphones, and HD television. Given the shift of focus to negotiated meaning and context, this view of mass communication is more in keeping with the transactional model of communication.

Media Effects

Media effects are the intended or unintended consequences of what the mass media does (McQuail, 2010). Many of the key theories in mass communication rest on the assumption that the media has effects on audience members. The degree and type of effect varies depending on the theory. In general, we underestimate the effect that the media has on us, as we tend to think that media messages affect others more than us. This is actually so common that there is a concept for it! The third-party effect is the phenomenon just described of people thinking they are more immune to media influence than others. If this were true, though, would advertisers and public relations professionals spend billions of dollars a year carefully crafting messages aimed at influencing viewers?

There are certain media effects that are fairly obvious and most of us would agree are common (even for ourselves). For example, we change our clothes and our plans because we watch the forecast on the Weather Channel, look up information about a band and sample their music after we see them perform on a television show, or stop eating melons after we hear about a salmonella outbreak. Other effects are more difficult to study and more difficult for people to accept because they are long term and/or more personal. For example, media may influence our personal sense of style, views on sex, perceptions of other races, or values just as our own free will, parents, or friends do. It is difficult, however, to determine in any specific case how much influence the media has on a belief or behavior in proportion to other factors that influence us. Media messages may also affect viewers in ways not intended by the creators of the message. Two media effects that are often discussed are reciprocal and boomerang effects (McQuail, 2010).

The reciprocal effect points to the interactive relationship between the media and the subject being covered. When a person or event gets media attention, it influences the way the person acts or the way the event functions. Media coverage often increases self-consciousness, which affects our actions. It's similar to the way that we change behavior when we know certain people are around and may be watching us. For example, the Occupy Movement that began on Wall Street in New York City gained some attention from alternative media and people using micromedia platforms like independent bloggers. Once the movement started getting mainstream press attention, the coverage affected the movement. As news of the Occupy movement in New York spread, people in other cities and towns across the country started to form their own protest groups. In this case, media attention caused a movement to spread that may have otherwise remained localized.

The boomerang effect refers to media-induced change that is counter to the desired change. In the world of twenty-four-hour news and constant streams of user-generated material, the effects of gaffes, blunders, or plain old poor decisions are much more difficult to control or contain. Before a group or person can clarify or provide context for what was said, a story could go viral and a media narrative constructed that is impossible to backtrack and very difficult to even control. A recent example of such an effect occurred at the University of Virginia when the governing body of the university forced President Teresa A. Sullivan to resign. The board was not happy with the president's approach to dealing with the changing financial and technological pressures facing the school and thought ousting her may make room for a president who was more supportive of a corporate model of university governance (Pérez-Peña, 2012). When the story picked up local and then national media coverage, students, faculty, and alumni came together to support Sullivan, and a week later she was reinstated. Instead of the intended effect of changing the direction and priorities for the university, the board's actions increased support for the president, which will also likely add support to her plans for dealing with the issues.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is a media effects theory created by George Gerbner that states that media exposure, specifically to television, shapes our social reality by giving us a distorted view on the amount of violence and risk in the world. The theory also states that viewers identify with certain values and identities that are presented as mainstream on television even though they do not actually share those values or identities in their real lives (Griffin, 2009). Drawing on cultivation as it is practiced in farming, Gerbner turned this notion into a powerful metaphor to explain how the media, and television in particular, shapes our social realities. Just as a farmer plants seeds that he or she then cultivates over time to produce a crop, the media plants seeds in our minds and then cultivates them until they grow into our shared social reality.



Yoshihide Nomura – [Watching TV](#) – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Over decades of exploring cultivation theory, Gerbner made several well-supported conclusions that are summarized as follows:

- Prime-time television shows and weekend morning children's programming have been found to contain consistently high amounts of violence over the past thirty years.
- Older people, children, African Americans, and Latino/as are more likely to be shown as victims of violence than are their young-adult, middle-aged, and/or white counterparts. This disparity is more meaningful when we realize that these groups are also underrepresented (relative to their percentage in the general population) on these shows while their vulnerability to violence is overstated.
- The effects of television viewing on our worldview build up over years, but in general, people who are more heavy viewers perceive the world as more dangerous than do light viewers. Gerbner coined the phrase "mean world syndrome," which refers to the distorted view of the world as more violent and people as more dangerous than they actually are.

- Heavy viewers predict that their odds of being a victim of violence within the next week are 1 in 10, while light viewers predicted 1 in 100. Real crime statistics give a more reliable estimate of 1 in 10,000.
- Heavy viewers fear walking alone on the street more than do light viewers, believing that criminal activity is actually ten times more prevalent than it actually is.
- Heavy viewers believe that more people are involved in law enforcement and that officers draw and use their weapons much more than is actually the case.
- Heavy viewers are generally more suspicious of others and question their motives more than do light viewers (the basis of the mean world syndrome).
- Given that most people on television are portrayed as politically moderate and middle class, heavy viewers are more likely to assume those labels even though heavy users tend to be more working class or poor and more politically conservative than moderate. In short, they begin to view themselves as similar to those they watch on television and consider themselves a part of the mainstream of society even though they are not.

“Getting Competent”: Applying Media Theories

Although most do not get mass public attention, there are many media criticism and analysis organizations that devote much time and resources to observing, studying, and/or commenting on how the media acts in practice, which often involves an implicit evaluation of media theories we have discussed so far, in particular media effects theories. Media outlets and the people who send messages through media outlets (i.e., politicians, spokespeople, and advertisers) are concerned about the effects and effectiveness of their messaging. As we already learned, the pervasive view of media effects today is that media messages do affect people, but that people have some agency in terms of how much or little they identify with or reinterpret a message.

To understand media effects, media criticism organizations do research on audience attitudes and also call on media commentators to give their opinions, which may be more academic and informed or more personal and partisan. In either case, taking some time to engage with these media criticism organizations can allow you to see how they apply mass communication theories and give you more information so you can be a more critical and informed consumer of media. You can find a list of many media criticism organizations on World-Newspapers.com (www.world-newspapers.com/media.html). Some of these organizations have a particular political ideology or social/cultural cause that they serve, so be cautious when choosing a source for media criticism to make sure you know what you’re getting. There are also more objective and balanced sources of media criticism. Two of my personal favorites that I engage with every week are CNN’s show [Reliable Sources](http://Reliable_Sources) (www.cnn.com/shows/reliable-sources) and the public radio show [On the Media](http://On_the_Media) (www.onthemedial.org). *Reliable Sources* even has an implicit reference to reciprocal effects in its show description, stating, “The press is a part of every story it covers.”^[1] *On the Media* ran a story that implicitly connects to cultivation theory, as it critiques some of the media’s coverage of violence and audiences’ seeming desensitization to it (Bernstein 2012).

1. Of the “functions of mass media” discussed earlier in the chapter, which functions do media criticism organizations like the ones mentioned here serve? Specifically, give examples of how these organizations fulfill the gatekeeping functions and how they monitor the gatekeeping done by other media sources.
2. Since media criticism organizations like *Reliable Sources* and *On the Media* are also media sources (one a television show and one a radio show), how might they be contributing to reciprocal effects?
3. Using the links provided, find a substantial article, study, or report that analyzes some media practice such as the covering of a specific event. Apply some aspect of media effects from the chapter to the story. How might media effects theory help us understand the criticism being raised?

Key Takeaways

- The mass media serves information, interpretation, instructive, bonding, and diversion functions.
- As a gatekeeper, the media functions to relay, limit, expand, and reinterpret information.
- The hypodermic needle theory of mass communication suggests that a sender constructs a message with a particular meaning that is “injected” into individuals within a mass audience.
- Theories of media effects explore the intended or unintended effects of what the media does. Theories have claimed strong effects, meaning that media messages can directly and intentionally influence audience members. They have also claimed weak effects, meaning that media messages have no little power over viewers. More recently, theories have claimed negotiated

effects, meaning that media messages do affect viewers but that viewers also have some agency to identify with, reject, or reinterpret a message.

- Cultivation theory explores a particular kind of media effect claiming that media exposure, specifically to television, shapes our social reality by giving us a distorted view on the amount of violence and risk in the world.

Exercises

1. Which function of mass media (information, interpretation, instructive, bonding, or diversion) do you think is most important for you and why? Which is most important for society and why?
2. What ethical issues are created by the gatekeeping function of the media? What strategies or suggestions do you have for bypassing this function of the media to ensure that you get access to the information you want/need?
3. Getting integrated: Discuss media messages that have influenced or would influence you in a professional, academic, personal, and civic context.

References

- Bernstein, B., "The Story of the Times Gory Empire State Shooting Photo," *On the Media*, August 24, 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, www.onthemedial.org/blogs/on-t.hooting-photo1.
- Bittner, J. R., *Mass Communication*, 6th ed. (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1996), 11.
- Coronel, S. S., "The Media as Watchdog," Harvard-World Bank Workshop, May 19, 2008, accessed September 19, 2012, www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorri.20Watchdog.pdf.
- Griffin, E., *A First Look at Communication Theory*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 352–53.
- McQuail, D., *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 457.
- Pérez-Peña, R., "Ousted Head of University Is Reinstated in Virginia," *New York Times*, June 26, 2012, accessed November 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/27/education/university-of-virginia-reinstates-ousted-president.html?pagewanted=all>.
- Self, C. C., Edward L. Gaylord, and Thelma Gaylord, "The Evolution of Mass Communication Theory in the 20th Century," *The Romanian Review of Journalism and Communication* 6, no. 3 (2009): 29.

-
1. "About This Show," *CNN Reliable Sources*, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://reliablesources.blogs.cnn.com>. ←
-

This page titled [13.2: Functions and Theories of Mass Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

- [15.2: Functions and Theories of Mass Communication](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

13.3: Mass Communication and Ethics

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss patterns of ownership and control as they currently exist in the media.
2. Explain the relationship between the media and globalization.
3. Evaluate the diversity (or lack thereof) of representations in the media and discuss potential effects.
4. Employ media-literacy skills to evaluate media messages.

Mass Communication and Ethics

Given the potential for mass communication messages to reach thousands to millions of people, the potential for positive or negative consequences of those messages exceed those of interpersonal, small group, or even public communication messages. Because of this, questions of ethics have to be closely considered when discussing mass communication and the media. In this section, we will discuss how media-ownership regulations, globalization, and representations of diversity tie in with mass communication ethics.

Media Control and Ownership

Media interests and ownership have become more concentrated over the past few decades as a result of deregulation. Deregulation refers to the overturning or revising of policies that were in place to ensure that media outlets serve the interests of the public and include diverse viewpoints, programs, and ownership. Deregulation occurred as a result of the rapid technological changes in the 1980s and 1990s, including the growth of cable and satellite outlets. The argument for deregulation was to make the overall market for network, cable, satellite, and other media outlets more competitive.



Gerogeri – radio tower – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Timeline of Changes Made by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) (Austin, 2011)

- **1954–84.** National ownership is limited to seven stations and each station is required to be in a separate geographic market.
- **1984.** The FCC expands ownership to twelve stations as long as the number of stations owned doesn't reach more than 25 percent of the national market

- **1996.** The Telecommunications Act eliminates a maximum on number of stations that one person or entity can own, as long as they do not reach more than 35 percent of the national market.
- **2003.** Cross-media ownership rules are relaxed, which allows for a person or entity to own both newspaper and broadcast outlets and radio and television outlets. The FCC increases the maximum audience one person or entity can reach to 45 percent of the national market, but Congress intervenes and reduces that to 39 percent.

The pressure to lessen regulations came as media outlets struggled to keep up with increased competition and technological changes and saw mergers and consolidations as a way to save money and keep a competitive edge. Television was one of the first forms of electronic mass media to begin to merge. Companies that you're familiar with now but probably didn't know were once separate entities include Time-Warner Cable (formed from the 1989 merger of Time, Inc. and Warner Communications, Inc.). General Electric, a company we may know for making refrigerators and stoves, bought the NBC television network in 1986. These are just two of the many megamergers that have occurred in the past few decades.^[1] The merger of these media companies was meant to provide a synergy that could lower costs and produce higher profits by, for example, merging Disney (with its expertise and market share of children's entertainment) and the broadcast network ABC (with its expertise in television and news).

As computers and the Internet began to enter households, media companies wanted to take advantage of the prospect of providing additional media services under one umbrella. Media convergence refers to the merging of technologies that were previously developed and used separately (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). One such convergence that affects many if not most of you reading this book is the creation of broadband Internet access through existing cable lines and the bundling of cable and high-speed Internet services. This marked the beginning of a rush, on the part of media conglomerates, to own the methods of distribution for media messages as a means of then controlling the devices and technology that can be used on them. A recent and well-known example of this was iPhone's exclusive contract with AT&T. For the first few years that iPhones were on the market, AT&T was the only service provider that worked with the phones. To handle the data load needed to service all the new phones, AT&T had to rush and spend millions of dollars to upgrade its cellular network. These moves help preserve the media conglomerates' power, because smaller, independent, or competing companies cannot afford the time, resources, and money needed to build a competing or even functional distribution mechanism.

Consolidated media ownership has led to a decrease in localism in terms of local news and local reporters, radio DJs, and editors (Austin, 2011). Since business is handled from a central hub that might be hundreds or thousands of miles away from a market the media outlet serves, many of the media jobs that used to exist in a city or region have disappeared. While media consolidation has led to some structural and cultural changes in the United States, similar forces are at work in the process of globalization.

Media and Globalization

Globalization refers to a complex of interconnecting structural and cultural forces that aid the spread of ideas and technologies and influence the social and economic organization of societies. Just as modernization in the form of industrialization and then later a turn toward an information-based society spread across the globe, so do technologies and the forms of media they create. In all these cases, the spread of ideas, technologies, and media is imbalanced, as we will discuss more later. This type of cultural imperialism is often criticized as being a part of globalization, and scholars acknowledge that cultural imperialism is largely achieved through media messages (Siapera, 2012).

Media imperialism refers to the domination of other countries through exported media and the values and ideologies they contain (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). Just as corporations have helped further globalization, media companies have expanded into multinational conglomerates in such a way that allows them to have power and influence that is difficult for individual nations to regulate or control. During the first seventy or so years of electronic mass media, countries could more easily control messages that were sent through cables or other hard structures. For example, telegraph, telephone, and television lines could be cut and even radio television stations that broadcast over the airwaves could be taken offline by cutting the power to the transmitter. As more information became digitized and sent via satellite, countries had much more difficulty limiting what could get in and out of their borders.

Media-fueled cultural imperialism is critiqued because of the concern that the imported cultural images and values will end up destroying or forever changing the cultural identity of the countries being "occupied" by foreign media. The flow of media is predictable and patterned. The cultural values of more-developed Western and Northern countries flow via media messages to the global East and South, mimicking the flow of power that has existed for centuries with the western and northern hemispheres, primarily Europe and the United States, politically and economically dominating countries in the southern and eastern hemispheres such as those in Asia, South America, and Africa. As with any form of imperialism, the poorest countries are the ones who are the most vulnerable and subjected to the most external control (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). The reason more-developed countries

dominate the media in other countries stems from available resources and knowledge needed to produce and transmit media content. Developing countries lack the same level of infrastructure (such as fiber-optic cables and satellite systems), technical expertise, and technology needed to produce their own content, which makes it cheaper to purchase Western, predominantly US American, content to fuel the growing desire of people in these countries to have access to media. This creates a negative cycle in which poorer countries use what resources they do have to carry Western content, which prevents them from investing in additional organic and local content and creates a demand for more Western content. Critics have also focused on the quality of the content that is exported, which is only representative of a narrow range of Western identities and values. Content tends to be dramatized programs like *Baywatch*, which at one point was the most-watched television program in the world. Dramas are preferred because humor is more likely to be lost in translation, while viewers can often identify with stock plot lines in dramas, which make the shows easier to translate and attracts a larger audience. The downside to this is that these narrowly chosen shows that run over and over in a specific country contribute to a stereotypical view of what life in the United States is like.

Not all the discussion of and scholarship on globalization and the media is negative. More recently, much research has focused on the notion of cultural hybridity and the ways in which some cultures take in foreign, predominantly Western media messages and representations and integrate them into existing cultural beliefs and practices. For example, one scholar writes about a quartet in Africa that takes European chamber music and incorporates African rhythms and another group that takes American hip-hop music and gives it a more traditional African flair (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2004). Additionally, the emergence of social and personal media allows users in specific countries to generate their own content and adopt and utilize media platforms in their own ways. As we will learn later, social and personal media have been used to overthrow oppressive governments and to increase the flow of information in places where it was once restricted. So, in these cases, we can see that the ability of certain forms of communication to cross borders has led to positive change.

We can even examine the spread of personal media and social media as an example of globalization. Here, rather than a specific message or set of cultural values being distributed around the world, a platform was made available and adopted in a more democratic, less imperialistic way. Social media, unlike more traditional modes of media, bring people together in more self-determined ways. For example, people can connect over the Internet to a blogger with a shared interest and interact with one another via comments or other means.

Media and Representation

Another area of concern for those who study mass media is the representation of diversity (or lack thereof) in media messages. The FCC has identified program, ownership, and viewpoint diversity as important elements of a balanced mass media that serves the public good (Austin, 2011). This view was enforced through the Fairness Doctrine that was established in 1949 and lasted until the early 1980s when it began to be questioned by those in favor of media deregulation. The Fairness Doctrine was eventually overturned in 1987, but the FCC tried in 2003 to reinstate policies that encourage minority ownership of media outlets, which they hoped in turn would lead to more diverse programming. It remains to be seen whether or not minority-owned media outlets will produce or carry more diverse programming, but it is important to note that the deregulation over the past few decades has led to a decrease in the number of owners of media outlets who come from minority groups.

Scholars have raised concerns about the number of characters from minority groups on television relative to the groups' percentage of the population. Perhaps even more concerning is the type of characters that actors from minority groups play and the types of shows on which they appear. Whether we want them to be or not, the people we see featured in media messages, especially those who appear frequently on television, in movies, in magazines, or in some combination of the three, serve as role models for many that view them. These people help set the tone for standards of behavior, beauty, and intelligence, among other things. Social learning theory claims that media portrayals influence our development of schemata or scripts, especially as children, about different groups of people (Signorielli, 2009). For example, a person who grows up in a relatively homogenous white, middle-class environment can develop schemata about African Americans and Latina/os based on how they are depicted in media messages. Cultivation theory, which we discussed earlier, also supports the notion that media representations affect our perceptions and actions. Since media messages, overall, are patterned representations, they cultivate within users a common worldview from the seeds that are planted by a relatively narrow set of content. For example, people in television shows are disproportionately portrayed as middle-class professionals. In reality, about 67 percent of people working in the United States have blue-collar or service-industry jobs, but they only make up about 10 percent of the people on television (Griffin, 2009).



Mike Steele – Jane the Virgin – CC BY-NC 2.0.

African Americans, Latina/os, and women are underrepresented in television, and people over the age of sixty-five are the most-excluded group (Griffin, 2009). Studies show that there is less diversity in mediated messages relative to the population as a whole and that the images and messages in the media contain certain themes that rely on stereotypes and further reduce the complexity of our society. Over time, these recurring images and messages affect what we think and how we view the world. In particular, research based on social learning and cultivation theories find that people who watch more television have views that reflect what they see in the programming they watch.

Looking specifically at television, representations of African Americans on prime-time shows (those that air between 7 and 11 p.m.) are actually proportional to their percentage of the population. Whites, however, are overrepresented, meaning there is a larger percentage of white people on prime-time shows than there is in our actual population. This disparity can be accounted for by pointing out that Latina/o, Native, and Asian Americans, as well as African American females, are underrepresented if not invisible in much of the media (Signorielli, 2009). For example, a study of minority characters on prime-time television between 2001 and 2008 found that Latina/os make up 5 percent of the characters despite being 16 percent of the population.

As the number of minority-focused programs, especially sitcoms, has decreased in the past ten years, minority characters have diffused more into other shows. While this integration is positive in some ways, there are still many examples of shows on which a minority character is the lone person of color or gay or lesbian person. From the view of social learning and cultivation theory, this is problematic, since many people, especially children, may form their early perceptions of difference based on interactions with characters in media messages. So unless viewers intentionally seek out diverse programming, they will likely mostly see people with dominant identities represented in the media they consume (Signorielli, 2009).

Unfortunately, there has been a similar lack of diversity found among new media. In a first-of-its-kind study of gender representation in online news sources, the Global Media Monitoring Project found after analyzing news stories on seventy-six websites in sixteen countries that only 36 percent of the stories were reported by women, and women were the focus of only 23 percent of all the stories written (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2012). Another look at popular, blog-style news sites such as *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Beast*, *Slate*, and *Salon* found that representations of minorities conformed to stereotypes. For example, African Americans were featured primarily in stories about athletics, Latino/as appeared in stories about immigration, and Native and Asian Americans were absent (Jackson, 2012). Even when a major source for online information like *The Huffington Post* tries to include more diverse viewpoints, it does so under criticism. The website decided to add a section focused on information and news of interest to African Americans after adding twenty-six other sections ranging from information on travel to divorce. Although the editor of the section wanted to have a nuanced discussion about race, many of her ideas were discounted because they were not “buzzy enough,” meaning they might not attract enough readers. So instead of starting a dialogue about race, most of the stories featured on the first day were more “buzz worthy” and, ironically, written by white reporters (Jackson, 2012).

Some people who study and/or work in the media view media diversity as a means of expanding public dialogue, creating a more-informed citizenry, and enhancing our democracy through positive social change. Some online news sources have taken up such a call, but they fall short of the popularity or profitability of more mainstream news outlets. The online investigative news outlet *ProPublica* has received positive attention and awards for their coverage of a wide range of issues, including stories that focus on underrepresented communities.^[2] The advent of new and personal media makes it easier for individuals and independent rather than corporate-owned media outlets to take advantage of new technologies and platforms to produce quality media products on a budget. As consumers of media, we can also keep a critical eye open for issues of representation and seek out media that is more

inclusive and diverse. This type of evaluative and deliberate thinking about the media is an important part of media literacy, which we will discuss next.

Developing Media Literacy

Media literacy involves our ability to critique and analyze the potential impact of the media. The word *literacy* refers to our ability to read and comprehend written language, but just as we need literacy to be able to read, write, and function in our society, we also need to be able to read media messages. To be media literate, we must develop a particular skill set that is unfortunately not taught in a systematic way like reading and writing. The quest to make a more media-literate society is not new. You may be surprised, as I was, to learn that the media-literacy movement began in the 1930s when a chapter of the American Association of University Women in Madison, Wisconsin, created a newspaper column and a radio program called “Broadcast on Broadcasts” that reviewed and evaluated current media messages and practices (Dunlop, & Kymnes, 2007). Despite the fact that this movement has been around for eighty years now, many people still don’t know about it.

Media literacy isn’t meant to censor or blame the media, nor does it advocate for us to limit or change our engagement with the media in any particular way. Instead, media literacy ties in with critical thinking and listening, which we have learned about throughout this book already. Media-literacy skills are important because media outlets are “culture makers,” meaning they reflect much of current society but also reshape and influence sociocultural reality and real-life practices. Some may mistakenly believe that frequent exposure to media or that growing up in a media-saturated environment leads to media literacy. Knowing how to use technology to find and use media is different from knowing how to analyze it. Like other critical thinking skills, media literacy doesn’t just develop; it must be taught, learned, practiced, and reflected on.

Media-literacy skills teach us to analyze the media and to realize the following:^[3]

- All media messages are constructed (even “objective” news stories are filmed, edited, and introduced in ways that frame and influence their meaning).
- Media structures and policies affect message construction (which means we need to also learn about how media ownership and distribution function in our society—a growing concern that we discussed earlier in this section).
- Each medium has different characteristics and affects messages differently (e.g., a story presented on *The Colbert Report* will likely be less complete and more dramatized than a story presented on a blog focused on that topic).
- Media messages are constructed for particular purposes (many messages are constructed to gain profit or power, some messages promote change, and some try to maintain the status quo).
- All media messages are embedded with values and beliefs (the myth of objectivity helps mask the underlying bias or misrepresentation in some messages).
- Media messages influence our beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors, including how we perceive and interact with others and how we participate in larger society.
- Media messages can prevent change (intentionally presenting manipulated or selectively chosen content to inhibit change).

We learn much through the media that we do not have direct experience with, and communication and media scholars theorize that we tend to believe media portrayals are accurate representations of life. However, the media represents race, gender, sexuality, ability, and other cultural identities in biased and stereotypical ways that often favor dominant identities (Allen, 2011). Since the media influences our beliefs, attitudes, and expectations about difference, it is important to be able to critically evaluate the mediated messages that we receive. The goal of media literacy is not to teach you what to think but to teach you how you can engage with, interpret, and evaluate media in a more informed manner. Media literacy is also reflective in that we are asked to be accountable for those choices we make in regards to media by reflecting on and being prepared to articulate how those choices fit in with our own belief and value systems.

There are some standard questions that you can ask yourself to help you get started in your media criticism and analysis. There are no “true” or “right/wrong” answers to many of the questions we ask during the critical thinking process. Engaging in media literacy is more about expanding our understanding and perspective rather than arriving at definitive answers. The following questions will help you hone your media-literacy skills (Allen, 2011):

1. Who created this message? What did they hope to accomplish? What are their primary belief systems?
2. What is my interpretation of this message? How and why might different people understand this message differently than me? What can I learn about myself based on my interpretation and how it may differ from others’?
3. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented or omitted in this message? What does this tell me about how other people live and believe? Does this message leave anything or anyone out?

4. Why was this message sent? Who sent it? Is it trying to tell me something? To sell me something?

After asking these questions, media-literate people should be able to use well-reasoned arguments and evidence (not just opinion) to support their evaluations. People with media-literacy skills also know that their evaluations may not be definitive. Although this may seem like a place of uncertainty, media-literate people actually have more control over how they interact with media messages, which allows them to use media to their advantage, whether that is to become better informed or to just enjoy their media experience.

Key Takeaways

- Media control and ownership has been deregulated over the past few decades, which has led to increased consolidation and merging of media outlets.
- The media aids globalization by exporting Western beliefs and values to other countries. This trend in exporting has been termed *media imperialism*, since Western media tend to dominate in many countries. Certain stereotypes about the West, particularly the United States, are maintained through the narrow range of messages that are exported. Other countries do not just passively receive Western media messages, however. Some messages are reinterpreted by the local culture, creating hybrid media texts.
- Deregulation has contributed to lack of media outlet ownership by minorities. Additionally, representation of most minority groups in media messages is not proportional to their numbers in the actual population. When minorities are included in media messages, it is often in stereotypical ways. Social learning theory states that these representations are important because they influence the schemata we develop about other groups of people, which points to how these distorted representations can actually influence how people think and act in their real lives.
- Media-literacy skills allow us to critique and analyze the potential effects of media. Media-literate people ask critical questions about all the media messages they receive, not just the ones with which they disagree. Doing so leads people to be more accountable for their media choices and to have more control over the role that media plays in their lives.

Exercises

1. Visit the FCC's webpage to view its mission: <http://www.fcc.gov/what-we-do>. Based on what you read there, how do you think the FCC is doing?
2. As we learned, many of the media messages that are exported from the United States to other countries end up supporting narrow stereotypes about US Americans. What media messages do you think would be better to export in order to allow other countries to see a more "accurate" picture of American life? Try to think of several examples of television programs, movies, websites, and so on.
3. Think about the diversity in some of the shows that you watch. Before doing any research, write down the different cultural identities that you think are represented in a couple of your favorite shows or movies. Then go and actually research the show or movie (look up the cast online, etc.) to see if your perceptions matched up with reality. Are the shows diverse? Why or why not? If there are minority characters, are they portrayed in stereotypical or narrow ways?

References

- Allen, B. J., *Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2011), 29, 34.
- Austin, C., "Overwhelmed by Big Consolidation: Bringing Back Regulation to Increase Diversity in Programming That Serves Minority Audiences," *Federal Communications Law Journal* 63, no. 3 (2011): 746–48.
- Dunlop, J., and Angel Kymnes, "Analysis of Media Literacy Curriculum: The Center for Media Literacy's Media Kit," *Smile* 7, no. 3 (2007), 3.
- Jackson, J., "New Media—but Familiar Lack of Diversity," *Extra!*, June 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=4551>.
- Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010, "Who Makes the News?" accessed November 11, 2012, whomakesthenews.org/images/st.hlights_en.pdf.
- Griffin, E., *A First Look at Communication Theory*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 351.
- Rayner, P., Peter Wall, and Stephen Kruger, *Media Studies: The Essential Resource* (London: Routledge, 2004), 249.
- Siapera, E., *Understanding New Media* (London: Sage, 2012), 23–26.

Signorielli, N., "Minorities Representation in Prime Time: 2000–2008," *Communication Research Reports* 26, no. 4 (2009): 324.

1. "Media Mega Mergers: A Timeline," *Common Cause: Holding Power Accountable*, accessed September 20, 2012, www.commoncause.org/site/pp.a.QIwG&b=4923181. ↵
2. "About Us," *ProPublica: Journalism in the Public Interest*, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.propublica.org/about>. ↵
3. "Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States," *National Association for Media Literacy Education*, accessed September 20, 2012, namle.net/wp-content/uploads/questions2.pdf. ↵

This page titled [13.3: Mass Communication and Ethics](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).

- [15.3: Mass Communication and Ethics](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>.

Index

P

plagiarism

[4.3: Organizing](#)

Glossary

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

Glossary

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

Detailed Licensing

Overview

Title: Persuasion and Critical Thinking

Webpages: 55

Applicable Restrictions: Noncommercial, No Derivatives

All licenses found:

- [Undeclared](#): 50.9% (28 pages)
- [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#): 25.5% (14 pages)
- [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#): 20% (11 pages)
- [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#): 3.6% (2 pages)

By Page

- [Persuasion and Critical Thinking - Undeclared](#)
 - [Front Matter - Undeclared](#)
 - [Persuasion and Critical Thinking - Undeclared](#)
 - [InfoPage - Undeclared](#)
 - [Table of Contents - Undeclared](#)
 - [Licensing - Undeclared](#)
 - [1: What is Persuasion? - Undeclared](#)
 - [1.1: Persuasion - An Overview - Undeclared](#)
 - [1.2: Types of Persuasive Speeches - Undeclared](#)
 - [2: Basics of Persuasive Thinking - Undeclared](#)
 - [2.1: Persuasive Thinking - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3: Persuasive Strategies - Undeclared](#)
 - [3.1: Ethos - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.2: Logos - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.3: Pathos - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4: Preparing a Speech - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [4.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [4.2: Researching and Supporting Your Speech - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [4.3: Organizing - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [4.4: Outlining - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [5: Speaking Confidently - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.1: What Is Communication Apprehension? - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.2: All Anxiety Is Not the Same- Sources of Communication Apprehension - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.3: Reducing Communication Apprehension - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.4: Coping with the Unexpected - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6: Delivery - Undeclared](#)
 - [6.1: Four Methods of Delivery - Undeclared](#)
 - [6.2: Speaking Contexts That Affect Delivery - Undeclared](#)
 - [6.3: Using Notes Effectively - Undeclared](#)
 - [6.4: Practicing for Successful Speech Delivery - Undeclared](#)
 - [7: Types of Persuasive Speeches - CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#)
 - [7.1: Types of Persuasive Speeches - CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#)
 - [8: Persuasive Strategies - Logical Fallacies - Undeclared](#)
 - [8.1: Fallacies - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9: Ethics Matters - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [9.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [9.2: The Ethics Pyramid - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [9.3: Ethics in Public Speaking - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [9.4: Free Speech - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [9.5: Chapter Exercises - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
 - [10: Persuasive Theories - Cognitive Dissonance Theory - Undeclared](#)
 - [10.1: Cognitive Dissonance Theory - Undeclared](#)
 - [11: Organizing Policy Speeches - Undeclared](#)
 - [11.1: Organizing Policy Speeches - Undeclared](#)
 - [12: Persuasive Theories - Elaboration Likelihood Model - Undeclared](#)
 - [12.1: Elaboration Likelihood Model - Undeclared](#)
 - [13: Mass Media and Persuasion - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [13.1: Technological Advances- From the Printing Press to the iPhone - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [13.2: Functions and Theories of Mass Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [13.3: Mass Communication and Ethics - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [Back Matter - Undeclared](#)
 - [Index - Undeclared](#)
 - [Glossary - Undeclared](#)

- [Glossary - Undeclared](#)
- [Detailed Licensing - Undeclared](#)